

Introduction

It was October 2010. Life was good. I was married to my high school sweetheart, we had a wonderful two-year old daughter; our jobs steady, our family healthy. Then it happened. My husband had a grand mal seizure in our kitchen.

Fast-forward 30 seconds; I believe he is pulling my leg.

Fast-forward 30 seconds; I believe he was dying on the floor.

Fast-forward 5 minutes; ambulance arrives.

Fast-forward 2 hours; he has a brain tumor the size of an egg.

Fast-forward 3 hours; we are meeting a brain surgeon.

Fast-forward 3 days; he is being wheeled into the operating room.

Fast-forward 5 hours; it is cancer.

Fast-forward 3 days; he is released from the hospital.

Fast-forward 2 days; I am back at work and acting as though nothing happened.

But something did happen. My life flipped upside down, turned right side up, tipped over and toppled down a hill. I have always been a positive person, but now things had changed. I saw the negative. I saw the negative because I did not believe our family deserved this. I saw the negative because I did not know how to deal with this new set of circumstances. I saw the negative because I did not have time to see the positive. I saw the negative because I was exhausted.

Fast forward 2 months, I am struggling.

I needed an outlet for my emotions. I needed to spark my creativity. I needed to tell my story. I needed to take things day by day and not let my mind spiral out of control. I needed to remind myself that there are so many wonderful things in my life. I needed to be thankful.

So I made a quest: Say thank you to one person, thing or action every day for a year.

Here is that story.

[NOTE: This blog was managed on Posterous. It is no longer active. The content has been archived here.]

January 1, 2011

Thank you to a new year...

...for the ability to put the mistakes of the past behind us and allowing us to believe we have the possibility of starting anew. The future looks more achievable when you can wipe the slate clean and start again.

January 2, 2011

Thank you Ty Corp...

... for creating Beanie Babies all those years ago. I am sure who ever designed Bongo the Monkey did not think that it would become the highest object of a little girl's affection. It is her best friend, her playmate and her confidant. So thank you to whoever created Bongo. My daughter's life would not be the same without it.

January 3, 2011

Thank you Liz Jones...

... for hiring me at TMP Worldwide back in 1998. Without that job I would not have the social network I do now and the last 12 years in Chicago would have never been the same. I can trace almost everyone I know today back to the handful of people I worked with at that office. How many people can say that?

January 4, 2011

Thank you Doormen at the Conrad...

... for always greeting me with a smile in the morning. These guys are out there every morning, standing in the bitter cold, but they still manage to put on a happy face and greet everyone passing by with a 'Good Morning' or 'Have a Nice Day'. It makes me feel like there is still a bit of humanity left in this world when people can acknowledge each other just for the simple pleasure of doing so.

January 5, 2011

Thank You Seth MacFarlane...

... not only for creating an incredibly funny show that has provided hours of entertainment and witty one-liners to our household, but for his no-holds-bar and nothing-is-off-limits attitude. People need to have the courage to do something they love, even if they know it will not please everyone.

January 6, 2011

Thank You Dr. Chandler...

... for being an extremely smart and talented oncology brain surgeon. His performance during the surgery and gamma knife procedures was beyond what I thought possible. And the team he has put together for us at Northwestern Memorial Hospital is outstanding. I know that although each visit with him may not always give us the outcome we want, we are getting the best medical care there. Sincerely, thank you.

January 7, 2011

Thank You Charlie...

... for having such a wonderful spirit. After working all day, there is nothing more rewarding than hearing a delighted scream of "Mommy's here!" when I walk through the door. Everything just melts at the door and there is nothing to do but enjoy her presence. People cannot help but smile when they are around her. I hope that quality remains with her throughout her life. Thank you Baby Girl for making my days, and everyone's you touch, so much brighter.

January 8, 2011

Thank You Mexican Culture...

... for providing scrumptious food that cures any hangover or down-and-out attitude. Queso Fundido, I heart you. And the margarita is pretty cool too.

January 9, 2011

Thank You Sunday Tribune...

...For rounding out the weekend's routine. Sunday would not be the same without a cup of coffee and the paper. Although the routine has changed slightly with the addition of the munchkin, it still signifies a time to unwind and relax before the week starts at full swing again.

January 10, 2011

Thank you Josephine Russo...

... for giving two twenty-somethings a cheap place to live. There are so many things that I will always remember about our first place: the tiny deck that held so

many people and was so very much not up to city code, the fact that the living room had normal-height ceilings while you could scrape your knuckles in the kitchen, the extra storage space that served as the game room as people sweated through games of darts, and the fact that the place was the biggest place we have ever lived while costing us only \$675/mo. But physical things aside, I will always remember the great times had with friends in that place...St. Pat's parties, Mike's drop-in dinners, and cocktail parties that ever ended. Thanks to Mrs. Russo and to all of the people that visited us on School Street.

January 11, 2011

Thank you singer/songwriters...

...for having the ability to capture such powerful emotions in such a short amount of time. I place music in two basic categories - songs you love for what they say and songs you love for how they sound...and sometimes, a really good song can fall into both categories.

Today's thank you is addressed to those that fall into the first. A common misconception is that all songwriters just cover sappy love stuff, when in actuality it goes deeper than that. I believe an inept songwriter focuses on love, and the exceptional ones cover the rest. Each one of you should get your own thank you, but here's a special shout out to Adam Duritz, Sean Kelly, and Thomas Pace.

January 12, 2011

Thank you notebooks...

...for being the true 'first generation' IM/text message application. When I was in high school, email was not even invented – and cell phones were for emergencies. My good friends and I had notebooks. We would write long notes to each other and pass the notebooks back and forth between classes - either by physically handing them off or by dropping them in each other's lockers. They were our lifelines; we shared our thoughts, our dreams, our desires.

Teenagers today are losing out on a bit of depth in their relationships due to the brevity and impersonal nature of texts and IMs. And, I still have some of these high school notebooks in storage and treasure them as pieces of my past. Can a kid say that now about a text message?

January 13, 2011

Thank you James Cappleman...

...for running for 46th Ward Alderman. He has been making strides to better the Uptown community for many years. And now it looks as though he can make it into office and truly make a difference. Wishing good luck with the final campaigning and crossing my fingers he wins.

January 14, 2011

Thank you Pixar & Disney...

... for making movies that kids love, but parents can enjoy. I have always said that kids are a lot smarter than people give them credit for. So many kids shows dumb things down when they don't have to. It is nice to have entertainment options that are smart, witty and teach good values.

January 15, 2011

Thank you Chase Rewards Team...

... for responding so positively to my situation. Early last month, I redeemed points from my credit card for a reward. The reward was proceeded and scheduled to deliver by mid-December. I dawned on me the other day it never arrived. I contacted Chase credit card services with the preconceived notion that it was a lost cause. But I was pleasantly surprised to see a no-hassle response telling me the first reward would be voided and a new one shipped out immediately. Teaches me not to assume.

January 16, 2011

Thank you Food Network...

...for sparking my passion for cooking. I am addicted to the Food Network. Not only are the shows entertaining, but they have also engrained a wealth of culinary knowledge within me. I am no longer afraid to try something just to see if works. And luckily, because I am building from a strong base, those attempts are generally successful. I thank you, and I am sure Dan's stomach thanks you as well.

January 17, 2011

Thank you organization...

...for allowing me to see everything in my closet, thus preventing me from continually buying more of the same thing.

January 18, 2011

Thank you Joan Rivers and the Fashion Police...

...for reminding me why it is good to not be famous. I understand that awards shows are now about the Best and Worst Dressed, but do we really need shows like this that bash people for what they wore? Kelly Osborne, kudos to you for trying to keep things positive and not knocking people just to get a laugh.

January 19, 2011

Thank you Kappa...

...for inviting me into your home all those many years ago. People talk about those friends that are a part of your life and will always hold a special place in your heart; those friends that you don't need to talk to but know if you called they would be at your side; those friends that when you think about them you smile. I have a house full of those friends. Ladies, you know who you are. I love you and think of you often.

January 20, 2011

Thank you Eli...

...for being a wonderful first pet. He has been by my side through good times and bad. He knows when I need a love. And he knows when it is time to play. Some people dislike cats but I think they are interesting creatures that understand the dichotomy of living in sync with humans.

January 21, 2011

Thank you wine...

...for allowing awkward conversations to happen. People need to be in a relationship where they are open and honest. But sometimes they need to strip a layer to be comfortable to say what they mean, and make all the difference.

January 22, 2011

Thank you My Publisher...

...for pulling for my photos out of the computer. I have always loved having photo albums but that ceased ever since I switched to digital. Thanks to this program I now have a three albums printed and am on the move to make more.

January 23, 2011

Thank you Disney College Program...

...for providing a semester's worth of memories, work experience and friendships to last a lifetime. I just had a friend remind me that it was 15 years ago this weekend that a group of us arrived at the Vista Way compound. We had no idea what to expect. We had no idea who our roommates would be. We had no idea that 15 years later we would be looking back to that time of our lives and describe it as a life-changing event. Thanks to all of those people who went through that with me. You all deserve your own thank-you post.

January 24, 2011

Thank you Chicago sports...

... for being completely unpredictable. It is a thrill to be a fan of all the Chicago sports team. You never know quite what to expect. You can be elated one moment and heart broken the next. It is much more exciting than following a consistent team. So, nice try Bears. And good luck Cubs.

January 25, 2011

Thank you Morgan Freeman...

...for being the world's greatest narrator. Anything can be captivating if he is the one saying it. Imagine the influence one could have if all they had to do was talk and everyone would listen simply because of the cadence of the voice. The president doesn't even have that kind of power. I am glad to see, um hear, that Mr. Freeman uses his craft to teach us things, instead of for world domination.

January 26, 2011

Thank you french fries...

...for sometimes they are the cure to what ails you.

January 27, 2011

Thank you Heathers...

...for laying the groundwork that established a very fun ritual. The ladies involved know the context of this post. So all the Heathers and our Veronica, thank you for being there. You are a great, talented, smart group and we will celebrate this fact more often.

January 28, 2011

Thank you Harry Kraemer...

...for showing me how to become a better leader. I attended a powerful lecture of Mr. Kraemer's yesterday and I believe as I continue to grow as a leader I will consistently reference the material he shared. It really is a simple premise, but sometimes you just need someone else to explain it to you to make it click.

January 29, 2011

Thank you sense of sight...

...for being one of the top five senses. Our senses are fascinating when you truly think about them. Since I, like most people, take them for granted, I want to take a step back and be thankful for each one. Today, sight.

I am thankful that I can behold a sunrise...that I can witness my daughter give me that look that she only gives me...that I can take in the enchanting view of a lake that lays motionless in the early morning...that I can steal a wink from my husband from across a crowded room...that I can simply put one foot in front of the other without aide.

I am thankful that I use what I see each day to create a monstrous picture album in my head. And that I can close my eyes and pluck pictures from the album when I need an escape.

January 30, 2011

Thank you IMDB...

... for providing an easy tool to resolve bets with my husband. After years of claiming to know more about pop culture than me, I now have the ability to rightly take hold of my title. Thank you Dan for being a good sport and keeping the challenges coming.

January 31, 2011

Thank you Starbucks manager...

...at the 444 N Michigan location. I ran into you almost every morning as I got my caffeine fix. I have never met someone so eternally happy as you. I don't believe I ever saw you in a bad mood or flustered by a situation. Friday was your last day so today was my first ordering experience with your replacement. Totally not the same. You will be missed. I wish you luck in your new endeavors.

February 1, 2011

Thank you sense of hearing...

...for being one of the top five senses. My ode to my senses lands on hearing today. I am thankful I can hear.

As I think about why I treasure my hearing, the first thing that comes to mind is laughter. That is an easy one. And music, that is easy too. But to get more obscure, how about the lapping of waves against the shore...the autumn leaves rustling in the wind...the bumps and clanks of the early riser making coffee...the soft shuffling of PJ-padded feet...the crackle of a campfire...the purr of a cat that is wrapped around my head and taking up way too much space on the pillow...the crescendo of thunder during a storm...

... someone saying 'thank you' and really meaning it.

February 2, 2011

Thank you to The Blizzard 2011...

...for allowing Chicago to have the day off. The whole city seemed to stop for a day. Our internet and cable both went out. It made it a perfect day to just be with friends and family and just relax. No excuses.

February 3, 2011

Thank you to people who shovel...

...for making my commute a bit easier. I know it was a lot of snow and it was cold. So thank you for getting out there and getting the job done.

February 4, 2011

Thank you to my personal IT guys...

...also known as Rob Ruccia and Clarke Mills. Rob is my knight in shining armor for being able to restore my entire photo library after I lost it in a user-error glitch. And Clarke is my go-to guy at the office. When I swear that my excel keeps freezing on me - but I am unable to replicate it when he is watching - he believes me. Thanks guys for putting up with me and coming to my rescue time and time again.

February 5, 2011

Thank you coupons...

...for being the equivalent to free money. I love being a coupon clipper. I used to think coupons were there to tempt people into buying things they normally wouldn't, thus making them spend more money. But if you really look through the coupons, you will find there are ones for the things you buy on a regular basis.

It is a wonderful feeling to watch the register total come down, and down, and down. Now I am not an extreme couponer that spends hours clipping, comparing and shopping. But I do spend a few minutes every Sunday going through the paper and spend a few more minutes organizing myself before I go to the store. It makes a difference. Every dollar counts.

February 6, 2011

Thank you reality TV...

...for highlighting people's faults. Really, this is the main reason reality TV is so popular. The mass culture wants to witness people mess up - and the producers of these shows know this. But, to turn this into a positive, the producers are creating shows that highlight that no one is perfect. We all have our not-so-glorious moments. And we can all recover from them. Reality stars recover by making money on them, everyone else recovers with the satisfaction that our moments weren't caught on film.

February 7, 2011

Thank you lottery...

...for those blissful moments of daydreaming that are made possible - right before you check your numbers. Part of the fun of playing the lottery is listing all the things that you would do if you won. You think about how you would react, who you would tell, the first thing you would buy... Kids play pretend when they are little. I look at playing the lottery as my pretend play. It is just one way to keep my imagination alive.

February 8, 2011

Thank you CTA...

...for providing me with transportation to and from work every day. It is times like these - when the trains are packed with people because those who normally drive can't move their cars and trains are slow because the cold breaks down the equipment - that people automatically start complaining about the CTA. It is as though people believe it is the company's fault directly for all of this. So today, I will not complain. I will thank the CTA. Thank you for providing me with a public

transportation option every day of the year. Thank you for allowing me to read a book on the way to work. Thank you for only making me spend \$5/day instead of \$20/day to park my car.

February 9, 2011

Thank you high school crew...

... for not necessarily being the "coolest" crew in the school, but for being the ones that were counted on when push comes to shove. Dan and I just had a conversation on high school and determined that the friends we had there are the best that anyone could have asked for. We may not have won any "king" or "queen" titles, but we can truly claim the title of "tried and true friend". Thank you for sticking by our sides and being there when we needed you.

February 10, 2011

Thank you sense of taste...

...for being one of the top five senses. Taste, ah, taste. I love taste. I am not sure I would go as far as to say if I was only allowed to keep one sense that I would select taste. But, man, it would be a hard one to give up.

I love taste not only for the satisfaction of eating things that are scrumptious, but I love everything that goes along with taste. Such as the dinner party. People don't gather around the table to smell each other; they gather to taste food together. Or experiencing new cultures. Trying local foods is one of the best ways to learn about the traditions. Or celebrating. The congratulatory cheers would not be the same without being able to taste your achievements.

I am thankful for my sense of taste and that my palette is open for more adventures.

February 11, 2011

Thank you Chicago Parks District...

... for providing free, fun events for Chicago families. Our park down the street has provided many hours of entertainment, a wealth of friendships and an extended family to people within the neighborhood. Living in a big city often means to have to make some sacrifices - usually you don't have a yard or a large play area for your kids. The park system makes up for all this. So a special thanks to Chase Park and the Chase Park Advisory Council for keeping the system thriving.

February 12, 2011

Thank you book club...

... for providing a reason to get together with good friends once a month. With everyone's hectic lives right now, sometimes we need to have an event to put on our calendars to ensure we see each other. It's sad, but true. So I am glad that my friends have created that monthly calendar event. And yes, the books are good to read too.

February 13, 2011

Thank you Mumford & Sons...

... for truly enjoying yourself as you performed at the Grammys. It wasn't about a big stage performance. It wasn't about adding weird effects to your voice. It wasn't about who could you impress. It was all about playing music and having a great time doing what you love to do. And they got to play with Bob Dylan to boot! What a party.

February 14, 2011

Thank you to the Borman family...

...for including me in your formal family dinner when we were growing up. To this day I still remember thinking it was so cool that I came over one night and the dining room was set for a formal dinner. We sat, talked and Doug and Patti treated the kids like adults.

After dinner was over we continued to sit around the table and talk - specifically about the "topic" that was selected for the night. We discussed the Seven Wonders of the World and developed ways to help the kids recall what they were. I cannot recall them now except that the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus had a "hand attached to the outside that waved".

I love this idea. There are nights that Dan and I will sit at the dinner table and talk for hours about all sorts of things. Now that we have Charlie, I hope that she will become a member in these talks as she gets older. And that she can invite her friends to join as well. Thank you Doug and Patti for creating that memory, and Allison for being the good friend that invited me, and Sara and Mark for being there too.

February 15, 2011

Thank you TargetCom...

... for setting up Flex Spending Accounts this year. As this year progresses, and more and more hospital bills keep coming in, it makes things just a bit more tolerable knowing that I am paying those bills with pre-tax dollars. FSA's may not mean much to the rest of the employees there, but to me, it means a lot. Thanks TCOM for watching out for us and providing benefits like this.

February 16, 2011

Thank you mindless television...

... for providing some level of entertainment when all you want to do is check out for a while.

February 17, 2011

Thank you serendipity...

...for reminding me to keep things in perspective.

A few years ago I read a wonderful book called "The Ways of the Peaceful Warrior". In it the teacher has a mantra – Ask yourself "where are you?" The answer should be "here". Then ask yourself "what time is it?". The answer is "now". Basically, you need to remind yourself to concentrate on the here and now - not what happened yesterday or what is in store for tomorrow.

This morning as I was thinking about what lay ahead, I started to get overwhelmed by my work and personal to do lists. Then my daughter came in and made me laugh. It was then that I was reminded of that book and gave myself to the moment.

Then as serendipity would have it, I was reading my magazine on the way work and read an essay. It was written by a mom/author that claimed that 38 was her most memorable age. At the time she had a 3 year old daughter and said, "I knew she was going to be my one and only child, so my mantra and modus operandi was 'Be here now.' I woke up every morning with the knowledge that everything I did had meaning, down to the smallest details of breakfast, bath time and toe kisses."

I am thankful that I saw my lesson for the day and had it confirmed within an hour.

February 18, 2011

Thank you to those who created Classical Baby...

...for providing a wonderful way for kids to experience classical music and dance. We just watched an episode where cartoon characters performed pieces from the Nutcracker, Singing in the Rain, The West Side Story and Top Hat. And what impressed me most is that they used the original choreography and played the symphony score - they didn't try to "kiddify" it. I hope that by laying this groundwork with Charlie now she will enjoy these musicals when she gets older even more.

February 19, 2011

Thank you for Dance Party USA...

...because if you are a product of my era you know the extent of that statement. For those that come after that era I hope that you can expand your knowledge and acknowledge the power. Add a sparkly star near your eye and go with it.

February 20, 2011

Thank you walking...

...for allowing me to see every hidden gem a location has to offer. My husband and I have always found great adventure, spectacular people and unexpected finds when we set out on foot. Every city we have visited, we have walked. We have a rough idea of where we are headed, but we use our legs to get us there. This allows us to really see it all - and easily stop if we are so inclined.

When you are in a car driving to a destination, you are looking for street names to get you there - and missing everything you pass along the way. When you are walking, you are looking at what else is there.

This holds true for local venues as well. How many times have you walked down a street that you have driven down numerous times, only to uncover your new favorite restaurant (because you can read the menu) or your new favorite shop (because you can look in the window)?

A slower pace of life has its benefits, and taking the time to walk to your destination is one of them.

February 21, 2011

Thank you Tex...

...our 'security guard' at A.L. for pretending to enforce the no-open campus lunch laws. A friend and I thought we were so sneaky by using our yearbook and A.L. Insider press passes to go out to lunch every day our senior year. Tex went along with the charade for about a month until finally he just asked us to bring him back a Whopper. From then on there was a unwritten code between us. He knew we were just grabbing lunch and would come back without causing any trouble. It was a good lesson on setting the right expectations early and reaping the rewards later.

February 22, 2011

Thank you voters...

... for getting out there and making your voice heard. Even if your candidate does not win, at least you tried to make a difference. If you don't vote, you loose your right to complain about the outcome.

February 23, 2011

Thank you to the O'Conor family...

...for following through on a dinner party invitation that has been spoken about many times before. I am grateful for this crazy band of brothers and their fearless parents for they provide Charlie with a glimpse into the Stock household when Dan was a kid. But I am also grateful for the adult conversation that can coincide with the kid interaction around the table during dinner. This is one piece of childhood experience to which I hope Charlie can continually be exposed.

February 24, 2011

Thank you Marshalls...

...for providing this deal-seeker with hours worth of entertainment throughout the years. I love to find a good deal. So much so that I find myself buying things I don't really need, but since the deal is so good I feel guilty NOT buying it. My savings account may not thank you, but my thrifty self sure does.

February 25, 2011

Thank you Dr. Seuss...

... for proving a piece of our nighttime routine and for teaching little life lessons through funny stories. I have always been a fan of Green Eggs and Ham (I so do like them, Sam-I-Am) but I never really thought about it as a means for teaching kids to try new things. But I have seen first hand how a kid can connect the dots

between dinnertime trials and the bedtime book. Thank you Dr. Seuss for providing fodder when trying to get a kid to eat brussel sprouts.

February 26, 2011

Thank you SNL...

...for having the skit "Really?" in the Evening Update. I am a big fan of this response. It makes it easy to just shake your head and walk away .

February 27, 2011

Thank you Chicago Tribune...

... for providing a tranquil Stock Sunday ritual. It starts with the morning coffee, then the walk down the stairs with Charlie and having her wait on the last landing because it is too cold at the door and she is still in her PJs, followed by Dan absorbing the front "news" sections, me devouring the "fluff" sections, and Charlie leafing through the "pretty" auto and real estate sections. It really is the one time a week that we can all relax, spend time with each other and feel none of the daily pressures that come with the other 6 days of the week.

And I like it so much - I thanked it twice - oops.

February 28, 2011

Thank you Joanne Singleton...

...for keeping my mind sane throughout the events of last fall. She constantly sent me advice, words of wisdom, and positive prayers - and all with the precursor of "you can decide to read this, delete this or save it for later".

Sometimes it was hard to hear some of the things she shared, but if I really listened I knew she was right. It was some of those messages that kept me going throughout everything and allowed me to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Thanks Jo for being who you are and for being persistent with me. I hope everyone has access to a person like you when they need it most.

March 1, 2011

Thank you courteous riders...

...on the CTA who give up their seats to pregnant women, moms with kids and the elderly. It is nice to see people taking note of others around them and displaying common courtesies.

March 2, 2011

Thank you bacon...

... for making everything better. MMMM bacon.

March 3, 2011

Thank you women with passion...

...who want to make a difference. I just spent the evening with a group of women who care so much about the world around them that they tirelessly give their time and self for the cause. I would like to claim that I am on par with them, but I pale in comparison. This group is passionate, persistent and infallible. I tip my hat to you ladies and hope I can at least ride along side you in support.

March 4, 2011

Thank you stickers...

...for providing an inexpensive bribery tool for young minds. Growing up I remember the thrill of a gold star on top of my paper and it is nice to see that simple pleasure still exists today. These pushed us to do better, keep progressing, and thinking beyond our current capabilities - just so we could get a sticky piece of paper that we could put on top of another piece of paper. So thank you to the inventor of stickers, for I believe you have provided us with a wealth of new inventions due to your product.

March 5, 2011

Thank you Brendan and Maggie...

...for inviting us to participate in the most wonderful day in your life. These two got married today. Every time I come to a wedding I selfishly reminisce about my wedding day almost 10 years ago. No matter a person's situation, everyone needs to have a 'wedding' in their life. They need to be in a room surrounded by those who love them, who will be there through thick and thin, and stand by their side when they need them most. It is one of the most secure feelings to look around the room and see them all at the same time. I hope everyone gets the chance to experience it.

March 6, 2011

Thank you digital cameras...

...for allowing us to take picture, after picture, after picture. I remember back when we had to buy film - so it limited an evening to 24 photos. Now we can snap to our heart's content, see immediately if we need to take another, and weed out all the bad ones instantly. The chance of having just the right picture increases dramatically. I treasure all the photos I have taken over the years. I can flip through albums and get transported back to all those great times time and time again.

March 7, 2011

Thank you screenwriters...

...for providing witty one-liners that can be sprinkled into conversations when needed. Because I like smiling. Smiling's my favorite. I am serious, and don't call me Shirley.

March 8, 2011

Thank you readers...

...for keeping me motivated throughout this little experiment of mine. I am really doing this for myself as a means of staying positive and reflecting on things that should matter. However knowing that almost 500 people have visited the blog and each entry gets about 200 people looking at it has kept me motivated to stay on task. So thank you for your interest. Thank you for letting me get away with entries such as "Thank you bacon" - I mean, come on, really. And thank you for your support. I hope you are all still around in December.

March 9, 2011

Thank you Mrs. Hopper...

...my fourth grade teacher. Teachers in general deserve a special thanks for all that they do. I have a list of them that will likely be seen here throughout the year, but my first one to acknowledge is Mrs. Hopper.

First, she understood how 4th graders learn. Whenever possible she inserted hands-on projects that connected the dots and made it click. To explain cause and effect, we made apple-head dolls. She spent an afternoon peeling 30 apples and making faces on the surface. As they dried, the apple shrunk and the end result was a head for an apple-head doll that looked like an old lady's face. I remember I kept mine around the house for as long as I could until finally my mom made me throw it away. It was an apple after all.

While she was teaching us about American history, we made our own candles. She gave us all a string, we made a circle path around the room, and we took turns dipping the string in the wax. We watched the candle grow wider and wider as we made more laps. I never burned that candle because I thought it was so cool.

The other reason I remember Mrs. Hopper so fondly is that she truly cared for every classroom of students she had. Every year during the holidays, she had a tea party for her class. She made loads of cookies - and invited the class to her house! Who does that? How many people out there can say that they were invited to their teacher's home? My goodness, she had to love what she did and love the kids that she taught.

Thank you Mrs. Hopper for giving me so many wonderful memories. Thank you for making me love the art of learning. Thank you for finding your passion and doing it so well.

March 10, 2011

Thank you people who acknowledge first names....

...when greeting someone. I never really understood the impact of this simple gesture until this evening. There is a big difference between seeing someone you have seen many times before and starting the conversation without a formal greeting versus stating "Hi Angie". I never really thought about the situation before.

However, tonight I encountered many people I have met previously, had conversations with, but felt as though they really didn't truly acknowledge my existence. Tonight when they approached me by name they moved themselves into a whole new category in my head. It sounds silly and trivial, but one simple change does make a big difference. I will think twice when greeting people from now on.

March 11, 2011

Thank you American Pickers...

...for being the ultimate recyclers. The things these guys find - most times just rotting away somewhere - are amazing. They revive a little piece of history every time they go out. And they allow those pieces to be enjoyed by others instead of being turned into trash.

March 12, 2011

Thank you Bob at Mulligan's...

...for providing a safe haven for our St. Pat's party many years ago. This day became a tradition for our group 12 years ago and when it finally outgrew our accommodations, Bob stepped up to the plate and helped us out. We have since lost Bob but I think of him yearly, just as I think of the original crew back in 1999.

In conjunction to this, thank you to everyone that partakes in the day's festivities. I look forward to this day and its visitors all year long. You mean the world to me.

March 13, 2011

Thank you remote controls...

...for the sheer convenience they provide. I am sure every household has at least one of these tools, and I am sure there are households where the remotes seem to be multiplying and taking over. However, let's just take a step back for a moment and ponder what it was like before these things were around. Image you are all comfy on the couch and you decide you don't like what you are watching. You have two choices - continue to watch a show you have no interest in or get up off the couch, walk to the TV and push buttons until you can find a suitable replacement. If this happened today, what would you do? Exactly. So join me in thanking that remote control by your side.

March 14, 2011

Thank you public television...

...for providing wonderful, unique, and local programming. There is a proposal on the table to cut all government funding to PBS as a means of lowering the federal deficit. I believe there are other things that could take a cut before PBS funding. Why take away this opportunity to experience a variety of viewpoints, to enrich lives with broad topics, and to teach pre-K children the fundamentals?

March 15, 2011

Thank you for today...

...and for tomorrow. This morning I have been reminded of two mantras - 'live each day to its fullest' and 'you can't live your life in one day'. These two messages may seem to contradict each other but in actuality they balance each other. And that is was life is about - finding balance in everything you do.

So today I will remember to watch for what the day has to offer but realize I can't do it all. And I will forgive myself if I can't even do that.

March 16, 2011

Thank you sense of touch...

...for being one of the top five senses. Touch is a hard one to define. Often when you think about touch you think about your fingertips reaching out to do something: caress, poke, pick, squeeze. But touch is bigger than that.

Touch is hugging, holding hands, getting a massage, tickling, rubbing a back, brushing hair, and, I'll say it, sex. There is not one thing on that list that I would be willing to give up. So I am thankful I have my sense of touch so I don't have to.

March 17, 2011

Thank you Nora Ligurotis...

...for many, many things. But today thank you for inviting me into your annual tradition every year. Looking forward to spending the day with you and the Kitty Crew. Image me clapping really fast and jumping up and down. Slainte.

March 18, 2011

Thank you Super Heroes...

...for always saving the day. I love the notion of a band of people whose main purpose in life is to watch out for others. They will risk everything just to make sure someone else stays out of trouble. I have encountered some real Super Heroes in my life and view them with such level of respect that I almost cannot compare them to "regular" people. Thank you for your tireless work to leave the world just a bit better than the way you found it.

March 19, 2011

Thank you weddings...

...for allowing a bride's wishes to come true. I have written about the wonders of a wedding day before, but today I am writing about the planning of a wedding. There is nothing better than witnessing the bride picking the colors, the dress, and the elements of her perfect day - and knowing it is exactly what SHE wants.

And being by the bride's side and following her while she makes these decisions is what it means to be a friend.

March 20, 2011

Thank you first class...

...for reminding me how nice it can be to fly. Don't get me wrong, I love Southwest prices, but it has just been illustrated to me that you get what you pay for. It was so nice to travel with people that know how to properly travel, know what carry on luggage should look like and how it should be properly stored. And flight attendants who deal with smart people all day are so much nicer than those they need to babysit. So thank you first class for providing a breath of fresh air to this wary traveler.

March 21, 2011

Thank you to my high school writing teachers...

...Mrs. Christine Wahl and Mr. Rod Cameron. A fellow member of one of my creative writing classes reminded me today of the great experiences we had in those classes. The fundamentals of good writing are fairly easy to teach - don't end sentences with a preposition, when to use "I" and when to use "me", and the difference between there, their and they're. But to teach where to find inspiration, how to capture and harness a thought, and how to translate what is spinning around your head into meaningful words - now that is hard to do.

Not only has this blog allowed my to fulfill my goal of focusing on the positive things in life. It has also allowed me to follow one of the tenets these individuals taught: write every day. It doesn't matter what it is that you write or how much you write. Just write. Maybe this will push me to write more and more every day. Maybe not. Either way, I am enjoying getting back into the routine.

And thank you Carrie for providing my topic for today.

March 22, 2011

Thank you to people who think...

...before they speak. I often wonder how some people can be oblivious to the outcome of their actions, or worse, don't care. So instead of dwelling on things I cannot change, I choose to move on and focus on the people that do care. I will surround myself with people who support each other, understand the role they play in other lives, and attempt to move the collective group forward. No sense in getting your panties in a wad over things that don't really matter.

March 23, 2011

Thank you portable electronics...

...for making traveling with a rambunctious 2.5 year old a more tolerable experience. When on vacation I like to have the motto of stashing all electronics for the duration of the trip - no checking email, no logging on to Facebook, no checking work voicemails, and no texting other people. Vacation should be about unplugging for a while and focusing on yourself and your trip-mates.

However I have just made an exception to my own rule. Portable DVD players are not classified as electronics and are permitted on airplanes. Thank you Bloom for the loan.

March 24, 2011

Thank you Kristin Van Ogtrop...

... for overseeing my favorite magazine of all time, Real Simple. It is the one magazine I literally (and I know the definition of the word literally, and I mean literally) read from cover to cover. I enjoy the Q&A from the readers, the book "reviews", the exquisitely written essays, the fashion and food tips...I even like the ads that choose to be in the magazine.

But what I really like is reading the editor's note every month. You may be thinking, "Really? I never read the editor's note. What is the point?" I challenge you. The next time you are standing in line at the supermarket, pick up a Real Simple, leaf to the editor's note and take a moment. She writes as though she is standing right next to you having a conversation. She makes it real. She has funny quips. And mostly, she is very insightful.

I have been meaning to check out her blog and to read her book for some time, but for some reason kept forgetting to do so. Until now. I just visited her blog, Adventures in Chaos. I am in love. This is the blog I want to write.

Maybe I will.

March 25, 2011

Thank you cousins...

...for being able to be both family and friends.

You have your siblings that are family and you can be friends with, but depending on your stage at life (like, say, teenage years) the relationship could get too close for comfort.

You have your parents that are family and in your adult years you can consider them your friends.

And you have your grandparents – that are just the best.

But cousins are a rare breed. They are the family that you don't live with so they become so much more of a novelty. Charlie just spent the day playing with her cousins and it was amazing to watch all three of them together. I hope as she grows older she can see her cousins in the same light I see mine. I look forward to the holidays, not only for Charlie to see her family, but so I can see my cousins. I love catching up with them, getting insight into what their lives have held in the months we didn't see each other, and getting their thoughts on what is going on with me. There is a level of respect that is not duplicated with anyone else.

Much love to Charlie's cousins and much love to my own. Can't wait to see you.

March 26, 2011

Thank you timelessness...

...for allowing me and my friends to live the secret lives that we do. Today, in 2011, I still think of my parents as though they were in their forties, and I still think as myself as 25. This is not an egotistical thing; it is a harmonious thing.

Maybe it is how we want to remember ourselves. Maybe it is how we want to remember others (such as we don't want to think of our parents getting older – thus leaving us. Instead we make them remain 40 forever).

Whatever the reason, growing old still happens. I just worry about what happens the day that the real world slaps us in the face and we realize things kept going without us.

March 27, 2011

Thank you cab drivers...

...for always being available to get us where we need to go. I believe the life of a cab driver would be difficult. You spend your days and nights in the car, often driving to the same locations over and over again, and always dealing with traffic.

The thought of doing that makes my stomach turn. So I am thankful that there are people who think differently.

March 28, 2011

Thank you alarm clocks...

...for being one of the most hated electronics in the world, yet also one of the most used. Think about the things you hate. You probably try to avoid them. You most certainly wouldn't replace them if they broke. And you attempt to not even think about them. However, the alarm clock does not fall into the category. We hate it, yet go back for its torture every day.

Thank you for getting us going in the morning...for jumpstarting the day...for making sure we do not sleep the day away. The world would not be as productive without you...although we would probably be a bit less grumpy.

March 29, 2011

Thank you To Do Lists...

...for providing a sense of accomplishment, while also keeping me on task. There are days when I think, "today is the day I will take on the world" and I am going from the moment I wake up until I am ready to crash on the couch at night. These are the days that I relish the To Do List. If I am really in the go-get-em mood, I have things done before I even have time to formally make the list. However, when I get around to it, I start with the item that I just did or the one I am about to complete. There is nothing like crossing something off a written list within one minute of writing it down.

Now I know this blog is suppose to focus on being positive, but if I am talking about to do lists, there is a negative. I have three to do lists that are persistently taunting me. I have yet to figure out how to properly tackle them:

Restaurants: This is probably my most frustrating to-do list. I love eating out and trying new things. I have a list of places I want to try - some come from recommendations and reviews, others come from watching the Best Thing I Ever Ate and Chicago's Best. Here is why this list is so frustrating - it grows exponentially but I never seem to cross anything off. Why? The list resides in my head (and online for the shows) but when I get the opportunity to go out, I always seem to fall into the trap of "where should we go?" and NEVER think at that time to cross an item off the list. Ugh. At this stage I am going to have to take a day and eat pork rinds at Publican, french fries fried in duck fat at Hot Doug's, Peking duck at Sun Wah, and a pizza at Great Lakes all at once.

Chicago Stuff: I live in a great city where there are wonderful things to do. Why is it that when I think about it, I can list about 10 things I would love to do, but when that lazy Sunday comes around and I want to get out of the house, I cannot remember to go to Maxwell Street Market or the French Market or when the weather gets nice, head out to Starved Rock to go hiking?

Travel: I don't know if this is technically a to-do list. If it were up to me, we would travel the world and visit every nook and cranny. But the real world gets in the way of that. Instead, Dan and I spend some evenings drinking wine and adding to, re-prioritizing and figuring out what should be at the top of our list. Unfortunately the last thing that was crossed off our list of new places to visit was our road trip in 2007, but we look forward to the next time we can tackle this list.

So, I may be able to get from day to day with my to do lists. But the bigger things - who knows. Is there an app for that?

March 30, 2011

Thank you Reading Rainbow...

...for creating such a wonderful show that sparked a passion for reading in so many young minds. There is a commercial out now for yogurt that has a deep voice talking about "plain". Every time I hear it I am transported back to my childhood watching the episode where James Earl Jones read Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain. I remember it vividly and think that I prefer him being the voice of this book versus the voice of Darth Vader.

So as I take that trip down memory lane, I did some research on the show. Growing up, I always thought of Reading Rainbow as mine. I didn't think there was anyone else in my town that watched it - and I loved thinking that. However, I now know this could not have been true. This show is the third-longest running children's series in PBS history, after Mister Rogers' Neighborhood and Sesame Street. And it won a Peabody Award and twenty-six Emmy Awards. They could not have done that with just one viewer in Council Bluffs.

There have been rumors that the show is being reworked and will go back into production. I hope that these rumors are true, but hope they don't change too much about it. It had a winning formula. You could go anywhere. There were friends to know and ways to grow. You could be anything, if you just took a look, in a book.

But you don't have to take my word for it.

March 31, 2011

Thank you Denny kids...

...for being such wonderful friends and mentors to Charlie. Mary and Sarah have taught her how to be a big girl. I just witnessed Mary giving a life lessons to Charlie and I couldn't be more proud.

Margaret and Matthew have taught her how big kids pee on the potty and have played a wonderful role in teaching her how to play nicely with others.

As an only child I am so grateful that she gets the essence of siblings through the Denny family.

April 1, 2011

Thank you family day...

...for allowing me to watch Dan and Charlie interact with each other all day. At times they seem to live in their own little world, with their own jokes, their own games and their own language. They make me smile. I know Dan never planned to be the primary parent, but I am so glad he is. I don't know if I could raise her quite the way he does.

April 2, 2011

Thank you U.S. Cellular...

...for creating the Belief Project that allowed me to collect points and upgrade my phone early. I have hated my phone since the moment I got it. Unfortunately I did not return it within the 30-day timeframe because I thought it would grow on me. It did not and it has plagued me ever since. Until today. I just cashed in my points and got a new phone. I am a very happy customer.

April 3, 2011

Thank you cool side of the pillow...

...for making relaxation flow through my body the moment my cheek makes contact. Seriously, there is nothing better after being awoken in the middle of the night than rolling over, flipping the pillow, and settling back into the luxury of being all snug in bed. That feeling is calling me now, so I bid you adieu.

April 4, 2011

Thank you indoor plumbing...

...for being the unsung hero of current construction. Everyone always says we need to be thankful for all the little things we take for granted each day. How about we be thankful for the big things in life we take for granted. When was the last time you were thankful that you don't have to use an outhouse, that you have hot water in the shower, or that you even have a shower? So thank you indoor plumbing for making life so much better without flaunting it.

April 5, 2011

Thank you Carrie Whalen...

...for teaching me about the power of three. Carrie is a kick-ass writer by trade and, whether she knows it or not, is also a great teacher on the subject. Her professional calling is advertising copywriting, so she is always explaining and justifying why she wrote what she wrote. It may be an unfortunate aspect of her job, but it is very fortunate to those around her who listen to her rationale.

Many years ago she was explaining to me that while the client may want to cut one of the things listed as a benefit statement in a sentence, she wouldn't do it because if you list out three things instead of two it flows better. It's the power of three. I think about that every time I write and am listing off examples of things. It never stops at two. You always go to three. It does flow better.

So thank you Carrie for taking the time to explain things. And to those of you that are reading this, make sure you pay attention to everything that is told to you, regardless of its context. The person saying it may not think they are providing a life lesson, but if you listen you might just learn something.

XXFF

April 6, 2011

Thank you small businesses...

...for keeping the dream alive and not giving up. Within the past couple of months I have started to see more and more notices go up for new independent businesses opening in the neighborhood. This is a wonderful news, especially as more and more big businesses are declaring bankruptcy.

When we started this recession, there was a part of me that thought that some of this may actually be a good thing. Hear me out, the housing crisis and loss of jobs - bad thing. But to some extent American society had way too many options available to them. Gluttony started to take over. Do we need that many different cars? Do we need to have two different Walgreen's or Starbuck's five blocks

away from each other? So maybe it is a good thing that some of those big guys had to scale back a bit.

Also, we have become a society of workaholics that seem to all hate their jobs. So maybe the new business openings are a sign that people have had enough and are ready to take matters into their own hands.

Or maybe this is me just trying to find the positive in all the negative that has been happening. Either way, I look forward to trying out these new businesses and helping them thrive.

April 7, 2011

Thank you Kindle...

... for saving my back. I love reading on the train. It provides the perfect way to turn my head on in the morning and turn my head off at night. But lugging a book to and from the office - and sometimes to and from the grocery store because I forgot to take it out of my bag - that is a pain. Literally.

I love how light and little my Kindle is. I can shlep it wherever I go without the need to schedule an appointment with the chiropractor.

April 8, 2011

Thank you umbrellas...

...for attempting to provide shelter from the storm. I just had a miserable commute to the train. It was cold, windy, and the spitting rain was just pelting objects with vengeance.

So I took out my umbrella, as most people do when it is raining. Well, I can definitely thank my umbrella for keeping my head and shoulders dry. As for everything else, I should be thankful that clothes eventually dry.

April 9, 2011

Thank you naptime...

...for providing a moment to recharge. The wonders of naptime can come in two forms. First, for a parent, naptime is that glorious time midday when you get to have a moment to yourself. You can use that time to be really productive and cross things off your to-do list; to check out for a bit and clean out on your DVR; or simply go to the bathroom in private.

The second wonder of naptime comes when as an adult you can take a nap. I really think I need to move to a country that embraces the siesta. Think of how pleasant a child is after their nap. They are well rested and ready to tackle the rest of the day. Now think how you feel around 3:00 in afternoon. Wouldn't it be nice if 3:00p.m. felt like 9:00a.m.? Naps should not be reserved for just kids. Adults need naps too.

April 10, 2011

Thank you spring breezes...

...for blowing the stench of winter out of our homes, hair and souls. I love the first days of spring. They transport me back to my college days. The days when you get done with class (or, ahem, skipped class) and all across campus you saw people tossing the Frisbee or laying in the grass just loving life. There were always those crazy guys that although it was barely breaking 70 degrees would have busted out the shorts, sandals, and no-shirt motif. But it was okay - it was spring.

In the car today, we rolled down the windows. At one point I looked back at Charlie - her sunglasses on, eyes closed, head tilted back, absorbing every bit of sunshine and breeze coming through the window. It made me smile and do the same thing.

April 11, 2011

Thank you Boogers...

...for providing a rock-n-roll alternative for kids music. Regardless of the message we receive from Congress, music and art are critical to the development of young minds.

I am always on the lookout for new ways to expose the little ones in my life to creative culture. Until we found the Boogers our options for seeing live kids music was relegated to bubble gum pop music and cheesy sing alongs with people in costume.

The Boogers are three guys who hail from the days of punk rock, have grown up, had kids of their own, and realized kids music sucked. They claim to be anti-Barney and the Wiggles worst nightmare. I like to claim they just rock.

So thank you Boogers for saying, "No more" and providing a concert everyone can enjoy.

April 12, 2011

Thank you date night...

...for allowing parents to reconnect with each other. All the parenting books tell you the same thing - good parents are happy parents. And what makes happy parents? The ability to take time for yourself every now and then. This means taking time to go to the gym...get that pedicure...go shopping by yourself. Simply stated - take time to do the things you did before you had a kid.

One of the things Dan and I relished before Charlie was date night. Now let me define date night. It is not "let's grab dinner". It is not "let's open a bottle of wine". Those things are great, but date night is about making the evening special. Go to a new restaurant. Order a special bottle of wine. Get dressed up. It elevates the evening and makes it an event - an event that celebrates each other.

I love date night. It rekindles the strength of our relationship. We talk about our goals, our desires, and our dreams - not the goals, desires and dreams we have for the babe. It allows us to be people, not parents. Thank you date night and thank you Jaime for babysitting so we could have our date night. I hope there are many more in our future.

April 13, 2011

Thank you Groupon...

...for being so kick ass. What a great concept. Businesses get traffic they never would have received while consumers get a great deal. This is a company that has figured out how consumers work. They want to feel like they are part of a group. They want to feel like they are getting the best bang for their buck. They want to experience new things. Groupon does all those things.

I heart Groupon. What is better than seeing your dinner bill come in at \$15 because you were smart enough to spend \$10 weeks earlier to get \$40 off.

April 14, 2011

Thank you laughter...

...for opening a soul and allowing a flood of emotion to be released. Laughter can come in so many forms and effect you in so many ways. Think of all the varieties of laughter:

When your baby first giggles

When a nervous chuckle breaks the tension

When your laughter turns to a cackle (one of my favorite lines in Reality Bites)

When you get laughing so hard or it catches you so off guard, you pee a little

When laughter goes too far and you can't stop, even though you try really hard to be serious, but all that does is make you laugh again

When your laugh goes silent and all you are doing is shaking and gasping for breath

Laughter is wonderful. And think about this, laughter is the same in any language. Actually, no language is even needed in order to laugh. It is one common denominator in all of us.

April 15, 2011

Thank you birthday cakes...

...for providing a fun celebration. I think people should bust out a birthday cake a few times a year - regardless if there is a birthday or not.

Now notice I did not say have a cake multiple times. It has to be a birthday cake. With candles. With singing Happy Birthday. It is just a fun tradition.

Don't believe me? Stick a candle in something tonight and sing a song. It will put a smile on your face. I promise.

April 16, 2011

Thank you to people to wait...

...for you to walk in your door before driving away. This was something my dad taught me when I was growing up. If you are dropping someone off, you make sure they get inside before driving away. It is just common courtesy.

This goes along with holding the door open for those behind you. Not honking the horn to notify someone you have arrived - the neighborhood does not need to know you are here to pick up your friend. And saying excuse me if you need to pass by someone.

Thank you to people who believe it is necessary to watch out for others and not just themselves.

April 17, 2011

Thank you bed time...

...that is all. I am thankful I can go to bed now.

April 18, 2011

Thank you Chicago weather...

...for keeping us on our toes. Two weeks ago we had 80 degrees. This morning we woke up to snow. Really. A blanket of snow covered the ground.

So instead of complaining about it, I say, "thank you randomness of weather for reminding us that there are just some things in life that are out of our control no matter how hard we try to reign it in."

April 19, 2011

Thank you Yahoo home page...

...for keeping me updated on random 'news' stories. I have to admit, I am a sucker for the Yahoo news feed. You can learn a variety of things from the effects of the oil spill a year later, to the best snacks to eat when dieting, to the best way to save for your retirement. These articles are a great pastime. They all try to disguise themselves as newsworthy but mostly they are based on pure entertainment value. However, I still find myself reading them - looking for that morsel of information I can use later.

April 20, 2011

Thank you cleaning people...

...for putting things back in their place and allowing me to start fresh every day. I don't think people give the cleaning staff enough credit, especially in large office buildings. Let's face it - corporate Americans are slobs. I shudder to think what our office space would look like after just one week without a cleaning crew. Actually, it would probably look kind of scuzzy after just one day of not cleaning. And I am sure if the cleaning crew did not show up, people would complain about it, but it would take at least another week for most of them to consider actually picking up after themselves.

So kudos to the cleaning crew for cleaning up our mess and for coming back every night to do it again. I wish we were a society that did not rely so heavily on you, but we are, so please know we appreciate what you do.

April 21, 2011

Thank you people who tell the truth...

...instead of lying to make a buck. I know I am suppose to use this space to be positive, so I need to somehow spin recent events into a positive light. I have been reading about the Three Cups of Tea author Greg Mortenson and it really makes my blood boil. Are people really this vain? Do they think they won't get caught? Do they not remember the name James Frey?

And Mortenson did so much worse. Not only did he lie in a book to sell millions, he set up a charity that made millions and did not strive to achieve what it set out to do. He provided hope; a glimpse of what could be if you tried; a ray of light within all the negativity that surrounds us. And now that sanctity is shattered as we find out it was all lies.

My ray of hope is that 60 Minutes is wrong. But from what I have seen that has transpired since Sunday, I am doubting that. But here's to hoping.

To my fellow writers -- Stay true. Don't sell out. If you want to write something in first person that is not about you, do so. Just call it fiction.

To my fellow do-gooders -- Remember why you are a do-gooder. It is for other people. Your benefit comes from knowing you made someone else's life a bit better, not your own.

April 22, 2011

Thank you sunroofs...

...for allowing us to connect with the rest of the world while remaining safely in our own. This morning as I was walking to work, the wind was ferociously whipping my hair about. It made me recall a night many years ago down in Southern Illinois.

Dan and I were visiting our good friends Will, Sarah, and Adam. Dan and I loved these trips. The three of them usually had a house on the outskirts of town so when we visited, the weekend was all about the 5 of us hanging out. We didn't have to do anything, except enjoy each other.

One night we did leave the house for dinner. On the ride back Sarah and I opened the sunroof, stood up, and let the wind of the country roads wash over us. It was one of those Ahhh moments. We may have just been crazy kids, but I thank that sunroof for providing that experience and fond memory.

April 23, 2011

Thank you Wizard of Oz...

...for being the movie that brought families together year after year. Growing up, there was no such thing as a movie channel, or On Demand, or even the thought of owning a copy of a movie. When I was little we waited until the one night in spring when one of the network channels would air Wizard of Oz. It was a highly publicized event because this was the only time every year that we could see this movie.

We made this night a special family event. We watched the movie in the den - a room that was off my parent's bedroom - a room that was, in itself, a special place. We got in our jammies, popped popcorn and rooted for Dorothy to make it back home.

Events like this just don't exist anymore. People's expectations are too high. We have whatever we need at our fingertips, whenever we want it. The idea of waiting for something is unfathomable - even though it is the anticipation that makes it all worthwhile.

April 24, 2011

Thank you lifelong couples...

...for showing us that some things are worth fighting for. I am blessed to be able to say my parents are still together. Many of the couples from my childhood are still together as well. It is wonderful to be surrounded by so many role models.

While I cannot confirm how these couples act in private, I am lead to believe they know how to communicate...they know when to listen, when to push, and when to let go. I am also lead to believe that most of these couples married their best friends. It's these couples that you see from across the room and know they just work.

Marriage is not easy. But if you give it the college try, you are rewarded with many years in the victory lane. Thank you to the couples that showed us the way.

April 25, 2011

Thank you Natalie Spears...

...for being one of the people who inspired this blog. As she was approaching a birthday, she mentioned that she wanted to take the opportunity to look back upon her years, identify a handful of people who had shared their wisdom with her, and write a letter thanking them for the impact they had on her life. I thought this was a wonderful idea - although I thought it would be a hard task to just pick a handful of people.

I also need to thank John Kralik, although I have to say I did not know his name until I started to write today's post. Toward the end of 2010 I heard a quip about a guy who wrote one thank you note a day for a year. I put this together with Natalie's story, my desire to take on a meaningful project that could improve my state of mind... and voila, here we are.

I am four months in and my handful of people have yet to be properly thanked. Know that you are on my list, I just need time to properly craft those entries. You'd think those would be the easy ones, but honestly, they are the hardest.

April 26, 2011

Thank you to the grip of a small child...

...for melting my heart and reminding me of the role I am suppose to play. There is something so sweet about a little hand sliding its way into yours and giving a squeeze. And there is something so primal about little arms and legs wrapping themselves around you and locking on. Now add a little face gazing up at you knowing that you are there to hang on and not let go.

Nothing else matters in the world at that moment. You are the protector. You are the teacher. You are the leader. You are the person who matters most. Thank you for providing me with that brief moment of clarity.

April 27, 2011

Thank you well tailored clothes...

...for completing my transformation into an adult. Recently I went on a shopping trip with my mom and visited two of my former haunts: Ann Taylor and White House Black Market. I use to love shopping here, but in recent years they fell off my radar. Replaced by Target and Marshalls.

When I got home and looked at some of the items that were purchased, it made me realize that I need to clean up my act a bit. These clothes made me feel like I was established, successful, and in my thirties. All glorious things.

This sparked a desire to clean out my closet. Notice that I said clean out, not clean up. One day during nap, I converted my closet into a wardrobe by:

Ridding myself of clothes that don't fit properly, were past their prime, or should have only been worn by a 12 year old.

Coming to terms with the fact that I will never fit into that size 4 dress again unless I can get my butt to the gym and stop drinking wine. Neither of which will happen, so bye-bye dress.

Making room in my closet to properly store clothing in order to make it look better and last longer.

It was very therapeutic and I am grateful I did it. And thank you Mom for buying the two dresses that started the whole thing.

April 28, 2011

Thank you Pure Michigan ads...

...for eloquently depicting the state of mind so many of us long to experience. Every time one of these commercials comes on, I pause what I am doing and listen. The tranquility of Tim Allen's voice, the simplicity of the background music, and the enchantment of what is being described combine to create the most euphoric 60 seconds. I am first struck by these commercials for they reach me as a consumer, a traveler and a dreamer. But then when I put on my writing hat, I am even more impressed. And then I put on my advertising hat and say, "Damn, those spots are gold."

I am particularly thankful for the radio spot Mermaid Tails that I first heard today. For those reading this who may be unfamiliar with this campaign, check it out. You will be thankful you did.

<http://www.michigan.org/Topics/Pure-Michigan-Ads/Default.aspx>

April 29, 2011

Thank you Mike Jelovecky...

...for being that friend who can always be counted on to be brutally honest, but in a productive way. Some of the best, extremely thought provoking, and most poignant conversations I have had in my life have included Mike Jelovecky. We can talk about what ails us, what motivates us, what make our blood boil, and what we honestly want out of life. Nothing is taboo. Nothing is offensive. Nothing

is selfish. Everything is put on the table. No preconceived notions. No condescension. No guilt.

These types of conversations regularly happen with my husband. And I treasure them. But when they happen with Mike, it is a different kind of experience. It is a fresh outlook and a new perspective.

Let me put this into another context. Mike and I had been friends for almost 10 years before he ever asked me, or wanted to know, what I did for a living. Seriously. I knew his passions and some of what he did daily; he knew my passions and what my life goals were - but none of that ever had to do with what we actually did to make a living. Think about the interactions most people have with each other. How many times do the questions, "What do you do?" or "How's work?" come up? Is that really what you want to talk about?

I hope that everyone has the chance to dig deeper in their relationships. There is more to them than what is on the surface. And I am truly thankful Mike and I could find the layer underneath.

April 30, 2011

Thank you April showers...

...for bringing May flowers. Rain clouds have been everywhere recently. So as this month comes to a close, I am hopeful that all the storms will bless us with an abundance of sunshine and flowers this spring.

And what do those May flowers bring? Pilgrims. Tee-hee.

May 1, 2011

Thank you old friends...

...for introducing new friends. I have to admit, once you hit a certain age in life, you are not as keen on meeting new people. That mentality comes largely from, "I have people in my life that I already don't have time to see, I do not need to add more people to that list." But, I have learned that should not hold you back from meeting new people.

When you get older, meeting someone new no longer obligates you to become life long friends with someone. It becomes more socially acceptable to meet someone, have a good time, then say, "see you soon" - and not quantify that soon. You may hope that soon really is soon, but you know that life will get in the way and likely prevent it from happening. And that is okay. They will be around later, and understand.

So thanks to a great night of laughs and good times. And, here's to hoping it really could happen again soon.

May 2, 2011

Thank you US troops...

...for being the epitome of selflessness. In light of events that have transpired over the last 24 hours I feel as though I need to recognize the world of the armed forces. It is a world I know little about because it is a lifestyle I personally would not choose. But I am thankful that there are people out there who do make that choice.

I would like to attempt to understand their thought process. I assume they want to be protectors, they want to be part of something that is bigger than them, and they have a passion for what America originally stood for. I just hope that the American attitude that has developed in recent years does not encourage the wrong people, or dissuade the right people, from enlisting in the future. We do not need more people to think that war can fix any solution, or that killing one person will solve all our problems.

I'd like to be able to say I am thankful to put this whole thing behind us. But I am afraid we really just started it all over again. I am now waiting for the tit to go with that tat. Is there amicable way of calling truce? Probably not, so thank you troops for sticking up for us.

May 3, 2011

Thank you grocery store trips...

...for providing feelings of accomplishment and opportunity. I love going to the grocery store. It stirs my senses and allows my mind to wonder to what could be. There are times when I just need to get the staples. But sometimes I have the luxury of looking around, exploring ideas, and gathering new things.

Then when I get home, I unload all the groceries and get everything in its place. I feel as though I can relax a bit. Sometimes I just stand in my kitchen, open the fridge in awe, and feel like Super Woman. I have provided for my family. I can make whatever is asked for at dinner. I have endless opportunities.

If I had all the time in the world I would go to the store every day to pick out things to prepare that evening. But really, who has that kind of time on their hands? So I am thankful for the days that come every few weeks when I can at least select what is on the docket for a handful of dinners and get excited about it.

May 4, 2011

Thank you time outs...

...for providing a moment to reflect on the situation. Think about why they work for kids. It provides them time to settle down, think about what they just did, and start to come to their own conclusion to the cause and effect equation.

Time outs are beneficial to adults as well. When something unexpectedly crosses your path, it does wonders to take a deep breath before reacting. When things get overwhelming, you regain focus if you take a few moments to reflect on your priorities. And after a big ordeal, adults too, need to take time to settle down, think about what they have done, and put things into perspective.

Thank you parenting for reminding me of the life lesson to slow down and take a time out.

May 5, 2011

Thank you civil servants...

...for having the courage to lead while knowing your followers may not want your leadership. It must be difficult to wake up in the morning, go to work and make decisions that will piss a lot of people off. You attempt to do the right thing, analyze the possibilities, and come to the best conclusion. In most jobs, you would get promoted for that kind of work ethic. But not civil servants. That process is not good enough. People expect you to say yes and no at the same time. They demand you to pick their solution. There is never a true, right answer. That's rough.

I commend anyone who has the tenacity to weather through that and come out the other end relatively unscathed. It is yet another career to add to my long list of those I do not wish to have. But I am thankful there are those who do.

May 6, 2011

Thank you city living...

...for allowing me the opportunity to walk to where I need to go. Today Chicago was blessed with about an hour of sunny warm weather. Instead of driving the car, taking a cab, or riding the bus, I decided to walk.

Being in a city provided me with this option. In some smaller cities the thought of walking is not an option. They don't even have sidewalks. I could walk the same distance as I did today but would be thought of as crazy.

So I am thankful that I have the option if I want it.

May 7, 2011

Thank you crack of an aluminum bat...

...for reminding us we were all kids once. I love the sound of an aluminum bat. A wooden bat is nice too but it conjures up a different set of memories. Wooden bats are for adult fun. Aluminum bats are kid fun.

I love watching kids learn to play a sport, understand team dynamics, and the role of a coach. They don't care if they are good. They don't care if they win. They just want to have fun. Play ball!

May 8, 2011

Thank you mothers...

...for all your tireless work. I have a specific thank you reserved for my mom, but that will come later. Today, I want to thank every woman out there who took the leap and became a mother. It may sound cliché, but it is true - being a mom is one of the hardest, yet most rewarding jobs out there.

Mothers are faced with a challenge to overcome every single day. Sometimes those challenges are relatively easy, like what to do when your child repeatedly disregards the "no splashing in the tub" rule and you end up basically taking a bath yourself. Sometimes the challenges are more difficult, like when your mind battles itself over whether you are a good mother.

But mothers are also faced with an abundance of love and gratitude that makes every challenge seem to disappear. A hard day can be forgotten with an unexpected hug, a giant smile and scream of "I did it", or a simple "I love you Mommy" before bed. Thank you moms of the world. Keep up the hard work.

May 9, 2011

Thank you in-unit washers and dryers...

...for their sheer awesomeness. I remember what it was like to have to schedule laundry night. Ugh. I hated that night with a passion. The only good thing about laundry night was that you could get three loads of laundry done at once. But that also meant you had to fold and put away three loads of laundry at once.

I have come to terms with the fact that I hate laundry and I get extremely lethargic about it. So I am very thankful that when a spark of enthusiasm hits, I can do a load of laundry, put it in the dryer - and when the spark is gone an hour later leave it in the dryer until I need whatever is in there. It is not uncommon in our house to witness me going into the dryer to pull out a clean pair of undies and finish dressing with whatever is left in my closet. Or that Dan (who is very diligent about his laundry) moves my clean, dry laundry into a hamper, do his laundry, just to have me put my clean, dry laundry back in the dryer for safe keeping.

I probably just shared too much about myself, but there you have it. People sometimes joke that they would like to have two dishwashers and no cabinets, so they can take clean dishes from one and put the dirty into the other. Well, I could use two stackables, so I can take clean clothes from one dryer and add them into the washer of the next. Is that bad? Nawh. I'm just thankful I that my one in-unit washer and dryer can support my bad habits.

May 10, 2011

Thank you NKOTB...

...for being my first true crush and holding that special place in my heart that can never be replaced. I love my husband dearly but if Joe McIntyre would cross me in the street tomorrow, there would be a fleeting moment that I would question my loyalty.

I will always love the New Kids. I will follow their lives forever. Maybe it is because my next real love after them was my hubby or maybe it's something that will always connect me to my adolescence. Either way, I am thankful the NKOTB are a part of my life.

May 11, 2011

Thank you kids songs...

...for making it as easy as clapping your hands to let people know you are happy (and you know it). Tonight I clap my hands to let everyone know it.

May 12, 2011

Thank you John Hughes...

...for making some of the best movies of all time. He perfected the dramatic comedy. He found the right mix of teenage angst, self-discovery, challenge adversity, and puppy love. His themes are not preachy, but provide a pleasant reminder of the life lessons that allowed us all to survive high school. The movies may have been made in the eighties, but they are timeless because they are so simple and relatable.

We can all be thankful to John Hughes for teaching us:

Never let your grandparents answer your phone, and the average girl can get the popular guy. (Sixteen Candles)

The love of your life could be standing right by your side all along. (Some Kind of Wonderful)

Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it. (Ferris Bueller)

Never, ever ditch your friend for a boy. (Pretty in Pink)

Just because you don't fit the mold, it does not mean you are less of a person. (Weird Science)

Don't stop yourself from meeting someone just because they are different or what your friends may think. Make your own judgment. Because a brain, a beauty, a jock, a rebel and a recluse can all get along. (Breakfast Club)

Here's to finding one of these movies on cable late at night. You know you will watch it - even with commercials - and laugh at all the right parts, quote all the best lines and cheer for the hero to come out on top.

May 13, 2011

Thank you minor holidays...

...for giving people a random reason to celebrate. Although I did not do anything special for this Friday the 13th, I can recall times in my past (particularly in college) when that day meant going to the video store and trying to beat everyone else to the copies of Friday the 13th. Usually we were too late in our planning and had to settle for Nightmare on Elm Street or Halloween, but it still meant we gathered with friends for an impromptu party.

It is always good to have a reason to get together. Sometimes we just get too caught up in life and we need a reason to stop, gather our friends and celebrate. So who wants to get together for National Talk Like a Pirate Day? ARG. (It's September 19th, by the way.)

May 14, 2011

Thank you professional photographers...

...for capturing a moment that will last forever. Like so many other people, I like to claim to be a photographer. I have always loved to take pictures, and have captured my fair share of great moments. But it's when you see that one great shot taken by someone who knows what they are doing, you realize that is why they get paid to take pictures and you don't.

May 15, 2011

Thank you Denny family...

...for everything. Where do I begin? How about at the beginning...

Thank you for allowing a musician to stay at the studio long after his welcome in order to develop his talent as an engineer and create a new career.

Thank you for welcoming said musician's wife into your personal life, pushing her time and time again to join you until finally she felt as though she had been there the whole time.

Thank you for having the most wonderful kids, who made me start to understand motherhood well before I actually became a mother due to their unconditional love - and screams of delight when I come through the door.

Thank you for everything you did (and still do) to help stock our home with everything our little girl needs.

Thank you for ensuring Dan received the best care possible, as quickly as possible, last October.

Thank you for inventing The Challenge and serving up The Challenge whenever it is needed - and sometimes even when it is not so needed.

Thank you for watching Charlie whenever we can't find a sitter or for volunteering to do it before we even start to find a sitter.

Thank you for being our best friends, and often our partners in crime.

Thank you for becoming our Chicago family.

May 16, 2011

Thank you text messaging...

...for providing an anti-phone person a great way to keep in touch. I have never been a fan of talking on the phone. Even in high school I broke the mold of "all girls do is spend their evenings talking on the phone". I definitely talked more then than I do now, but I never thought I was on par with the stereotype.

I am a listener. I don't mind awkward pauses in the conversation. I only like talking about myself when I know the other person is fully engaged. I need to connect by looking someone in the eye, interpreting their body language, and listening to the inflection of their voice. All these things are not easily done over the phone.

I would much rather talk in person. But I realize this is not always practical. So when I need to share interesting tidbits, or check in on friends, or simply let someone know that I am thinking about them and long for a chance for us to talk face to face - it is nice to have a text messaging option. Some people think text messaging is impersonal, but if used in the right way, it can provide a connection that may have never happened otherwise.

May 17, 2011

Thank you Oprah...

...for working your ass off and being able to reap the rewards. Tonight Oprah is taping her Farewell Ex-traaaa-va-GAAAANNN-za. I had a very slim chance of being able to attend and took the shot. It fell through, but it allowed me the opportunity to meet some family members of a good friend, thus making it worthwhile. And my philosophy was - might as well try and fail, than not try and find out tomorrow that we could have succeeded if we would have tried.

But, back to Oprah. I grew up when Donahue ruled the daytime talk show circuit, Sally was a close second, and Oprah was trying to carve her way. I give her props for keeping at it. She was not polished, she did not come from a privileged background, and she did not put too much emphasis on impressing people. This made her relatable to so many people, and thus allowed her to become so damn popular.

Some people may dismiss her for what she has become. Some may be upset because she is not sharing her wealth directly with them. Some may be upset because so many people follow her guidance, thus giving her more power than they think she deserves. But I challenge them to look at it a different way. She worked her ass off to make something of herself and she actually succeeded. She gives back and uses her power to make good things happen. Who cares if she is controlling and bitchy? Who cares if the person she exudes on stage is not the person she is backstage? This is what made her successful, and frankly, she does not owe anyone anything.

As her reign in Chicago comes to an end, I want to take the opportunity to thank Oprah. Thank you for being a strong, determined woman who refused to fail. And thank you for doing what one person can to give back to the society who helped you.

May 18, 2011

Thank you Garrett Popcorn Shop...

...for making the most wonderful food ever made. It is the one food I know of that everyone likes. I've never witnessed someone try Garrett's popcorn and say, "Meh, that's okay." Nor have I heard someone say, "I'm not a fan of Garrett's". There is universal acceptance - and that rarely happens.

I also want to thank Garrett's for creating a wonderful family moment. Last night I splurged and brought home a bag of cheesy goodness. After dinner we told Charlie we had a surprise treat for her. She spent the next 20 minutes taking turns feeding herself a kernel then feeding one to Dan.

This struck me because, one, I've never seen her sit still at the dinner table for that long. And second, I witnessed how much that little girl loves her Daddy. I may have to buy popcorn more often.

May 19, 2011

Thank you white noise...

...for drowning out the rest of the world and creating a land of tranquility. Sleeping with a fan is just bliss. You don't hear the cats wrestling outside the bedroom door, the garbage truck at 5am, or the neighbors coming home. It is just the peaceful hum of the fan. Thank you for allowing me years of uninterrupted sleep (or at least sleep that is uninterrupted by random noises.)

May 20, 2011

Thank you phone battery...

...for dying, thus requiring me to charge it...then leave it on the counter when I left the house. This morning I got to my meeting early, planning to check messages and drink my coffee. Alas, no phone and no means of connecting with anyone or anything. No checking emails, voicemails, or surfing online.

I have to admit, I was antsy for a moment. But then I told myself, "It is 20 freaking minutes. You can disconnect for 20 minutes even if it is during the productive, morning work hours". It was liberating. It made me think about what it was like to conduct business 15 years ago - before the internet, before email, before it was normal for everyone to have a cell phone. Seriously, it has only been 15 years since the birth of ultimately connectivity - and a part of me thinks the last 15 years has been the slow demise of society.

Believe me, there are good things about technological advances. But the fact that we feel as though we need to be connected at all times - that has gotten out of hand. So I recommend that everyone "forgets" their cell phone once in awhile. There may be the initial urge to check email, go on Facebook, or send a text. But as soon as the realization hits that those things aren't possible - a sigh of relief and relaxation occurs. And everyone should have the opportunity to experience that feeling and be thankful.

May 21, 2011

Thank you powers that be...

...for not ending the world today. That's about it. Just pretty thankful the rapture, Armageddon, or anything else of biblical proportions didn't happen.

May 22, 2011

Thank you Sesame Street...

...for being relatable to kids, but also to adults. It may sound odd to have fond memories of a TV show, but there are segments from Sesame Street that I will always remember: the trip to the crayon factory, going through the car wash, and the cartoon pinball: onetwothreefourfive sixseveneightnineten eleven twelheyheyheyheylve. When these segments were played in a recent episode, I got really excited and paid closer attention to the TV than Charlie did.

This show understands that although their primary audience are preschoolers, their original audience are the preschoolers' parents. There is the allure that

Gordon, Maria, Luis and Bob are still on the show. As is the deaf woman - however I cannot remember her name and wish she was on more to teach sign language.

And I enjoy watching with Charlie just to see who will be a guest star. She sees a funny episode of Wild Nature Survivor Guy - I see Jimmy Fallon being a goof. She sees Sarah Jessica Parker talking with Grover about waiting for Big (Bird) - I commend the writers for connecting the story lines. She sees Elmo trying to hear a lullaby - I witness a very funny sketch with Ricky Gervais.

This creates a cycle that will allow the show to go on forever. I loved the show and love to watch it with Charlie. Charlie loves the show and hopefully she will love to watch it with her kids. Thank you Sesame Street for the old memories, the new memories and the memories yet to come.

May 23, 2011

Thank you high heels...

...for making me feel put together from the moment I slip them on. Clothes transform into an outfit when you put on the right shoes - and those shoes are not flat. Don't get me wrong flats, flip-flops, and sneakers are tops in my book for the casual day. But when I want to feel like an adult or want to feel special, I put on the heels. I immediately feel better about myself. Now I just need the balls of my feet to feel better at the end of the day. Oh, hello slippers.

May 24, 2011

Thank you dawn...

...for the tranquility it provides. This morning I arose before my family to go for a lakeside bike ride. The city was so quiet; the sun was coming up over the water; and I was alone with my thoughts. Once I got past the thought that I am out of shape, I was able to focus my thoughts on all the good things in my life. When the sun is shining, the sky is blue, and you are breathing crisp morning air it is difficult to hold on to negativity.

I have a great husband - and I know I will get to see more of him soon.

I have a daughter who is becoming a wonderfully balanced mini human being - and although I don't get to spend every day with her, I do see her enough to witness the transformation.

I have a good job - and it allows me provide for my family and maintain a proper work/live balance.

I have a supportive family - and they know I love them even though we don't talk all the time.

I have a treasure chest of friends - and I know I can call on any of them to be at my side in a moment's notice.

Life really is good.

May 25, 2011

Thank you to the roof over my head...

...that you are still there. I would like to think that because I grew up near tornado alley, I understand what it is like to live through a tornado. Granted, growing up I knew the difference between a watch and a warning; I witnessed the calm before a storm; I saw the damage that occurred when a tornado traveled down the main street of a town. However I have never truly felt the after effects of what a storm like that can have. Our house had some downed trees; those trees came close to hitting the house; but they never took away part of our home. They never ripped apart every piece of our belongings. They never scattered our lives across town. They never took the roof from over our heads.

My heart goes out to the people of the most recent disaster, as well as those that came before them.

And I am thankful that I do not have to personally experience their devastation, as well as thankful that I can help.

May 26, 2011

Thank you long holiday weekends...

...for creating the feeling of a mini vacation without having to schedule time off. Three-day weekends feel like a more natural progression from a workweek. I would love to be able to wave my magic wand and make workweeks four days long. I really think people could be more productive if they were forced to do all their work within four days. Then you have three days to decompress before having to go back to do it all again. I am thankful a long weekend starts tomorrow - and I will have time to properly unwind from everything.

May 27, 2011

Thank you proper apologies...

...for acknowledging a foul in an attempt to prevent it from happening again. It is one thing to say you are sorry. It is another to mean it. We teach our kids to say sorry for hitting. We say sorry when we bump into someone on the street. These quick sorry's are needed, but not the focus of today's thank you.

The sorry I am talking about is the one that comes after you have realized that you have wronged someone, you have not followed through on a promise or have let someone down. I am a person who is sensitive to these things, so I do my best to not put myself into a situation where I have to apologize. But on those instances when it does happen, it rests heavily on my mind. So I am thankful I have the opportunity to make things right.

May 28, 2011

Thank you Tony Jones and Company...

...in association with Muffin Man Productions. When Dan and his buddies were in high school, their favorite past time was dreaming up, writing, performing and filming short skits. They have hours worth of footage. Some really funny stuff. Some not-so funny stuff. The thing I really admire about their material is that they didn't care what other people thought. They were doing it for themselves - not for a larger audience. True, if a skit turned out really well, they would play it for others. But that is where it stopped. They weren't out to be famous or make a career of it. They wanted to pass time and have some laughs.

We didn't have blogs, You Tube or Facebook. But I wonder if we did, would they have done things differently? Would they have their own channel? Would they write material for the masses? Who knows. I am just thankful that Andy never found his merry men, that the Sweet Pickles driver never got a DUI, and that Clayton got onto that Highway of Life. Here's to you Blue Guy.

May 29, 2011

Thank you New Orleans...

...for being the place for good food, good drinks and good times. Tonight I was reminded of my trip to New Orleans by a friend who introduced me to a crawfish boil and Strawberry Abita beer. Oh. My. Gosh. Is this combination wonderful.

So this culinary adventure reminded me of our road trip we took many years ago. We hit Memphis, Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Nashville. I find that Dan and I spend so much time dreaming of the trips we want to take, but never follow through. This road trip was one in which we did follow through - and created

some of the best memories we have had as a couple. We met many of the locals and let the trip guide us instead of sticking with a strict schedule.

Sometimes you need to just take the leap and not worry about it. As another friend mentioned tonight - you need to just book that trip you want to take and worry about the logistics later. If you keep waiting until just the right time - you will never find it. Tonight I am thankful we did follow through with trip one. Now it is time to set trip two.

May 30, 2011

Thank you friends with kids...

...for altering the party dynamic in our favor. I believe our group of friends has finally crossed over the line and ascended to the other side. The side where kids come to parties and no one bats an eye.

There are times when I view our little crew and still see us in our twenties - an age where the thought of a kid at a party was definitely a downer. So when the invites come through, I fight an internal battle: do we bring Charlie or not? I don't want to be "that parent" but I also know our friends would be cool with her.

As of yesterday, I believe my internal battle is over. At the party there were three little girls running about together, with another little girl about a year away from joining them. This is who we are now. There is no denying that we are parents. Kids just come with the invitation. But I also know there will be evenings in the future where all us parents demand an "adults only" party. And I am thankful we can have both.

May 31, 2011

Thank you anticipation...

...for giving me something to look forward to. I have read lately that to reduce stress and increase vitality, you just need to have a bit of anticipation. They (whoever "they" are) say your body relaxes just by acknowledging it will be 5:00 soon. Or that you are going to try that new restaurant tomorrow. Or that your vacation is right around the corner.

I am thankful that my summer is dotted with bits and pieces of things to anticipate.

June 1, 2011

Thank you for my health...

...because really that is all you have. We hear it all the time, "at least you have your health". This comment is meant to make you feel better; to put your current situation in perspective; to make you think things could be worse. But how many of us have acknowledged our good health when everything is fine? I am thankful I have my health and can tackle any challenge put in front of me.

June 2, 2011

Thank you Conan...

...for providing a little piece of funny late at night. It is rare that I am up long enough to watch a whole episode of Conan. But when I do, I am always impressed. Thanks for the laughs. They were needed.

June 3, 2011

Thank you phone...

...for being in my purse. I have been thankful for forgetting my phone in the past. But today I really needed to have it with me. When I grabbed coffee this morning, I realized my phone was not where it should have been in my purse. I swore like a sailor for about five minutes and then started to figure out a work around.

But then I had to look one more time. Searching every nook and cranny. Telling myself it just had to be there. And, ta-da, found it. I have not felt a moment of relief such as that in while. Thank you little electronic gadget for making life a bit easier today.

June 4, 2011

Thank you English people...

...for having some of the best words to add to the English language, Honestly, I am considering to pretend to be English today just so I can say, "Bloody Hell." Or, more accurately, "Bluh-ee ell".

And I want to call people "Bloaks" or "Cheeky Bastards". These words just bring a smile to my face and you can't get away with using them without an accent. Maybe it's partly the accent that makes it fun. Who knows. I just like it.

So if you see me today, sorry if I call you a "Wanker" for no apparent reason. I just want to giggle to myself for a bit.

June 5, 2011

Thank you click of an air hockey puck...

...for allowing me to recall some of Dan and my's first years together. We were in high school and we needed things to do when we went out. So we kept it simple. We went to the playground. We cruised the streets. And we played air hockey.

It was a good sport to play against each other because my lack of athletic ability and Dan's abundance of it didn't matter. We were pretty evenly matched. Our battles were fierce, but it was also such a great learning experience. It allowed both of us to see each other's competitive nature. We could test the boundaries, identify each other's buttons and how hard they could be pushed. And we could both take our turn at being the gracious loser.

Thank you air hockey for letting me know early on that Dan and I make a good match.

June 6, 2011

Thank you starry nights...

...for providing something glorious, and somewhat overpowering, to stare up at in the middle of the night. Living the city I sometimes forget what a clear, starry night looks like. It is breath taking. And when you actually stop to think about it, it makes you realize our place in the larger picture. You never get that feeling when you look up at the sky during the day. You see the clouds, the blue landscape, the sun. It takes the night sky, and all the stars, to put it all into perspective. We are part of something bigger than us.

And tonight as I stare up into the sky, I recall a wonderful evening I had years ago. Amangie had come to be and the Michel family invited me to join them at their house in the Adirondacks. While we were there, a meteor shower occurred. We all laid on blankets in the yard and watched the countless shooting stars overhead. There were Ohh's and Ahh's, and endless wishes made. It was something that I will always remember and something I will always be thankful to Amanda for allowing me to participate.

June 7, 2011

Thank you campfires...

...for being the epitome of vacation and friends. I could wax poetic about campfires all night...the hypnotic lapping of flames and the crackle of wood. But tonight I am simply going to thank campfires for pulling everyone away from the TV and stoking great conversation.

June 8, 2011

Thank you extended Quinn family...

...for going above and beyond to make our vacation wonderful and making us feel like your extended family too.

Thank you Mike and Joyce for hauling supplies to our house at a moment's notice, and for supplying us with an endless amount of firewood.

Thank you Penny and Glen for delivering our necessities upon our arrival, and for supplying the most fabulous lobster dinner.

Thank you Heidi for taking care of the boys, and for supplying Trey and Marissa as extra sitters for the kids.

Thank you Mary for providing Charlie with the first two crushes of her life, and for supplying the boat for an extra special day of fun.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

June 9, 2011

Thank you preteen literature...

...for providing adventure as a kid and memories of the stories as an adult. As I was playing war tonight I was reminded of a wonderful story I read as a kid, "From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler". I have made reference to this book throughout my life at various points and found that many people have never heard of it, but those who have always recall it fondly as one of their favorites.

It is a great story of a girl who decides to run away to find an adventure, ends up taking her brother because he has a stash of money (won by cheating at the game of war), and spends the night in a museum. What kid does not dream about being at a museum all alone? It just cries adventure. Mischievous behavior leads to a mystery; and thus a great story is born.

I am thankful I embraced reading as a child. My vast imagination and restless soul are thankful for it as well.

June 10, 2011

Thank you proper PJs...

...for lifting my spirits in the evening. When you get ready for bed and put on a PJ set - complete with robe - you feel so much better than when you just put on sweats and a t-shirt. It's like an outfit for sleeping. Now I am not saying you should go as far as wearing something from Frederick's, I mean, a girl's got to be comfortable to sleep. But I am thankful to have an upgrade in the pajama department.

June 11, 2011

Thank you routines...

...for helping get back to 'normal'. Vacations are great, but there is something to be said about coming back to reality, back to your own bed, and back to your own world. Routines put structure to our lives. I enjoyed having a break from that structure, but it made me appreciate the benefits structure can provide.

June 12, 2011

Thank you Joe Dirt...

...for keeping on keeping on.

As ridiculous (ridiculously funny) as this movie is, it has some pretty positive life lessons. A guy classified by society as a loser keeps his optimistic attitude as life keeps pushing him down. He makes everyone he meets feel good about themselves too. Throw in some great one-liners, a mullet wig, and you have got yourself a classic.

Life's a garden. Dig it.

June 13, 2011

Thank you Target...

...for being the coolest store around, even though you cannot get out of there for under \$100. Where else can you visit the \$1 bins, snag a new purse (because, really, they are only \$15), grab beach toys for the kids, pick out new towels AND THEN nab a box of wine (that is pretty darn tasty). I mean, come on.

Yesterday I had the luxury of going to Target...by myself...with no time constraints. It was glorious. I got to just peruse the aisles and see what was new. It made me recall a story my sister told me about going to Target with one of her friends. They made it an event. Her friend's philosophy was to look at all the end caps, because, "if they didn't want me to look at it, they would have put it in the

aisle. They put all the good stuff on the end caps". I have to admit, a few things off those end caps ended up in my cart this time around.

Thanks Target for giving me some me time yesterday, but also being my one-stop-shop when I don't have all the time in the world.

June 14, 2011

Thank you stationary...

...for jumpstarting a stalled writer. I once read that sometimes writers are just people with a fetish for expensive paper. I admit, I fall into this category. But for me it doesn't have to be expensive - it just has to be new and clean. (Although, I am a sucker for a good wedding invitation.)

In the past, every time I thought about getting back into journaling, I went out and bought a new notebook and pen. Now, the thrifty side of me says, "You don't need a new notebook. You have three half-used ones right here. And what's this? They aren't even half used. They only have about 10 pages gone."

But the paper-loving writer in me says, "But those are old and used. I need to start this project fresh. It was the notebook's fault I didn't stick with it. It just didn't feel right. Why would I go back to something that didn't work."

I know that the above statement is false. The notebook was not to blame. And, as I attempt to start this process again, I must take the first step to the road of recovery. I admit that I am addicted to paper, but that old notebook beside me can achieve what it was destined to become. And this time it will.

June 15, 2011

Thank you video...

...for capturing not only a moment of time, but a moment of life. Pictures are wonderful for helping jog your memory of an event. But video can enhance the experience even more. You can hear the excitement in the air, see the activity unfold and properly insert yourself back into the moment. And, in some cases, it can even bring people back to life one more time. Thank you video for making moments live on and on and on.

June 16, 2011

Thank you for nights alone...

...because sometimes it is just what you need. I think one of the many reason Dan and I work so well is that we both want, and need, time to ourselves. Granted, I love family time and if I had my druthers we would have more family time together. But I must admit that if I go too long without a night to myself, I don't feel quite right. I need a night to make the dinner I want to eat. Watch the shows I want to watch. And not speak.

I am thankful I have a family life that allows for me time, Dan time and family time.

June 17, 2011

Thank you polite children...

...and the parents who raise them. I have found that both can be a rare breed, so when I come across a pair in the wild I need to acknowledge them. Thank you for making our future world shine a bit brighter.

June 18, 2011

Thank you pedicures...

...for making a girl feel pretty. I know I could easily slap some polish on my toes and call it a day, but there is something so exemplary about getting a pedicure that I try to keep it on my regular to do list. First off, it is relaxing to have someone rub and massage your feet - and don't even get me started on the chairs. Second, a salon can do a much better job than I could ever dream of doing myself. And third, with so many colors to choose from it just looks so darn pretty. So why would I even entertain the thought of having someone other than a professional do the job?

Thank you Paris Nails for doing such a stellar job for all these years and I look forward to returning to the regular routine.

June 19, 2011

Thank you daddies...

...for doing whatever it takes to take care of your family. Like on Mother's Day I am not going to focus on my own dad today. That will come at another time.

Instead I want to thank all the daddies of the world for everything they do. Particularly those who may not be living the life they had planned, but are living the life their families need.

Thank you for being the best caretakers, the best all hours workers, and the best husbands in the world. You guys rock.

June 20, 2011

Thank you Mondays...

...for kicking off the countdown to the weekend. In general, Mondays get a bad rap. The weekend fun is behind us and we have to put on our grown up hats and walk out the door back into the real world.

Today, I flip that thinking and look at Mondays as the day that starts the build up for the weekend ahead. Like I mentioned in an earlier post, your mood can be lifted if you have something to look forward to. So everyone's mood should be really high on Mondays - because I know everyone is longing for the weekend again.

Who has a case of the Mondays now?

June 21, 2011

Thank you Barb Stock...

...for being one of the most compassionate and thoughtful people I know. When I think about Barb, I get awestruck.

First, she is a matriarch to 14 grandkids, 6 boys, 2 girls, plus all the significant others. Add in Chuck and rest of her family...that is a lot of people to keep track of. And she does it with gusto. Cards come for every birthday, every holiday, and sometimes just because. When care packages arrive, you can tell she took time to really think about the recipient and find gifts specifically for them. I am always amazed at how well she has Charlie pegged - even from 2 states away.

Barb has a way of making everyone she meets feel special, loved, and as though they are the only person that matters. Sometimes I wonder if she keeps a notebook stashed somewhere with all the tidbits of information she collects over the years, because every time I see her she asks about my family or follows up on specific event that has occurred. She remembers everything - and it is because she really listens when she asks a question.

Right now, Barb has a lot on her plate and I hope she knows that she can count on all of us the way we have always counted on her. It is her turn to be taken care of - and to be properly thanked for everything she does.

June 22, 2011

Thank you hide and seek...

...for being a game that can span the ages. As I think about all the games of hide and seek I have played in my life, there are three that will go down as The Greats. And all have a common thread: good company, a rush of adrenalin, and lots of laughing.

1. Carbondale. In the dark. During a thunderstorm. It was one of those picture perfect nights for the game. The house was pitch black and you only had the brief moment during a crack of lightening to orientate yourself and to hope to catch a glimpse of someone moving.

2. Michigan Ave. In our new office space. During a private game night. A group of us decided to break in the new digs in style. I was it. BK was strategically placed on top of a filing cabinet. I passed him multiple times without notice. Finally, he got bored and jumped down from his spot as I passed. He literally made me pee my pants a little - then fall on the floor laughing.

3. Chicago. In our house. During family play time. I will always remember the first night we taught Charlie how to play the game. There are about three good places to hide in our house, so the games went pretty quickly. But she could do it over and over again and be thrilled with the outcome each and every time.

Thank you to a great game that has provided so many great memories.

June 23, 2011

Thank you for one topic...

...leading to another. I just had a wonderfully deep conversation that I never would have imagined to have this evening. And now that it is done, I have to stop and ponder, "how did we even get there?" As I think about it, I can trace it back to one meaningless statement.

It is crazy how one simple topic can lead to another, and another, and another until finally you are bearing your soul...when you thought you were just talking about summer camp.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to dive deeper.

June 24, 2011

Thank you reunions...

... for reconnecting people and allowing them to realize why they became connected in the first place. Tonight I saw some people I have not seen since college - or shortly thereafter - and it was spectacular.

As I prepped for this event, I had been asked if I was excited, nervous, hesitant to see people I had not seen in so long. My reply was, "No. Facebook has ruined any reunion before it even happens. You know what they have been up to. You have seen pictures of their kids."

I have now realized that Facebook has actually made reunions better. Because you know what they have been up to, you can jump right into talking about the things that matter. It allows you to pick up the conversation from where you last left off, without skipping a beat.

The reunion that I went to tonight was also one that I will always treasure attending. It was not one of those events where everyone was trying to impress each other. It was one where we realized we are all true friends and were able to be honest with each other. It was comforting to know that these women whom I respect, adore, and hold in high regard feel the same heartache, frustration, and pride that I do.

Thank you Brooke and Allison for making it all happen.

June 25, 2011

Thank you deja vu...

...for reminding us that we are all connected in some way, shape, or form. This weekend has been filled with conversations that have spanned people, places, events, and topics...but all looped back to each other piece by piece.

It honestly makes you realize how small the world really is.

June 26, 2011

Thank you clean sheets...

...for wrapping us in a wonderful cocoon of freshness. Sliding into fresh sheets is such a comforting feeling. While some things - like your favorite jeans - are better once they are worn in, sheets are the opposite. The crisper the better. And when

they still have a firm grasp on the smell of the dryer sheet, it is even better.
Thank you clean sheets for allowing us to relax knowing that all is as it should be.

June 27, 2011

Thank you to this day being done...

...and being able to put this one behind me and move on.

June 28, 2011

Thank you dollar store...

...for being a diamond in the rough. I remember when I was little and the first dollar store came to the mall. The running joke was to ask how much something cost. The clerk would yell, "Price check" and the employees would respond, "Everything's a dollar." My frugal self was in heaven.

I forgot about the glories of the dollar store until I recently visited one again. There is a lot of stuff in there - and stuff that I would normally buy elsewhere for more than a dollar. It is like having a mini-Target on the cheap. Okay, that may be a stretch, but still. I am thankful I visited this dollar store again. I have a feeling I will be back.

June 29, 2011

Thank you HUB...

...for creating a station dedicated to classic reruns. And this isn't the channel for Andy Griffith or even Rosanne. It is for the true 80's classics you can't find on regular rerun TV. This is where you go to find:

- Doogie Howser, M.D (If he were to post his diary entries he would have become the first blogger in history. I would have followed him.)

- Wonder Years (I felt like I grew up with Kevin. And my real life best friend is Winnie Cooper's twin.)

- Jem (She is truly outrageous. Truly, truly, truly outrageous.)

- Fraggle Rock (I mean really, this show was awesome. Gobo, Mo, Red, Mokey, Wembley, the Doozers...)

Whenever I need a little piece of my past to comfort me, I can turn to the Hub. If only they would add these shows to their line up: The Monchichis, Saved by the

Bell, The Shirt Tails, Punky Brewster, The Fact of Life, Life Goes On, My Two Dads, Silver Spoons, and Too Close for Comfort.

June 30, 2011

Thank you kid in the back seat...

...for likely saving Daddy from a speeding ticket. The officer literally pulled out, drove up beside us, checked us out, then turned around. Dan had a stare down with a cop and won.

I think it was because he felt our pain of driving cross-country with a two year old. That, or Dan's killer 'stash. Either way, thanks for letting us slide.

July 1, 2011

Thank you big families...

...for always providing someone. Need a playmate - check. Need a babysitter - check. Need someone to run an errand - check. Need advice from someone with experience - check. Need someone to watch your back - check.

Coming from a relatively small family I am thankful I married into a big one. It is wonderful to be able to experience both kinds of family.

July 2, 2011

Thank you easy going kids...

...for just going with the flow. When the holidays come around there is no telling what schedules look like and no way to adhere to a routine. It helps to have kids that can roll with the punches and know things will just be different for a while. I am thankful that Charlie understands that she joined our world, we didn't join hers. She just sits back, relaxes, and comes along for the ride.

July 3, 2011

Thank you fireworks...

...for being an exciting event that brings neighbors together. There is something about lighting fireworks that creates an instant bond between people - and sometimes with people you have seen before but never spoken to. Conversation becomes easier. Laughing becomes natural. And by the end of the night you seem like old friends, although you do not know each other's names nor will you likely speak again. But for those few hours everyone had a lot of fun together. Thanks fireworks for making the good times roll. 'Merica.

July 4, 2011

Thank you history...

...and my husband for helping me appreciate it. Don't tell my teachers (or my Dad), but I hated history. The thought of learning about battles and memorizing key events...snooze. But over the years my perspective has started to change. I doubt I will ever voluntarily read every plaque in a museum, drive miles out of my way to see an open plain where something occurred, or be able to tell you what year something monumental took place, but I will say that while I am in history's presence I will have a better appreciation for what I am viewing. I can see the big picture and the role events played to take us to where we are today.

Thank you Dan for being a history enthusiast and making me watch so many specials - as well as not poking too much fun when I may not know all the right facts. And thank you to every person who has played a role in the history we learn. I hope that everyone can one day realize the effect of everything that has come before us.

July 5, 2011

Thank you Robot Chicken...

...for being so wrong it's right. How ingenious to create a show where you can quickly run through roughly 50 jokes in 15 minutes. Some rely on viewers to come from the right era, some require a stupid (and sick) sense of humor, and some require you know random facts pulled from today's crazy headlines. Regardless, it is an intelligent show - produced in a juvenile fashion - and I am thankful for the laughs it provides.

July 6, 2011

Thank you laser hair removal...

...where have you been all my life? I have had a few treatments and think I could become addicted. I am loving this no shaving business and my only regret is that I didn't do it earlier. Thank you to whomever figured out that shooting a concentrated laser of light at your skin could stop hair growth. You are my hero.

July 7, 2011

Thank you cable...

...for showing us there is more out there than just what we see in our everyday life. I have always been fascinated with other people. If I could, I would spend my

free time meeting new people and understanding what makes them tick. So I am drawn to shows where the hosts travel across the world, meet new people and experience their culture. As much as I would like to say that I could do this here in Chicago on my own, the fact is that's just not true. People are reluctant to talk to new people and although I don't want to admit it, I need something to prompt me to act as well.

Considering the most interesting people to meet cannot be found in the usual areas, I am thankful for some of the great cable shows that allow me to live vicariously through others and see the world through their eyes.

July 8, 2011

Thank you sunshine...

...for waking me up naturally, slowly and in silence. It was such a pleasure to wake up today on my own accord and not via a little voice through the monitor, the cat crying for attention, or the vicious buzz of the alarm clock. I got to open my eyes, look out the window, and lay in bed for a bit until I was fully ready to get up. It has been awhile since that has happened and it was a great way to start my day.

July 9, 2011

Thank you tradition...

...for providing the ability to reminisce about old times while creating new memories simultaneously. I am a fan of fondly recalling memories, laughing at the same stories and looking back on all the places we've been. But I am also cognizant to remain in the present and not overlook the new memories that can happen every day. Tradition allows both worlds to overlap at the same time. I am thankful I have a handful of traditions that continue the cycle.

July 10, 2011

Thank you pools and parks...

...for providing the fearless with vehicles to test the boundaries. I love watching kids see how far they can go - and when they succeed, see the look of accomplishment wash over their faces. Thank you for the elements that allow the adventures to happen.

July 11, 2011

Thank you power...

...and the fact that we have ours. You never understand how much you can be thankful for something until it is taken away. Many people lost their power during a storm and are now battling to keep food from spoiling and to stay cool in the heat. I am thankful that we were not effected and can retain our normalcy.

July 12, 2011

Thank you motherhood skills...

...for overlapping into every day life. Being a mom to a two-year old has provided me with the skills to be patient when people don't listen, to calmly talk people down from a tantrum, to acknowledge when someone does what was asked, and to just throw your hands up and laugh things off when necessary. Thanks kid.

July 13, 2011

Thank you birthdays...

...and thank you to all my friends and family for acknowledging mine. Pretty much once you hit that big two-one birthday, all the ones that come thereafter start to seem less significant. However, I have always been a big believer that birthdays should always be important. It is the one day in the year that is specifically for you. Granted, you may share that date with other people's birthdays or other holidays, but it is still a day to celebrate you. Thank you to everyone who granted me happy birthday wishes and acknowledged my presence in the world.

July 14, 2011

Thank you people who do not take themselves too seriously...

...because if you can't laugh at yourself, you really shouldn't be laughing at anyone else. I could go on about this one, but I think I will just leave it at that.

July 15, 2011

Thank you 5pm...

... for FINALLY making its way to my doorstep. It officially marks the most amount of hours away from 8:30 Monday morning. Weekends, I heart you.

July 16, 2011

Thank you street festivals...

...for allowing college bands to live on forever. The ages of about 15 to 30 are formative years and the music you attach to those years will likely always remain close to your heart and stir something inside of you when you hear it.

Some bands can span the ages and remain in the mainstream for decades. For all the others, I am thankful for street festivals and state fairs for providing a forum to hear bands from our past play live and to be transported back in time.

July 17, 2011

Thank you cool shower...

...for being the perfect ending to a day in the heat. At some point I have to draw the line and say heat is not fun. I love summer. I love when it is sunny. I love when it is warm. I hate when it is hot. If the air tugs at your lungs and you get beads of sweat forming within a minute of stepping outside, you probably should not be venturing out for too long. It's just not right. So I am thankful that a cool shower can turn back time and wash the heat from my skin.

July 18, 2011

Thank you one-on-one time...

...for allowing me to be in the moment and whole-heartedly interact. A party is fun and a wonderful way to catch up with a lot of people all at once. One of my favorite sayings is, "the more, the merrier" and a truly mean it when I say it. But there is something so special about one-on-one time. And it absolutely has to be one-on-one time. Adding just one more person changes the dynamic.

When it is just two people there are no mistaking who you should be listening to and who is listening to you. There is no one else. There are no distractions. There is no competition for attention.

It is hard to get this time with all the people that matter. But I have realized I need to make this a priority in my life. And I am thankful I have had the opportunity to start to check people off my list already.

July 19, 2011

Thank you gut instincts...

...for leading me down the right path more times than not. I recently came across an article titled, "Ten Mistakes All Parents Make". Like a loon, I read the thing and now I have to add one more mistake to the list: They read articles titled "Ten Mistakes All Parents Make".

There are way too many people are trying to figure out the precise moment "where things went wrong". It's like saying, my kid is the fry cook at McDonald's because I let him watch four hours of TV on that one Sunday when he was three. Or, she will become the CEO of McDonald's because her parents never fed her McDonald's as a kid.

How about saying, things happen simply because we can't control everything and human nature takes over. We all just need to trust our guts, do our best, and stop trying to analyze things to death. If your gut tells you that you need some down time or else you will explode, take the down time - even if that means planting the kid in front of the TV for awhile. If your gut tells you are walking into a bad situation, consider turning around. If your gut tells you that you are hungry, eat a sandwich.

I am thankful that my gut is starting to speak up more often - and that I am finally really starting to listen.

July 20, 2011

Thank you thunderstorms...

...for providing the perfect soundtrack for sleeping. Although the initial crash may wake you from a slumber, the subsequent ones can lull you back to sleep. I am thankful everyone in our household feels the same.

July 21, 2011

Thank you work/life separation...

...because really it has to happen for any level of normality to occur. Work needs to end when you walk out the door, just as your life needs to be put on pause when you walk back in. If you try to carry one side across the threshold, things start to get complicated.

I know some people are defined by their jobs and I feel as though these people are being misrepresented. You can enjoy your job, you can work 80 hours a week if you want to - but it still shouldn't define who you are.

Whenever I think about this topic, a quote from Dazed and Confused always comes to mind, "All I'm saying is that if I ever start referring to these as the best years of my life - remind me to kill myself." I could say the same thing at it relates to my job: if I ever start defining who I am by my job - remind me to kill myself.

Instead, we should all just take heed from Dawson, "All I'm saying is that I want to look back and say that I did the best I could while I was stuck in this place. Had as much fun as I could while I was stuck in this place. Played as hard as I could while I was stuck in this place". I think we can omit the part about dogging chicks since that would be wrong to do at work.

So I am thankful I can work hard, close the door, and not look back until I have to.

July 22, 2011

Thank you dance team...

...for creating some exceptionally fun times in high school and generating some wonderful memories to recall years later. Recently some ladies from the ALHS Pom Pon team started posting old photographs of the squads to Facebook and it sparked a flurry of comments among the girls in the group. It was great to see our former selves and to recall all the many hours we spent together - morning practice, summer practice, performances, camp, nationals.

We are all a bit different from each other, but all got along so well. One of the ladies made a comment that sums up how I feel as well - it was one of my favorite groups to be part of. I am thankful for those three years and the girls who made it great.

July 23, 2011

Thank you Stock brothers...

...for being part of my life for 19 f'ing years. I have known them for more years than not, and for so many years that the youngest Stock has never known a life without me in it. (Really, Dan and I started dated when Andrew was in kindergarten so that last statement is likely true.)

We have spanned sock wars (Ben and Andrew you should be thankful for my protection), lighting farts on fire (Jamie, you are a professional), new years eve parties (that Chuck knew about and ones that Chuck did not know about), girlfriends (not Dan's, but everyone else's), forth of July's (do we really need to bust out an ax), tequila bandits & bandita...and marriages, kids, and life in general.

I have treasured being part of Dan's life, but I also relish that it has made me a part of the rest of the Stock lives as well. I feel as though I have witnessed so

much that I was technically a Stock before I officially became one. So I am thankful that I was a Stock sister before I became a Stock wife.

July 24, 2011

Thank you to my ability to entertain myself. ..

...for I will always be able to go anywhere and do anything I want and be content. I just experienced a long, boring car ride across the Midwest. However I didn't need a Game Boy, a portable DVD player or any other electrical device to entertain me. I was able to just sit in the car and pass time by myself - because that what kids did when I was growing up. We made our own car fun.

I feel sorry for those kids that need stimulation all the time. Sometimes it is necessary to just sit in silence and watch the world pass by - and be okay with it.

July 25, 2011

Thank you summer birthdays...

...for making the summer ritual even more memorable. My sister and I both have July birthdays. And although we never got to bring treats for our entire class in school, we got to celebrate our birthdays in ways that the school-time kids couldn't. It may have been with sleepovers in the middle of the week, pool parties, or one of my favorites - in Okoboji if our birthday happened to fall while we were there with the family.

And now we get to share that tradition with my nephew. We just sang him Happy Birthday and Lake Okoboji was the backdrop. I am thankful that we get to share in this with him.

July 26, 2011

Thank you in-laws...

... for being family but a special kind of family. Once I hit my mid-twenties I became in-lawed. But that was initially me becoming in-lawed into a family I already knew. I really did not feel in-lawed until my sister got married and I got in-lawed the other direction.

And I am thankful that I can now call Derek part of my family. We need his dynamic, my sister needs his partnership, and my husband needs him as his P.I.C. Thank you all around, Mr. Courtney.

July 27, 2011

Thank you for admitting the truth...

...because it is a difficult task but something that needs to be done at some stage. It is a very hard thing to admit what you truly want to others. It makes it become real once you say it out loud. It becomes something that a month from now someone could ask, "What have you done with such'n'such." And you have to face the hard truth that the answer may be, "Nothing."

So maybe saying it out loud could help it move forward or make you seem foolish. Regardless it is so gut-wrenching that most people won't do it. So I am thankful I did it, and I am curious to see what comes of it.

July 28, 2011

Thank you human kindness...

...for highlighting that in a crisis the first instinct may be to run away, but there are people who will run into it to help. It is interesting to look into an emergency and see how people react. I am okay with the people who may panic or look the other way - we are not all made to be heroes. But I am in awe of the ones that don't. The ones who push all their fears aside and put others first regardless of the situation. They create the balance that our society needs. Thank you.

July 29, 2011

Thank you Internet...

...for being a wonderful research tool. I do not believe there has ever been a time in our history where so much information is readily available as it is today. You want to know the name of that actor in that movie - check the internet. You want to know which body of water holds more mass, the Red Sea or the English Channel - check the internet. You want a second opinion (or third, or fourth, or fifth) - check the internet.

Now the pit fall to the internet is that sometimes there is just too much information. You can get overwhelmed or extremely paranoid. However, I am thankful to have a resource that allows me to arm myself with knowledge when I can't find it elsewhere.

July 30, 2011

Thank you Okoboji...

...for being more of a state of mind than a location. This is a place that I remember coming to as I grew up. It was a time that I got to spend at the lake swimming, fishing, boating, and most of all hanging out with my extended family.

Everyone gets to see their family for the holidays or random dinners here and there. Not many get to spend a whole week with them. It allows us to see each other when they have just woken up, when they need a nap, or when they just are so relaxed that they are really themselves. There is no putting on airs. It is vacation.

I am thankful I got to come to Okoboji with my family this year and experience it all again. And to be able to introduce Charlie to the experience at an age when she may start to remember it. Thank you extended Kelley family for coming along for the ride. Thank you Crescent Beach for being the host of the initial years. And thank you Anne and Jerry for being the hosts of the present years.

July 31, 2011

Thank you as seen on TV...

...for providing us with the most necessary products around. I don't know how I ever survived without a meatloaf pan with a lift out rack. And I don't know how I manage to find the spices I need without the swivel spice rack. But wait there is more. I can't even cut things properly without my jinsu knives.

Thank you late night TV for showing me all products I would normally miss if I only shopped at brick and mortar stores.

August 1, 2011

Thank you balloons...

...because of the simple pleasure they provide. Even as an adult, balloons make me smile. It is like a mini-party attached to my arm. Life is good when you are holding a balloon.

August 2, 2011

Thank you life's odd occurrences...

...for either beginning to explain why somethings in this world happen or to highlight that there is no explanation. Such as:

- Why was it that at the first doctor appointment where I start to relax and decide not to attend did we get the first dose of bad news? Did my subconscious lead me away from hearing the news?

- Why after years of visiting one place over and over again did I finally choose this time to look at a map and orientate myself? Did I secretly know that I would have to find a hospital or drive the family around?

- Why would I meet a new client whose husband recently past away from cancer within the same week we are up to our heads dealing with our own battle? Will that support loop back around at a later date?

Who knows. But I do believe things are connected in some way. However I am not going to stress too much about how.

August 3, 2011

Thank you comfort of my hubby's arms...

...because there is no better place in this world to be.

August 4, 2011

Thank you support system...

...for always having my back. There are times that I look back on my life and am amazed by the people who have been part of it and the role that they played. Today is one of those moments.

On this day ten years ago, I stood in front of a church, with my support system at my back, and married my husband. And now ten years later, those same people - plus a whole lot more - are behind my back once again.

Not only am I amazed by the vast composition of this group, but also by the fact that every single one of them has remained present in my life after so much time. I have heard that people come and go in your life, but I seem to be one of the lucky ones where people keep coming and never leave.

My system includes people who me laugh, who let me cry, who allow me to vent, who pour me a drink, who babysit Baby Girl, who remind me what is important, who share advice, who guide me, who push me forward, who realize when I need to pull back, who make me dinner, and who just get me out of the house.

I am blessed and truly thankful for every single person who has laid their hand upon my shoulder and let me know they had my back. Thanks.

August 5, 2011

Thank you lovies...

...for being the calm to any storm. Growing up I had a blanket that meant the world to me. It was a white and red quilted blanket that I believe was made by one of the quilting trio: my Grandma Holly, my Great Aunt Ginny or my Great Grandma Babbo. (My mom may have to confirm this but it looks like all the other baby doll blankets that I have that came from them.) This blanket was my safeguard at night. I would turn the corners until I found the one that was fraying and rub my index finger along its edges until I fell asleep. It was a hardship when I finally reached the age when I had to wean myself off that blanket.

Now that I am a mom I come to love the lovie again. My daughter has two - a beanie baby named Bongo and a knit blanket called Blanket. Charlie is our transient child. She can pretty much sleep anywhere as long as we remember to bring these two sacred belongings along for the ride. I love the sanctity that they provide now, but am not looking forward to the day when we need to say our goodbyes to these dear friends.

August 6, 2011

Thank you Ikea catalog...

...for showcasing all your wears in actual living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms instead of just showing pieces on their own. I know most home decor magazines do this, but there is something about Ikea's that resonates on a visceral level. I actually think I am peering into someone's home.

And the great thing about peeking through these rooms is that you get to see what is in each closet and cabinet. They actually leave the doors open and want you to look. Probably because they are all so organized. Everything is put away, and usually in a container that is the perfect size for what it holds. Who wouldn't want to show that off to everyone that visits? After a big power cleaning session, I kind of feel like inviting people over just to show them how I Tetris'ed all my stuff into the closet.

Thank you Ikea and your set designers. Wanna come over to my house and work your magic?

August 7, 2011

Thank you day at home...

...it may not necessarily been by choice, but it was nice to spend the whole day at the house. Nowhere to go, no one to see, just home. I was able to cook both lunch and dinner. I organized Charlie's room. I was able to get caught up on photo albums. I could just relax. I am thankful it happened.

August 8, 2011

Thank you oldies...

...for your wholesome lyrics, simple melodies and real instruments. I would take an oldie to a new song any day. There are exceptions to that rule, but if I had to make a sweeping judgment call that would be it.

Thank you Buddy Holly, Beach Boys, Ray Charles and the long list of others that were true to the rock and roll form and created the timeless classics we will still be listening to 40 years from now.

August 9, 2011

Thank you guy who broke into our car...

...for realizing that the door was unlocked before trying to smash out a window. Especially considering all he took was a container of change. Evidently he did not need a car seat, like my style of sunglasses, or our taste in music. Or maybe that last one is a true testament that CDs really have become a dead format.

Anyway, thanks for keeping the expensive parts of the car in tact. And for emptying my glove box and armrest. I have been meaning to do that for a long time.

August 10, 2011

Thank you dinner club...

...for the hardy laughs accompanied by a hardy meal. Coordinating the logistics of a dinner for nine people can be a hassle, but once everyone is seated around the table, you forget about all that and relish in the company. Last night nine great friends shared wine, stories, sarcasm, and wine. Did I mention the wine? It was exactly what the doctor ordered. Thanks crew.

August 11, 2011

Thank you container garden...

...for allowing this city dweller to get a little taste of the country. This is the first summer I have attempted a garden on the porch, and it was a successful

inaugural season. It has been great to go outside and get a fresh snip of rosemary or pull a jalapeno from the stem. It doesn't get any fresher than that. I think the garden will have to expand next spring.

August 12, 2011

Thank you grass...

...for tickling our toes and making us giggle with delight. Or at least doing all these things for a two year old. Last night I experienced some good old belly laughs watching Charlie and my friends run around their yard barefoot squealing, "Oh it tickles! Oh it tickles!" So I kicked off my shoes too, and you know what, it does kind of tickle.

August 13, 2011

Thank you CPAC...

...for taking on the initiative of upgrading the Chase Park playground. Today as Charlie played at her home away from home, I tried to remember what the old park looked like. I remember that it had dilapidated metal equipment and wood chips for ground cover. Basically, it was polar opposite to the beautiful space we have today. So thank you to the CPAC team for chasing the dream and putting hours of work into fundraising efforts. That urban oasis is well worth the effort.

August 14, 2011

Thank you evenings...

...for your tranquil symphony of sounds. One of the best things about a drop in temperature is the ability to sit on the couch with the windows open. Evenings in the city are an eclectic mix of cars, streetlights, and far off conversations sprinkled with the natural sounds of crickets, cicadas, and the wind. There is a constant hum of activity. And there is something strangely comforting about that.

August 15, 2011

Thank you time...

...and the fact that I feel as though I have a grasp on it again. As a mom, a wife and a woman with a career, there never seemed to be enough time in the day. I felt as though I was simply moving from one task to another just to ensure that everything was completed. And I got stressed out when things veered off plan. This left little time to enjoy the life I worked so hard to create.

Over the past few days I have had the luxury of not feeling rushed to squeeze it all in. It is okay if a 10-minute walk takes 30 if it means that we can examine all the bugs and pick up all the sticks along the way. It is okay if we get a late start to the day if it means we could all have breakfast together. It is okay if I am not getting something done during nap if it means I get to spend some down time with Dan. Everything is okay as long as I get watch my daughter grow and get to spend time with my husband.

Time started to move really fast this past year. I am thankful I have the opportunity to slow the clock down, because I know one day it will stop.

August 16, 2011

Thank you blocks...

...for being a timeless toy. I have rekindled my passion for blocks again. I forgot how much fun it could be to build a tower and knock it down. And build it back up and knock it down again. And build it back up and knock it down again. And build it back up...

August 17, 2011

Thank you opinions...

...for never being wrong. People fascinate me. I love that every person is different. They have their own set of opinions based on how they were raised, what they have encountered, and the people that surround them. It just takes time, the ability to listen, and the restraint to not tell them they are wrong to find out more. What you may hear will either reinforce, alter or challenge your own beliefs. I am thankful I can let a person's opinions be right for them - but not necessarily right for everyone.

August 18, 2011

Thank you Lincoln Square...

...for always having something up its sleeve. We went for a walk tonight to enjoy the pleasant evening. With no predetermined destination I decided to head toward Lincoln Square - thinking it was simply a good turning around point. When we got there, there was a mini-street festival and concert in the plaza - along with a farmers market across the street. Surprise! Lincoln Square is such a gem for all of its random activities, and I am thankful I live close enough to take advantage of it.

August 19, 2011

Thank you good days...

...for making it easier to get through the bad days. One day shouldn't put things a kilter on forever. So I am thankful that I have had a run of good days that can make up for one not so good one.

August 20, 2011

Thank you naked kids...

...for reminding us that it is okay to be naked. Kids have no qualms about taking off their clothes. I think most of them would rather be naked than wear clothes half the time. They strip down, run around, and show it off. It's liberating. It's funny. It's natural. At what age do we become modest?

August 21, 2011

Thank you Thunderbirds...

...and all the other participants in the Air & Water Show. I look forward to the Air and Water Show every year. I love the boom of a jet as it races by. I catch my breath when they perform their stunts. I cheer when they tear through the clouds. And I am also thankful that the only time we see these fighter planes is for entertainment purposes.

August 22, 2011

Thank you bras...

...for being the unsung piece of a woman's wardrobe. I never pay much attention to my bra - until I get a new one. And oh Lord, that is when you realize the error of your ways...you went too long before replacing it. I am very thankful for my new purchase.

August 23, 2011

Thank you mail...

...and not the kind that tells you that you owe someone money - but the kind of mail that is from someone you know. It has become rare to get a personal piece of mail these days. Email, texts, voicemail have all but replaced the hand written note. It is a pleasure to receive something unexpected. I am thankful that I have people in my life that still recognize this ritual - and it makes me think I need to get more practice at it as well.

August 24, 2011

Thank you kisses...

...for being a simple way to express how much you care about someone. There are all kinds of kisses - passionate kisses between lovers, loving kisses among family, and caring kisses among friends. I believe it is a positive thing to show emotion to those whom you adore. We should all consistently remind each other the role we play in one another's lives. We are together for a reason - let's all be thankful for that. XOXO.

August 25, 2011

Thank you thesaurus...

...for expanding my vocabulary. I am thankful that over my 35 years I have consistently added to my vocabulary. I am not a word-a-day kind of gal, but I am a fan of sprinkling in new lexeme when I can. See, I just did it. It keeps my brain turned on. It makes things appear to be more interesting than they are. It makes things sound better... advantageous... superior... exceptional... sophisticated... preponderant. Now if someone could just do something about my spelling.

August 26, 2011

Thank you landscapers...

...for having the ability to create a whole new world within a backyard. The tranquility of a manicured and developed backyard allows you to escape. An enclosure of trees, a splash of a water feature, the greenery that looks natural (yet a bit to perfect)...it is a captivating oasis.

August 27, 2011

Thank you apples...

...for being the perfect snack. I have rekindled my love of apples lately. They are portable, read-made, crunchy, sweet and just the right size to squelch your appetite until dinner. Looks like I won't have to go to the doctor anytime soon because I could easily eat one a day.

August 28, 2011

Thank you Scrubs...

...for being just the right mix of lovable characters, witty banter, and thoughtful plots. It is a show based in comedy but can fluidly slide into drama then transition

back to comedy at just the right moment. The drama makes you think and many times it reminds us we need to be living our life better - taking care of ourselves better, watching out for others better, and prioritizing better.

This is also a show where the main characters expose their vulnerabilities and allow the audience to see all the facets that make them who they are. I am thankful the writers kept everything so honest, therefore believable.

August 29, 2011

Thank you Sondgeraths...

...for being two of the most selfless people I know. Julie and Alex are simply wonderful people and I am thankful that I can call them friends. They are willing to share themselves, their time, their possessions with anyone who asks. And most times they are too quick to volunteer to even allow the time to ask. It is such an admirable quality and one that I wish came more naturally to me.

Thank you Alex and Julie for everything you have done for all those in need. Your charitable hearts make the world a better place.

August 30, 2011

Thank you change...

...for reminding us to keep moving on and pushing forward. The thought of change sometimes paralyzes me. It makes me sad to think of friends moving on. It makes me panic at the unknown. It can all seem overwhelming until I realize that in order for any of us to fulfill our dreams there needs to be elements of change along the way. We cannot remain stagnant all our lives.

The biggest impact of change isn't the change itself - but how we decide to react to it. I am thankful for those opportunities.

August 31, 2011

Thank you hand-me-downs...

...for being the ultimate way to transition through the first few years of a child's life. The one thing that is constant about a small child is that they will keep growing. I feel as though I am in a constant rotation of clothing, so I am thankful I can rely on hand-me-downs to fill most of those gaps. And because kids cycle through clothes so fast, they are like new even after the 2nd or 3rd kid. I need to relish these days before the hand-me-down stigma rears its ugly head. I have a few more years, right?

September 1, 2011

Thank you ice cream...

...for not only being a delicious treat, but the culmination all good things about summer. Mind you, I am talking about going for ice cream - not getting ice cream out of the freezer. There is a big difference.

Going for ice cream is something that creates cheers from the family. It elevates the simple dessert to something to treasure. It's the anticipation on the walk there. It's the discussion of what you are going to order. It's the standing in front of a plethora of options that, as a child, may seem unfathomable. It's the awe of being able to walk down the street with something cool in your hand. It's the way it starts to melt about half way home that challenges you to finish it before it all turns to liquid.

It is the sitting on the front stoop looking at your husband and daughter sharing spoonfuls of creamy goodness and laughing about the mess it is creating.

September 2, 2011

Thank you curiosity...

...for pushing us to keep learning. If it weren't for simple curiosity the brain would remain stagnant and turn to mush. Instead, we keep asking questions, keep questioning the truths, and keep expanding the possibilities. "What if" is one of the best questions anyone could ever ask.

September 3, 2011

Thank you quotes...

...for providing a small doses of inspiration. I am thankful that there were so many smart, famous people that came before us. Thank you for your guidance.

September 4, 2011

Thank you dancing...

...for being an exhilarating way to release energy. Whether you just bounce your head to the rhythm or you give yourself to the melody, dancing makes you smile. Even watching other people get into the action can warm your heart. So get your toes tapping, and have some fun.

September 5, 2011

Thank you fall weather...

...for providing a release from the summer swelter. The first fall day is probably my favorite day of the year. When after days of heat, you finally get a break. You can give your summer clothes a rest and pull out your favorite jeans and hoodie that have sat dormant for months. You can turn off the air conditioning and open the windows. You can hear the crispness in the trees as they begin to give up their fight and prepare themselves for colder times.

This is the weather made for football, late season BBQ's, and bonfires. This is the reason I live in the Midwest.

September 6, 2011

Thank you tears...

...because sometimes you just need a good cry. One of the benefits, and sometimes downfalls, of being human is that we can experience emotion. This means that we can be blessed with elation or cursed with sorrow. Whichever it is, the body reacts best when we allow ourselves to experience it. We need to acknowledge that it is there and let it out. It is our body's way of righting the wrong and leveling back out. I am thankful for a good cry because it makes it so much easier to laugh afterward.

September 7, 2011

Thank you Lincoln Park Zoo...

...for exposing this city kid to farm life. Granted, it is on a very small scale but I still fed a cow, pet a goat, brushed a horse, and rode a tractor. How wonderful to have such experiences with the Chicago skyline as the backdrop. It really is like having the best of both worlds.

September 8, 2011

Thank you eavesdropping...

...for being a discreet way to get precious tidbits of information. I know technically it is rude to eavesdrop, but I have found that lately I can't help myself. I listen in to Dan telling Charlie about how Led Zeppelin 3 was recorded. I listen in to the moms at the park talk about the classes they have their kids signed up for. I listen in to the kids making up their own games.

If I didn't do this I wouldn't know to listen for the airplanes in the background, about the Spanish class in Roscoe Village, or that all the girls need to get tagged before they can chase the boys...all worthwhile things to know.

September 9, 2011

Thank you sleep patterns...

...for making me a morning person. Although it may be rough to crawl out of the comfort of bed, once my feet hit the floor I am ready to accomplish anything. If I have a to-do list, I can crack through it in no time - if I do it in the morning. If I save it for after lunch, it is a crapshoot.

My being a morning person generally means that I am bed by 10PM, but to pull a quote from the parent's handbook, "nothing good ever happens after 10 anyway".

September 10, 2011

Thank you pumpkin spice latte...

...for eliciting the senses of Thanksgiving two months early. Hands down, my favorite holiday is Thanksgiving. It is a time that you gather with family and friends, share a wonderful meal, and count your blessings. I love the time of year of Thanksgiving. I love the food of Thanksgiving. I love the colors of Thanksgiving. I love the sights, sounds, smells of Thanksgiving. I love that people converge just to see one another - not to exchange gifts, ring in a new year, or view fireworks.

Every time I take my first sip of a pumpkin spice latte, I close my eyes and think about sitting around the house...and around the table...with my family. It is an elixir that warms me from the inside out.

September 11, 2011

Thank you freedom...

...and all of our First Amendment rights. My only wish is for an Amendment XXVIII: All persons shall accept one another's religious choices, topics of speech, and decisions to disagree. While Congress shall pass no law on these things, there should be a law for tolerance. Thank you to those who do not punish others for holding different beliefs than their own.

September 12, 2011

Thank you Sears...

...for taking Baby Girl's 3-year portraits and getting the job done in record time. I know it is good customer service at a photo center to flatter a mom (that is buying pictures) by saying her daughter is beautiful, funny, photogenic, polite, and the kind of kid that makes them want to have their own kid - but honestly, I believe this guy meant it. He made me a proud mom.

And I am truly thankful that this same guy allowed me to change my order once I left and reviewed all the photos again when I got home. He's the best.

September 13, 2011

Thank you ladies who lunch...

...and the fact that I got to pretend to be one today. How nice to meet friends for a casual, relaxing lunch with no deadline for calling it quits. I honestly could have stayed there all day, but I will take the hour we had. I believe I could make dining out my career. Now to figure out how to get paid to eat.

September 14, 2011

Thank you fairy tales...

...for letting people's dreams come true. Some people may take issue with fairy tales, saying they make girls think that a boy needs to save them or that they create a false reality that could never come to fruition. But I say, what is the harm in dreaming? You need a dream to give you something to work toward. Here's to happily ever after.

September 15, 2011

Thank you impulse buys...

...for providing that little pick-me-up. I think that I am addicted to shopping. Yep. The first step is admitting it. I like to buy things. And I really like to buy things on sale. There is an adrenalin rush. Nothing that would be noticeable to the outside person, but I feel it. I know when it has been awhile since I bought something fun. And once I do, even if it is \$2, I feel a bit better.

It's the little things.

September 16, 2011

Thank you plateaus...

...for providing the pause necessary to recharge the conversation. Every few minutes a conversation will hit a lull. Some people may panic at the silence.

However this is the natural discourse of a conversation. It can't go on forever. So I am thankful for plateaus because they provide a natural hiatus and allow things to start over.

September 17, 2011

Thank you dance floors...

...for unleashing everyone's inhibitions. Get a group of friends together, give them some drinks, and put on some good tunes...you have yourself a party. Who cares if you have moves or not. It doesn't matter. It is a moment where you loose yourself and smile like you haven't done so in ages.

September 18, 2011

Thank you kid-free weekends...

...for allowing two parents to reconnect. Date nights are a great release, but a weekend away is a great escape. You can momentarily revert back to your pre-baby life, when there were just two people in the equation, and you can focus on those two people.

You have no responsibilities. You can sleep in. You can spend the afternoon at a bar watching football. You can hang with friends. You can talk, and talk, and talk. You don't feel rushed. You don't have an agenda.

You remember why you got married.

Thank you Jaime and Dan for hosting a wedding, thus giving us an excuse to get away. Thank you Ashley, John, Carrie, Trent, Loden, Andy, Rachel, Craig and Suki for making us laugh so much our bellies hurt. And thank you Denny family for taking the Baby Girl.

September 19, 2011

Thank you Sweet Home Alabama...

...for reminding us that we all have roots. Big, small. Urban, rural. North, south. We all had to grow up somewhere - and no one had the luxury of picking where that place was. Where you spend your childhood helps form the people we become. There is no changing it. Embrace it.

September 20, 2011

Thank you flare...

...for adding a little something to an outfit. Jeans and a t-shirt can be jazzed up with the addition of a necklace, a scarf, or a bracelet. And it takes all of 30 seconds. I lost my flare for a bit, and I am thankful I got it back.

September 21, 2011

Thank you independence...

...for being so liberating. In this instance, I am not talking about legal, country, or social independence that, by the way, are all good things. I am talking about personal independence.

One of the best attributes my parents installed in me is that I could do anything. They provided the framework that gave me strength. They supplied the guidance for identifying right from wrong. They stood by me as I made decisions and figured things out on my own. They gave me the confidence that allowed me to branch out from the norm. They gave me my independence.

Without this I never would have had the same high school experiences, had selected the college I attended, experienced the glories of WDW, or moved to Chicago.

Above anything else, I hope this is something I can provide to my daughter as well...To be comfortable in her own skin, to know that she can attempt anything, and to understand that her parents will back her, no matter what.

And a secret thanks to the movie "Son in Law". I know it is quirky and stars Paulie Shore. But it is a light-hearted tribute to embracing one's independence, and reminds me a bit of myself oh so many years ago.

September 22, 2011

Thank you nicknames...

...for being a quick term of endearment for those close to us. I always wanted a universal nickname that everyone called me. But as I thought about it more, I like that different people have different names for me.

My dad used to call my sister and me AJ1 and AJ2. A few good friends from high school call me Angelina Sue. Dan calls me Baby. Others call me Johnson (and now that I am officially not a Johnson, I really like this one). When I worked at Disney I was part of Amangie. At the park I am known as Charlie's Mom. And then there is Ang.

I answer to many names and I find that when I hear each one, I know why that person uses it and the role I play in their life.

September 23, 2011

Thank you Dept. of Transportation...

...for FINALLY fixing our sidewalk out front. We have been missing a large section of the sidewalk and it was becoming an eyesore and messy endeavor. After months of dealing with it, it was finally fixed today. Thank you much.

September 24, 2011

Thank you smiles...

...for being a small gesture with large consequences. A smile can change the trajectory of someone's day. It may catch them off guard and hush the negative thoughts for a moment. It may provide the extra swell of confidence to tackle a challenge. It may just be the sign of humanity that someone so needs.

And hopefully, once one person is effected, that one simple smile they received becomes contagious and ripples to others.

I like smiling. Smiling is my favorite.

September 25, 2011

Thank you sense of smell...

...for being one of the top five senses. If I had to loose a sense, I could find a reason to keep each one. My fight for smell would be threefold...

One, it enhances the sense of taste. A waft of melting butter, the aroma of baking bread, or the perfume of garlic can make me instantly salivate.

Two, it can provide comfort. Bleach, baby lotion, and suntan oil all stimulate pleasant memories.

Three, it reminds me of home. Head and Shoulders, Pantene, Lubriderm lotion, and Old Spice.

September 26, 2011

Thank you second impressions...

...because sometimes the first one isn't quite right. I hope everyone gives others the chance to make a second impression. Everyone has bad days. Everyone is

subject to hearsay. Everyone makes a bad decision here or there. Give a person a chance to redeem themselves and you could be thankful you did. If you don't give the opportunity, you could be missing out on something big.

And if the second impression is the same as the first, at least you can say you tried.

September 27, 2011

Thank you Caillou...

...for being a kid who is four and who each day he grows some more. But more importantly for affording me thirty minutes of solitude in the morning. I am generally not one to placate a child with TV, but it is glorious to just stand in a hot shower for twenty minutes. Or to take a quick shower and have twenty minutes to read uninterrupted. Or to lay down for another twenty minutes. A bit of alone time is all a mom needs to jump-start her day.

September 28, 2011

Thank you Community Days...

...for being an inexpensive way for locals to experience all the wonders of Chicago on a regular basis. One of the great things about Chicago is all the cultural experiences it provides. However it can get quite pricey to hop from museum to museum. So I am thankful that each location offers free admission randomly throughout the year and we can get exposure to a variety of adventures.

September 29, 2011

Thank you compliments...

...for providing a swell of pride that you can carry with you a long time. Especially when said compliment comes from a complete stranger. Yesterday I received a compliment from an older gentlemen on the street. It wasn't said in a flirtatious manner nor in a creepy old man manner. He just thought I had nice legs and wanted to let me know.

Today Dan and I had a mom come up to us as the zoo just to tell us that we had the most beautiful little girl she had seen. I am thankful that these people shared what was on their mind. I am going to attempt to return the favor and speak up when I see someone with a stunning bag, doing a good deed or anything else that seems worthwhile to share.

September 30, 2011

Thank you Dr. Ramirez...

...for seeing the signs that I tried to avoid for so long. She could tell I was holding on by a thread and turned that thread into a rope. Sometimes it takes someone from the outside to look in in order for things to appear.

Thank you for making me take time off. Thank you for introducing me to Noelle. Thank you for your patience with this patient.

And thank you TargetCom for being so understanding and providing outstanding benefits that made it all possible. See you Monday.

October 1, 2011

Thank you rivalries...

...for becoming a habit that is hard to break. Sports get taken up a notch when rivalries come into play. It is something to anticipate all season, experience with gusto, and start plotting next year's revenge or glories at the last buzzer. Good game Badgers. We will see you in Memorial Stadium.

October 2, 2011

Thank you snack jars...

...for keeping the party in the kitchen. Why do we all prefer to congregate in a small kitchen, standing up when we could be spread out and comfortable on couches and chairs in the living room? All parties start and end in the kitchen.

Maybe the close quarters create the intimate setting required for positive gatherings. Maybe it is because the drinks and snacks are readily available, thus the momentum is not interrupted when supply has waned. Maybe it is a mix of both. So I am thankful we have the snack jars to sustain us, and the conversation.

October 3, 2011

Thank you cultures...

...for reminding us that everything is normal and everything is foreign, all at once. Everyone holds the notion of comfort if they were exposed to it from the beginning.

One's own culture seems to dictate what is right and wrong. But considering that there are a multitude of cultures, it should actually be seen as multitudes of rights. Sometimes I think that I was born into the wrong culture. Some of our rights seem so wrong to me. And other's rights, which are our wrongs, seem so right.

October 4, 2011

Thank you miniature candies...

...for being that quick kick of sweetness to get you over the three o'clock hump. And you can have it without feeling guilty.

October 5, 2011

Thank you Steve Jobs...

...for being one person who positively and universally effected the world. There are people who are notorious because of their elected positions, of their extreme beliefs, or of their outlandish behavior. Mr. Jobs was notorious for having a dream and a passion coupled with the intelligence and persistence to make it come to fruition.

The whole world started to pause today to reflect the impact this man had on our lives. As I type this, I am listening to digital music from iTunes, on my iPod, writing this on my MacBook. This site has a mobile application allowing me to post remotely. My daughter is playing with a Buzz action figure from the movie, Toy Story.

He was a visionary. He was a leader. He inspired others to greatness. It makes me sad that it took his death to truly honor him.

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don't settle.”

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

"Being the richest man in the cemetery doesn't matter to me ... Going to bed at night saying we've done something wonderful... that's what matters to me."

"We don't get a chance to do that many things, and every one should be really excellent. Because this is our life. Life is brief, and then you die, you know? And we've all chosen to do this with our lives. So it better be damn good. It better be worth it."

"I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything. It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life."

"Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently —they're not fond of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do."

"You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something — your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."

-Steve Jobs

October 6, 2011

Thank you spare keys...

...seriously.

In the cab on my way home from dinner with a good friend, I began to craft today's post in my head. I got out of the cab, walked up the front stoop, opened my purse...and realized that I left my keys on my desk at work.

Think. Think. Think. I could cab back to work, but my key fob to get into the building after hours was on my keys. I could ring a neighbor, but that would only get me into the building. Could I really sleep in the hall without it being weird? No. Husband out of town. Poop. And then, ah-ha. Spare set. Please be home. Please be home. Done. Walk. Walk back. Home.

And now my head goes back to my original post topic. It was something way more prolific. But really, at this moment, I am more thankful for that spare set of keys.

October 7, 2011

Thank you rooms with a view...

...for stoically holding your place. A view is something that is often overlooked - until it is taken away. Then you realize what is missing.

A window peering into a brick wall is vastly different than one that exposes the coastline. Even though you normally don't spend hours staring out a window, having a view available in your periphery makes a big difference. And a quick glance outside can boost your spirits.

I am thankful for my view, especially because I know not everyone has access to one.

October 8, 2011

Thank you outlets...

...for being a wonderful way to spend an afternoon. A treasure hunt for the best deals. Leisurely chats with a good friend. Unprecedented Indian summer temperatures. That is a trifecta in my book.

October 9, 2011

Thank you massage therapists...

...for selecting a profession that exudes a powerful, positive aura. These people have to go home each night feeling so satisfied. How many of us can claim that because of our work others can stand a bit taller, breathe a bit deeper or relax a bit easier? I am thankful that someone uncovered the art of massage and there are people who practice it.

October 10, 2011

Thank you airports...

...for being a melting pot of emotion. In an airport you see all kinds of faces. Yes, you see old, young, black, white, brown. But you also see joyous, excited, nervous, sad, upset, irritated, tired, bored...the list goes on and on. You never know what is going through the head of the person next to you.

Are they ecstatic to be traveling to an exotic location? Are they fretting about visiting a sick relative? Are they triplicated, yet thrilled, to be interviewing for a new job? Have they been sitting there for hours waiting on a delayed flight? Are they anxious to visit old friends? The possibilities are endless.

I am thankful that I got to experience the best kind of emotion at the airport - the elation of a small child reunited with her mom after five days apart.

October 11, 2011

Thank you legacies...

...for allowing one piece of each of us to live on. I am consistently moved by hearing stories of traditions handed down by generations. Whether it is a family-run business, an old family recipe or just a family custom, it becomes a legacy and elevates its existence.

I used to think that kids that followed in the family business were taking the easy way out. My former thought process was: that was the life they grew up with, it is easier to follow in those footsteps than to forge new ground.

However as I get older, and have family of my own, I begin to relish the small traditions that are beginning to develop. I see how a parent may treasure a legacy. There are times, especially now as my dad is closer to retirement, when I second-guess my career choices. What if I became a dentist and joined a practice with my dad? That thought is more comforting now than it was years ago.

The closest our family came to passing along a legacy was within KKG. I was, in collegiate Greek terminology, a legacy. Going through rush I wanted desperately to abandon my legacy status and select anything but my mother's house. But as the first day came to end, my last stop was Kappa. I was done with the formalities. I really just wanted to relax. This was the first place, regardless of its personal history, that I felt like I didn't have to put on airs. I met my escort, she

found me a seat, I kicked off my shoes and shot the shit with her. It was great. I felt at home. And it was the best decision I ever made in college.

I know my mom was excited when I pledged Kappa - as I know I will be honored if Charlie decides to attend college, go through rush, and ultimately selects Kappa. It is our piece of tradition; the legacy that will bind us forever.

October 12, 2011

Thank you teamwork...

...for expanding possibilities farther than one mind can go. Combined brain power can be an excellent resource, however a proper team atmosphere is needed - one where everyone feels comfortable to speak up, where every single person participates, where the limitations are defined yet acceptable to push. Group ideation gets a bad wrap when they are missing one or more of these aspects.

Done correctly, brainstorms are a collaborate environment that can nurture ideas to be more complex than one individual could produce.

October 13, 2011

Thank you street performers...

...for staying true to your craft. There is nothing better after a long day at work than heading down to the train platform and hearing someone singing or playing music. It is a nice relief from the drone of everyday sounds. These people enjoy what they do. They don't need a giant paycheck to sustain their craft. They are fulfilled by simply sharing it with others.

October 14, 2011

Thank you moment of reflection...

...for helping to preserve my memories. One of the benefits I am gaining from doing this project is setting aside time each day to reflect on what is happening in my life. Most times this is what inspires the topic of the day.

My husband and I were reminiscing last night about the years we have spent together. There were times when one of us struggled to recall an event that happened long ago. For me, this was frustrating because I pride myself in remembering. I believe that remembering the past is just as important as experiencing the present and looking to the future.

As the conversation continued, we realized that as the years grow it is going to become more difficult to remember these stories. So I am thankful that I am allowing myself time to reflect every day. Hopefully since my brain is visiting events twice, they will be easier to retain.

And if my brain fails, I will always have these posts. Just as a photo brings back images of days past, journal entries bring back stories of our life.

October 15, 2011

Thank you dreams...

...for being theater of the mind. I love me a good dream. And wowza have I been having my fair share of good ones lately. Before, I would say that my dreams were pretty conventional. They were a strange compilation of the previous day's events. And generally I did not pay them much attention.

Recently, they are coming out of left field. They make logical sense while they are occurring, yet when awake are so bizarre that they are anything but logical. I have contemplated writing them down but, honestly, the words do not give them justice.

I have always enjoyed sleeping, but now I find myself looking forward to going to bed to see what tonight's adventure will be.

October 16, 2011

Thank you proper grammar...

...and the fact that it meant a lot to my father. Growing up I use to get so frustrated with my dad for correcting my English. But as an adult who cringes when she hears someone say "me and my friend", I am grateful that he was persistent.

It may seem like such a small thing - and as a kid, I did think it was a small thing. But if you use improper grammar as an adult it takes your intelligence level down a few notches. So thanks Dad for harping on me for all those years. It paid off. And I look forward to harping on my daughter in the same manner.

October 17, 2011

Thank you John Tesh...

...for his intelligence for life. Whenever my family drives back to Omaha we look forward to when KGOR comes into range. Not only does this signal that the eight

hour drive is coming to an end, it also means that we get to listen to some great oldies intermingled with words of wisdom. John Tesh always gives you something to ponder and it is so much better than the mundane DJ banter.

October 18, 2011

Thank you percentages...

...for being an easy way to gauge activities. If someone says, "I am not feeling 100%" you immediately know something is not quite right. If someone says, "I will give 110%" you immediately know that they are all-in.

The only way you can help a situation is to be able to properly assess it. I am thankful that percentages allow me to do that.

October 19, 2011

Thank you childhood friends...

...for being the people who know you and love you no matter what. There is something to be said about the people whom you befriend during your formative years.

These are the people who were there as I figured out who I was and who I wanted to be. They stuck by my side as I made wrong decisions, experienced disappointments, and survived heartache. They were also by my side to laugh until our bellies hurt, celebrate our achievements, and make mischief along the way.

The people that you meet when you are going through something life changing usually end up being the people whom place emphasis upon you once things settle back down. They are the ones that know you the best, have seen you at your worst, and are at your side at a moment's notice.

I am thankful for my dear childhood friends. I am thankful that Tracy and I got to see each other tonight. I am thankful that I know I can call upon Shawn, Allison, Andy or Kellie whenever I need them - even if it has been years since we have spoken. I am thankful I can still call these people my friends.

October 20, 2011

Thank you blogs and social networks...

...for keeping me connected. Period.

Granted, I know there may be times when we need to disconnect for a while. But that is not really the connected I am talking about. What I am talking about is the ability to see pictures of friends, understand what is going on in their lives, and feel as though I am a part of it along the way.

People have said that social media or texting have ceased our abilities to communicate properly with one another. I agree with that statement, however I also see the transverse of that statement. Without social media I may not have known that an old friend had a baby, or that someone got a new career, or that someone needed support.

I know there are many people that I have not spoken to in ages, but through social sites I feel as though I remain connected with them. I am thankful that I have not truly lost touch.

October 21, 2011

Thank you football...

...for providing a mindless activity and quick quips to a person whom is mentally exhausted. There are times when you are just done. You can't talk anymore, you can't listen anymore, you can't think anymore...but at the same time you don't want to go home. You crave peace. You desire quiet. You want to be alone. But the thought of being at home, in silence, isolated does not sound appetizing.

I am thankful there is football and for the simple words of, "let's get out of here, go to a bar, and watch the game." It lets you know that the game is the activity. You don't have to carry a meaningful conversation - or any conversation for that matter. You just have to sit back, relax, and pepper in a few "AUGH"s and "Come on!"s. You are allowed to be part of society, but not an active member in it, for a few hours.

October 22, 2011

Thank you death...

...for allowing people the opportunity to reevaluate circumstances and put things into perspective. It seems weird to be thankful of death. Believe me, I would much rather have that person here than not. But there are things that have occurred during death's events that made me believe there is good to come out of the bereavement process.

I have witnessed a family circle take one step closer to center. I have observed broken links within the circle mend. I have seen the barriers to the circle start to break down.

And throughout everything the family has learned to hug a bit tighter, say "I love you" a bit more, and recognize the tug within our hearts a bit easier.

Thank you CES. We love you. We miss you. You will live forever in our heads and in our hearts.

October 23, 2011

Thank you courteous drivers...

...for realizing that they are not the best drivers so they stay to the right and out of the way. If only everyone would be so nice.

October 24, 2011

Thank you confidants...

...for having an open ear, a level head, and a warm heart. Every person needs to have a true confidant in their life. We need the security of being able to share whatever needs to be shared. We need the safety of not being judged. We need the guarantee of knowing we are being heard.

I am thankful I have found my confidant. And I'm even more thankful I married him.

October 25, 2011

Thank you catch phrases...

...for being a subject changer when things get a bit awkward. We have all been caught in those instances when something unexpected, slightly embarrassing, and potentially uncomfortable occurs. I am thankful that my friends have embraced catch phrases to rescue us from ourselves.

I like soup. Sheboygan. And, end scene.

October 26, 2011

Thank you humming...

...for being a private way to perk up the mood. When I am out walking, I keep finding myself humming. And it is not a particular song - or any song for that

matter. It is just my own little ditty. But I find that it lightens my spirits and my step. And it isn't as disrupting as whistling. Not a fan of whistlers.

October 27, 2011

Thank you authors...

...for providing materials that can span the ages. A form of entertainment that has stood the test of time is a book. Movies, television, video games, apps - all new revelations when compared to books. Books are simple to obtain, simple to understand, and simple to embrace.

Some people resort to vegging on the couch as their form of relaxation. I challenge them (and myself) to turn off the TV and pick up a book. Your mind still gets to unwind, but it also gets wound around a new story - a story that could allow you to escape, to dream, to laugh.

Those who claim to not be readers just haven't found the right author yet. I am thankful there are so many who are willing to share their craft with others.

October 28, 2011

Thank you curfews...

...for attempting to keep the youngins under wraps and for providing a bit of devilish behavior for adults. A curfew is a rule that, when broken, doesn't really do anyone any harm. But for the offender, there is a surge of mischief, trouble, and defiance. Nothing feels as sneaky as breaking curfew.

And it is even more fun when, as an adult, you attempt to put a curfew on yourself. Then gleefully break it. Then ground yourself the next morning.

October 29, 2011

Thank you running jokes...

...for being a go-to for a cheap laugh with the insiders who know it. And you can get a bigger laugh when the instigator of said joke doesn't realize that it has become a running joke on his behalf.

Because, you know what would be great? If Ohio State beat Wisconsin.

October 30, 2011

Thank you silence...

...for providing an atmosphere in which I can listen to the assemblage of voices within my head. Sometimes you need solitude to sort out everything - to delete those voices that have no business being there, to store those voices that need to reappear periodically, to answer those voices that warrant your attention.

I am thankful my household knows when I need my silence - and allows me to have it.

October 31, 2011

Thank you Halloween...

...for being a holiday all about the kids, both young and old. It was such a fun experience watching Baby Girl get into the Trick-or-Treating activities. She understood the concept and had a ball running from house to house and seeing all the new people in their costumes. It put a smile on my face to see such a big one on hers.

And I am thankful that the Switch Witch came to our house to take all the candy away (save a few pieces) and leave her a toy in exchange. A person with Stock blood coursing through her system does not need extra sugar.

November 1, 2011

Thank you snuggles...

...for imparting the human connection we all desire. I remember snuggling with my mom on the couch when I was little. She would be laying down and I would crawl in beside her - either teetering on the outside edge or wedging myself against the back. It wouldn't necessarily be comfortable, but I still wanted to do it.

Today as I was absent-mindedly sitting on the couch, my own daughter came over and plopped herself right beside me and rested her head on my shoulder. I instinctively wrapped my arm around her and she snuggled in tighter. A wave of comfort came over me, as I hope it also did for her.

Even a simple snuggle of the arm, a hand resting on your hip, or a breath gently blowing your hair provides that connectively; the contact that humans crave. I am thankful I grew up in a house that openly hugged, kissed and snuggled. And I am thankful my little family embraces these practices as well.

November 2, 2011

Thank you perspective...

...for allowing people from the outside to see what things are like from the inside. Allow me to let you into a secret not all people know...things are never as they seem from the outside. People put up fronts, put on airs, or put under faults.

So when people look upon others they may wish for what they have, make harsh comments on what has been done, or hope for admission to their misfortune. But what they do not know is the true reality of the situation. They will never know that until they step inside that world and experience it for themselves.

I am thankful I have had some real world experiences that have made me second-guess judging someone else. You can never truly know the cause of someone's actions, unless you ask.

November 3, 2011

Thank you to things falling into place...

...for making things feel as though all is right in the world. I love it when I think about something and then, by chance, it actually happens. It does not occur frequently, so when it does, I have to take a step back and be thankful for it.

November 4, 2011

Thank you Free To Be You and Me...

...for teaching me valuable life lessons masked as funny, unique songs. I loved this record when I grew up - listened to it often, memorized all the words, made up dances and performed skits. Looking back on it now, I am thankful for it for many reasons.

First, whether I knew it at the time or not, it taught me to be comfortable in my own skin, that I can accomplish anything, and to be tolerant of others even if they are different. Those are a lofty messages and this group eloquently addressed them. I honestly believe this album impacted the person I became.

Second, it was a children's album, but it did not pander. Kids know when people dumb things down. Kids are not stupid, they just haven't had robust experiences yet. Kids respect not being treated like a kid.

The last thing that impresses me about this album emerges when I compare it to the music available today. Today, our kids hear lyrics like, "I am going to brush my teeth with a bottle of Jack.", "We're looking for something dumb to do, I think I want to marry you.", or "My milkshake brings all the boys to the yard."

Compare that to, "Well, I don't care if I'm pretty at all. And I don't care if you never get tall. I like what I look like, and you're nice small. We don't have to change at all.", "When I grow up, I'm gonna be happy and do what I like to do.", or "It's all right to cry. Crying gets the sad out of you. It's all right to cry. It might make you feel better".

Thank you Marlo Thomas and friends.

November 5, 2011

Thank you Kim and Marta...

...for sharing your calming disposition with me. As I look back over the days, weeks, months, years of my life, I tend to look at the constants that are weaved through the ups and downs. Kim and Marta are two of those constants.

There is something special about Kim and Marta. When I am around them, my body takes an extra deep exhale. When I receive a hug from them, I'm effected by the honest warmth they exude. When I talk with them, it is devoid of pretension.

I can't put my finger on what it is that makes them so unique. Maybe it is their open hearts, their accepting aura, their sensible perspective. Who knows. But I am thankful they have been there with open arms when I have needed them.

November 6, 2011

Thank you preparedness...

...for alleviating the panic of last minute decisions. I am skeptical of the people who can plan out meals on a weekly basis. I am more of a buy-a-bunch-of-stuff-at-the-store-and make-whatever-sounds-good kind of a person. But I attempted to see what all the buzz was about, so I made a whole meal after dinner to pack up for a few lunches. I kind of liked it. I am thankful I gave it a try. We'll see if it can be duplicated again in the future.

November 7, 2011

Thank you ignorance...

...for it, honestly, is bliss. Think about the definition: it is the state of being uninformed. Usually it is a synonym for calling someone stupid. But I want to turn that thought on its head. There are times when I think ignorance can make you smarter.

Look at the construct of the word. A large piece of it is "ignore". So if one were to practice ignore-ance, they may be better off. I am a happier person when I ignore the news. True, I may get strange looks from my blank stares when someone mentions Cain, Greece, Berlusconi, Paterno, or Bieber. I may even be called ignorant. But that is the price I will pay to not be disgruntled by all the messed up things in the world. How smart is that?

November 8, 2011

Thank you clumsiness...

...for breaking the tension and making people laugh. I am a clumsy person. I admit it. I trip over things. I drop things. I spill things (a lot). I run into things. I fall down. I do it so much that it doesn't even phase me anymore. I know not to buy nice things because I will inevitably ruin it the first time I wear it. I warn people not to hand me things of importance.

But more importantly, I laugh at myself when I succumb to my own clumsiness and encourage others to laugh with me. I don't mind being that person, and I am thankful I can embrace it instead of try to hide behind it.

November 9, 2011

Thank you to this year coming to an end...

...because this project is getting more difficult the longer I go. I've debated continuing into 2012, but on days like this that task seems impossible. Coming up with a new topic every day is a challenge. But I will push through and see this task to its end. I am thankful that tomorrow it may be easier.

November 10, 2011

Thank you soul mates...

...for aiding in the transformation of the person I have become. I understand that some people wait their whole lives to find their soul mate. I empathize with them. I appreciate the void it must create. I say these things not to demoralize anyone who is still looking, or to say that you need a soul mate to be complete. But instead I say them because I acknowledge how lucky I am.

I found my soul mate when I was 14 years old. I doubt I would have used the term soul mate at that time. It started out as pure puppy love. But there was something there. The metaphorical spark went off. We started dating two years after that when our paths crossed more frequently. There was always a connection. At times, one or the other of us couldn't figure out what we were

suppose to do with that connection or how it was suppose to fit into our lives. We pulled apart and rebounded back multiple times.

Until finally the day came when we figured it out. And we have been together ever since. Our bond is unbreakable. He is my best friend. He is my partner in crime. He is my brother. He is my playmate. He is the father of my daughter. He is my lover. He is my husband.

Within the last year, I have questioned the reason why we met so early in our lives. I hope it is because that relationship was necessary in forming the people we are today. But I also regret to think it is because we will be taken apart before we are ready.

Life isn't fair. Some people may never find their soul mate. Others may loose their soul mates. And both are very difficult things to accept.

November 11, 2011

Thank you bus boys...

...for fulfilling the last quarter of the dining experience. When going to a restaurant or a benefit function, you take note of the ambiance, you savor the food, you become friendly with your waiter. But many people overlook a key player in the evening. The bus boy. These people work just as hard, if not harder, than anyone else in the room to ensure your needs are being addressed. Need more water, drop your fork, spill a drink - it is the bus boy that runs to your aide. So the next time you are out, take a moment to acknowledge your bus boy and say thanks for everything he does.

November 12, 2011

Thank you national championships...

...for being the ultimate celebration. I have to look back on my college career and say I was blessed. National Championships are a big deal and are rare to come by. Not all schools get the opportunity to fight for one, nor are able to secure the title. While I was at school, the Nebraska football team won three National Championships. Being a football fan, a Husker fan, and a fan of fun - this was awesome! How lucky am I? I am thankful I was born when I was, decided to go to school when I did, and that the team was so kick ass back then.

November 13, 2011

Thank you flirting..

...for reminding us that people are meant to interact with each other. I look at my little family and can honestly define us as a flirtatious family. I do it, my husband does it, our daughter is definitely learning the craft - and I don't think there is anything wrong with that.

It may be strange to say, but I relish witnessing other girls flirting with my husband. I mean, I can't knock them for it. He is a very charming man. But maybe the real reason I enjoy it so much is because there is a bit of competitive spirit in the air when I see it happen. It is like, "Yeah, you go ahead - giggle, toss your hair, and touch his arm. He may even flirt back with you, but he is going home with me tonight." I love it. It makes me smile.

And the biggest thing about our family's level of flirting is that it is completely harmless. I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that he would never act upon one of these encounters. As he knows the same is true for me. Now, we just need to ensure Baby Girl comprehends the rules of the game as she gets older.

November 14, 2011

Thank you religion...

...for sticking by my side, even when I may not have cared if it did. I was raised with the gospel truth that there is a God. I always agreed with this notion and never wavered. I questioned going to church every single Sunday morning at 8:30, but never questioned what was practiced there.

I've had countless conversations about religion in my lifetime. And the more it is discussed, the more I wonder what to believe. My partner believes there is something bigger than us, but it's not a bearded man sitting the clouds. He believes that our energy lives on, but not in a place high in the heavens. He believes that organized religion was concocted to explain the unexplainable, but now that human kind has evolved we have science to provide those rationales.

So I struggle. I can see the validity in all these statements. And, at times, feel foolish forever believing anything else. However, I have a hard time abandoning everything that I was taught. I am comforted by the notion of a God and that He is watching over us. But then, in looking at everything that He is supposedly watching, I question what the heck He is thinking. Is this really what He wanted?

I am not looking to be hit like a bolt of lightening with the answers. I know that will never happen. But I am thankful that if there is a God, that He understands the conflict I have, and hopefully will tolerate me until I figure it out.

November 15, 2011

Thank you pay day...

...for making it acceptable to splurge with reckless abandon two times a month. Payday is fun. You experience a moment of euphoria when you first see your account balance. Then a flash of panic as you pay all your bills. Then finally, a calming wash of comfort when you realize you have a little something left. This feeling affords you the luxury of believing that you have the money to whatever you want to do. You go shopping. You go to dinner. And go to bed thinking all is right in the world.

Then you wake up and realize you have another two weeks until you get paid again. What were you thinking? I am thankful for a day of bliss—before the money hangover sets in.

November 16, 2011

Thank you @RickyGervais...

...for summing up creativity more eloquently and comically than I could have done. I read one of his essays today and it gave me a swell of pride for who I am, what I believe, and the task I am attempting to complete. I believe it will continually be a point of reference for me.

I don't want to devalue the essay itself by attempting to paraphrase it. Instead, I recommend reading the whole thing.

I May Have Been Wrong About Twitter <http://bit.ly/oQwzgF>

I am thankful I too have embraced elements of Twitter, thus allowing me to follow interesting characters that I normally would not have encountered on a daily basis. It has expanded my perspectives, supplied a slew of chuckles, and provided an open forum to put myself out there. Here's to "mucking about".

November 17, 2011

Thank you water...

...for keeping us alive and refreshed. I recently took stock in how much water I drink. Seriously, I guzzle the stuff. I'm surprised that I don't float away. And there are days that I feel as though I could not possibly be satiated. So I am thankful water is readily available. Finally, I have a habit of which I can be proud.

November 18, 2011

Thank you cancelled plans...

...for sometimes being the correct path to take. I do not like to cancel plans. I like being the reliable one that keeps her calendar up to date, does not double book, nor forgets about events.

But sometimes there are extraordinary circumstances that warrant a last minute cancellation. I may have been heart-broken by the initial decision, but deep down there was something telling me it was the right thing to do. And I am thankful I listened to that little voice.

November 19, 2011

Thank you wedding song...

...for expressing something powerful back then, while expressing something equally powerful—but different—today.

The song we selected for our wedding spoke to me ten years ago. There were lines within the lyrics that described what I felt and how I depicted that day, while others stood indifferently. Many years later, those once insignificant lines now cry louder than the originals. The song seems to have evolved right along with me. I am thankful that I can hear it and have it effect me just as strongly today as it has over the years.

November 20, 2011

Thank you lazy Sundays...

...for being possible, even with a little person in tow. We had thought that a day without showers, in our PJs, watching movies and ordering take out would not be possible once we had kids. I am thankful that we have a child that parties just as hard as we do and needs a day to recuperate as well.

November 21, 2011

Thank you bad habits...

...for being right and wrong simultaneously. Bad habits are inferior because they are commonly defined as "actions that not good for you". But you know what, the reason why they become habits is because they are gratifying. So as long as I have a slew of good habits to counteract my bad habits, I am going to be thankful I can indulge in those indiscretions.

November 22, 2011

Thank you spell check...

...for being the most relied-upon technological tool in my repertoire. I may have a vast appreciation for the English language and have a slew of seemingly uncommon words at my beck and call. But the talent of spelling those words is one that I have not been able to grasp. There are a handful of words that I consistently misspell - for example I believe definitely should be definitely. So I am thankful that when I desire to portray myself as an intelligent human being, I have spell check to watch my back.

November 23, 2011

Thank you Wednesday...

...for this particular Wednesday is the day before Thanksgiving. As a kid I got amped up on Christmas Eve. That is the emotional capacity of a kid...anticipating the arrival of Santa and what was to be discovered beneath the glitter and bows.

As an adult I get giddy on Thanksgiving Eve. There is something so intrinsic about the week of Thanksgiving. You wake up Monday morning knowing you only have three days of work in front of you. You start the grocery shopping and some of the prep for the wonderful celebrations to come.

Then comes Tuesday. More prep and more anticipation. Finally Wednesday arrives. You hope for a light days work since the majority of your colleagues and clients have already started their vacation. Maybe you'll be lucky and get to duck out a few hours early.

The moment you walk out the office doors there is a wave of relaxation and jubilation. A four-day reprieve has begun and Thanksgiving is just hours away. I am thankful I embrace the holiday in this manner. I look forward to it each year.

November 24, 2011

Thank you small things...

...for when you reassess they are actually the big things. Today is Thanksgiving. For everyone without my ambition, it is the one-day where they reflect and give thanks for the positive aspects of their life.

If you take a single day to examine a year, the negative things are likely to rise to the top. So you end up saying, "things weren't great, but I am thankful for my family, friends and health." Now, read the part after the comma again. Those

three things that were discounted as something to fall back on are the things that we need to be thankful for every day.

I am thankful that I have taken time daily to say thanks, so I realize that family, friends, and health are the big things—and there are a lot of alternative small things to which I am thankful as well.

November 25, 2011

Thank you reward programs...

...for showing customers a smidgen of gratitude. It is always a delight to get something special for completing a routine action. I have a credit card, as most people do. I use it regularly, as most people do. I get enough points raked up over the course of the year to pay for Christmas presents, as most people may not.

The credit card company is not asking me to do anything special except activate my bonus rewards each month—which is as easy a pressing one extra button at the ATM. As a marketer in the credit industry I understand that the company is banking on the fact that many people will overextend themselves on credit, thus accruing interest. They were not banking on me to watch my expenses and pay off my balance every month. Thus they make no money on me — but have to give me a wad of it a few times a year. How lovely.

November 26, 2011

Thank you guest of honor...

...for getting people together. Sometimes the party is not about the guests, and deciding to attend is not about whether or not you want to go. It is about how much it would mean to the guest of honor to have you there. I am thankful I dragged my butt out of the house and made one particular honored guest extremely giddy.

November 27, 2011

Thank you good karma...

...for bringing Bongo back home safely. Over the past few weeks the Stock household has lost two very important things: my wallet and my daughter's lovey. In both instances when I realized they were missing I did not panic. I knew, deep down, that both would be found. And if they weren't, well, there was nothing that I could do to correct it.

Luckily, both were found. I am thankful I cashed in some of my good karma when it was needed most. And I plan on depositing more in the bank for when we need it again later.

November 28, 2011

Thank you Amazon...

...for allowing me to get all my holiday shopping done in one day...from the comfort of my couch. And to have it all delivered to where we will be celebrating. No trolling parking lots looking for a renegade space, no lines of people at the check out, no schlepping bags from store to store only to never find your quested item, no storing items in random places around the house in a weak effort to have them hidden, no attempting to pack all the presents plus a weeks worth of luggage in the back of the car, and most of all, no stress.

I am a fan of shopping and for finding the perfect gift, but I am also a fan of being done with my holiday shopping before December even arrives. Now I can concentrate on the real spirit of Christmas.

November 29, 2011

Thank you Geoffrey Baer...

...for turning Chicago it a city of mystery, history, and glory. Mr. Baer can take seemingly boring information and captivate an audience. My husband and I are addicted. We have seen every one of his specials on WTTW and watch them again and again during their pledge drives. He provides so much information in one episode that you couldn't possibly retain all the information in one viewing.

So thank you Geoffrey Baer for allowing me to see Chicago as a living and breathing thing, and to take heed in all that it has to offer.

November 30, 2011

Thank you Proactive...

...for taming the beast otherwise known as my skin. I am 35 years old but have the skin of a teenager. In some ways it's beneficial. It means that I haven't aged much over the years. But it also means that I am still prone to breakouts. Yes, I have had the luxury of dealing with bad skin for twenty years. Hooray for me!

I am thankful that I have found Proactive. It is the only long-term solution I have been able to find. And I know that it works because there are times that I become

lax and believe I may have finally outgrown my predicament. So I stop. Then wham o — they're baaaackk!

So thanks Proactive for coming to my rescue. You are my hero.

December 1, 2011

Thank you Christmas Carols...

...for framing the season perfectly. December 1 marks the day that holiday music officially becomes the playlist of preference for the next 25 days. The moment they get busted out I can't listen to them fast enough. There are ones that I missed so much for the last 340 days that put them on repeat. They are filled with such spirit, pep and positivity you can't help but be put in a better mood by just listening. I wish every holiday had songs created just for them. How fun would that be?

December 2, 2011

Thank you soap operas...

...for keeping my mind quick witted. Others play games or do crosswords to keep their brains in shape. I watch a soap opera. Some may question that because the plot lines in these things move so damn slowly that your mind goes numb. But have you tried to mentally create a family tree for one of these dynasties, or keep track of who slept with who, or remember whose kid is secretly being raised by someone else? It is hard work. Now wrap your head around this one...Jack Wagner, who is 52, plays the SON of a woman who is 57. Mind boggling, right? Who can have a child at the age of five?!

Thank you Bold and the Beautiful for keeping my mind bold and being on during my workout thus keeping my body beautiful.

December 3, 2011

Thank you pen and paper...

...for being the most reliable form of communication. I always have a notebook in my purse. If an idea comes to me, I can quickly jot it down instead of finding my phone, opening a program, typing it out—wait, what was that thought?

I take notes during conversations—both business and personal. I wake up in the middle of the night and write something down so I can get it out of my head, yet remember it in the morning. Most mornings I locate my notebook to find little treasures scribbled on the lines from the evening before.

Writing things down also make them seem permanent and gives them purpose. Did you make plans to get together more often, did you dream up a grand scheme for your fortieth birthday, did you ask someone else to do something for you? Write it down and the chances of them getting done vastly increase.

I don't know about you, but I am looking forward to getting picked up in a limo, while in my PJs, and driving to Sonic to order a foot long chili cheese dog and wash it down with a vodka-laced cherry limeade.

December 4, 2011

Thank you bathroom graffiti...

...for proving an outlet for targeted communication. It is kind of like a tweet for specified followers.

I am usually not one to promote vandalism, but I enjoy walking into a bathroom and seeing things doodled on the walls. I am not talking about the "Mary was here 11.11.11" or the "Doug's a jerk" messages. Those are just cries for help. I am talking about the song lyrics, the profound statements, political beliefs, and silly quips that are spewed across the walls. I could read them all night.

I am thankful for those moments of entertainment while visiting an otherwise boring venue.

December 5, 2011

Thank you for client meetings...

...for keeping me away from my normal commute this evening. Otherwise I could have exited my train stop just as the SWAT team was surrounding the area.

Thanks Uptown for keeping us on our toes. And thank you Uptown Update for keeping the community informed and communicative.

December 6, 2011

Thank you silly comedy...

...for providing cheap laughs. For this post I am just going to provide a series of websites. You do the rest and thank me later...

<http://www.youtube.com/baratsandbereta>

Found Barats and Bereta a long time ago and believe they are geniuses. Love their Skitlets but Mother's Day is hilarious. The Cubicle Wars are slapstick gone awesome.

<http://iwastesomuchtime.com/>

Do a search for the top rated. If you like quick, stupid humor...you're welcome.

<http://www.someecards.com/>

This is my Hallmark, join me.

December 7, 2011

Thank you stop motion holiday specials...

...for reminding me what it was like to be a kid at Christmas. I am enchanted by the old school holiday classics - Rudolph, The Island of the Misfit Toys, Santa Claus is Coming to Town, The Year Without a Santa Claus. When I was little and these specials would come on, I knew that Christmas was drawing near.

I am thankful these masterpieces did not get swallowed up by fancier digital executions, and I hope they will continue to be aired for years to come.

December 8, 2011

Thank you family Christmas cards...

...for highlighting the things that really matter to each of my friends. I fancy receiving holiday cards in the mail—seeing all the kiddos looking their best and reading the family updates. Granted, I follow many on Facebook and correspond with few others regularly, so most things written are not new news to me. But I do love seeing what each one decides to share. It lets me know what they treasure and hold dear.

I have never done Christmas cards myself...mostly because I am a cheapskate. But I am thankful to still be on the receiving end of so many. Happy holidays everyone!

December 9, 2011

Thank you Rolling Stone...

...for sharing thought provoking, expertly researched, and well-written articles. Rolling Stone. Really? Yes. Really. Thanks to my husband, I believe I am hooked on reading this magazine: the music stuff, eh, pass—but the heart of the magazine that now focuses on deeper matters, absolutely.

I just read three articles in issue 1144: The Party of the Rich, Welcome to the Occupation, and How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Protests. They opened my eyes to the world that is changing in front of me. I doubt I will go off and spout their theories at my next cocktail party, but they did make me question what I previously believed. And I am thankful I was exposed to the entire the story.

December 10, 2011

Thank you self-service postal kiosks...

...for making mailing packages so freakin' easy. No standing in lines. No dealing with unpleasant workers. No hassles. I heart you.

December 11, 2011

Thank you Salvation Army bell ringers...

...for keeping charity on every curb. Sometimes when we get swept up in bequeathing gifts to our loved ones, we forget about the individuals who do not have enough to give or the people who do not receive. I am thankful for the sweet pitch of Salvation Army chimes for reminding us Christmas is not about

December 12, 2011

Thank you coloring...

...for being an easy way to unwind. And the fact that my daughter can join me makes it even better.

I've had people tell me that once they start an activity with their hands they immediately relax. It focuses attention to one activity and shuts down all the rest. I've never had the attention span for common handcrafts: knitting, cross-stitch, macramé or that thing with the small pieces of yarn and the hook from the seventies. But I think I can embrace coloring. It is simple, doesn't require expensive supplies, and it takes just the right amount of time to complete.

December 13, 2011

Thank you family dinners...

...for providing a chance for everyone to share their events of the day. Or, in the case of our three year old, a chance to rattle off everything that has ever happened to her and get so excited about all the things in her head that she gets extremely animated and starts snickering in the middle of the stories. Totally awesome.

December 14, 2011

Thank you frenzied activity...

...for quickening your heart rate, shortening your breath and twitching your muscles. This afternoon I experienced a hunt like no other. Within moments of reading a notice, I was in hot pursuit. I thought I had failed multiple times. But I kept at it and succeeded. I still find myself grinning from ear to ear and getting shivers of excitement hours afterward.

Thank you Mr. Achatz. I will be counting the days until I get to redeem my prize.

December 15, 2011

Thank you modesty...

...for allowing me to realize it is not how much you have but how much what you have means to you.

December 16, 2011

Thank you random acts of kindness...

...for paying it forward. I just read a heart-warming story about some people around the Midwest who are anonymously paying off people's layaway accounts. I am inspired by it.

At this time of the year, people are more apt to make charitable donations. They drop money in the kettles, give dollars to organizations, or donate toys to the less fortunate. But what about the people who don't qualify for these handouts but need some extra help?

I like the idea of rounding out the giving to include all levels of need. And I am in complete support of doing so anonymously.

December 17, 2011

Thank you daydreaming...

...for allowing my mind to create my perfect world and granting me access within its walls for few hours.

Daydreaming provides an outlet to uncover your truest desires so when you snap out of your fantasy, you can start to alter the course of your reality. And when the stars align, hopefully your two worlds will collide.

December 18, 2011

Thank you projects...

...for keeping me motivated and rattling my complacency. It is always fun to dream up projects. Some come to fruition while others fizzle moments after they are born. However by continuously concocting new ideas I have an arsenal of schemes to keep me busy once a current project ends. I wonder what I will select for my new adventure.

December 19, 2011

Thank you buddy system...

...for making sure no man is left behind. School field trips were on to something. Once you were assigned your buddy you knew that someone was watching out for you.

The buddy system can extend into adulthood too. You need a push to get your butt to the gym? Call on your buddy. You need to take a break from being a parent? Tag in your buddy. You need to know if you should buy that dress? Ask your buddy. They have your back.

December 20, 2011

Thank you story time...

...for providing a special connection with BG. I look forward to the ritual of reading a book before bed: BG in her jammies, freshly shampooed hair, and Bongo in tow. I sit on the floor. She backs herself into my lap. That little body heavily pressing back into mine. Her head tilts against my neck. We read our book. Take turns flipping the pages. And end the day with a "love you, night night." The best ten minutes of my day.

December 21, 2011

Thank you sweepstakes...

...for the possibility of getting something for nothing. For a deal-seeker such as myself, sweepstakes are the ultimate. I don't have to fork over anything monetary. Usually I just supply my identity.

To some this may sound appalling. But I am a marketer by trade. I know why they are collecting this selective information. I know they will likely track my behavior. I know I will become a data record for them. But I don't care. Because I also know they will use this material to better target. As a consumer, I can enter a sweepstakes with the chance of winning something for free...as well as enter into a system that will likely sending me marketing material that is relevant to me. Overall, it is a win-win.

Now if I can actually win one of these sweepstakes...

December 22, 2011

Thank you sarcasm...

...for allowing me to say what I really want to say without it being offensive. It is honesty under the guise of humor. And if you can make someone laugh, it throws them off just enough so they don't catch the undertone of what you just said. It's manipulative, yes, but sometimes it is the necessary evil.

December 23, 2011

Thank you impromptu parties...

...for allowing the fun to happen whenever the mood strikes. During another grueling long car ride this evening I was at my wit's end. Then all of a sudden I hear a tiny voice whimpering a version of Jingle Bells to herself in the backseat. The noise became something of reckon and the persons in the front seats were compelled to join. All of a sudden the entire car was engulfed with singing.

After the thrill subsided, the original tiny voice asked, "We are having a party in our car, aren't we?" Yes. Yes we are.

December 24, 2011

Thank you Trinity Episcopal Cathedral...

...for supplying years of treasured Christmas Eve memories. When I think of Christmas Eve, the image that is immediately summoned is the close of mass.

The choir retreats to the back of the church. The lights are dimmed. Only the flicker of the pew candles light the sanctuary. The congregation joins together to

sing "Silent Night". Our family joins hands. I can't quite complete the first verse. I sit in awe and am sometimes moved to tears.

This is the Christmas spirit.

December 25, 2011

Thank you eyes...

...for being the windows to our souls. Out of every part of ones body and aura the eyes provide the greatest avenue into their being. To fundamentally understand a person you need to be able to bore into their eyes. If they avoid this interaction, then they have something to hide. If they allow it, you can peer deep inside and uncover an old soul, a kindred spirit, a welcoming character, or a protective quality. Eyes are the initial barometer for connection.

December 26, 2011

Thank you Mom...

...for being the best mom you know how to be. Raising children is difficult work. Although many "experts" believe they have the perfect How-To guide, there is no rulebook for perfect parenting. You have to trust your gut, believe you are making the right decision, and rely on your laurels.

Good parenting means raising independent thinkers. Great parenting means attempting to understand your child's point of view and either embrace it, find a middle ground, or agree to disagree.

Good parenting means forgiving a child's mistakes. Great parenting is never forgetting them.

Good parenting means holding on tight for protection. Great parenting is knowing when to let go.

Thanks Mom for providing a solid framework for my thinking, appropriately reminding me of past mistakes in an effort to prevent repeat performances, and understanding my need for space while pulling me close.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I love you.

December 27, 2011

Thank you Dad...

...for being the most supportive Dad anyone could ever have. I believe my strength and confidence were born from his benevolence.

How could I be insecure when I knew someone was there to catch me...or pick me up after I fell?

How could I be complacent when I knew someone was there to keep pushing me?

How could I be infatuate when I knew someone was there to help me attain my dreams?

Thanks Dad for leading me, standing by my side, and propelling me forward. I love you.

December 28, 2011

Thank you Tracy...

...for being my best friend since we were 15. We have celebrated a lot of firsts together - first loves, first legal drink at the bar, first encounters with police officers. And I know we will be friends long enough to celebrate a lot of lasts as well.

Our friendship has swung from seeing each other every day and sharing every minute detail to going months without talking and sharing only the most important events. Regardless, we have always been, and always will be, best friends. Time may pass, but we will forever be those inseparable high school girls.

Thanks Tracy for being my bosom buddy. I love ya.

December 29, 2011

Thank you Amy...

...for being my sister. No matter what happens, the sisterly bond will always be there. I am thankful that we can be honest with ourselves and each other - regardless of the outcome.

I am thankful for you. I am thankful for your family. I love you.

December 30, 2011

Thank you Daniel...

...for...EVERYTHING. I am not sure that I can even find the words to depict how thankful I am that you have selected me as your partner through this crazy adventure we call life. Every morning I am thankful to rise with you by my side. Every evening I am thankful we have survived another day.

There may be days when the world is challenging our backs and there may be days when the world is under our feet. Regardless, we will experience the rotation together. We picked each other and Baby Girl picked us. And I am thankful for this perfect adoption process.

I love you.

December 31, 2011

One Last Thank You...

...to Daniel, Charlie; Terry, Kathy, Amy, Derek, Deacon, Fischer; Chuck, Barb, Corey, Crystal, Alexis, Arebel, Joe, Becca, Zaine, Jaime, Laura, Madison, Mikeala, Morgan, Ben, Angie, Devin, Andrew, Kemp, Kim, Jeremy, Bryson, Callie, Jaxson, Kathryn, Jeremy, Tyler, Tanner; Meeta, Nana, Papa, Julie, Rachel, David, Joanne; Ginger, Kris, Todd, Drew, Holly, Kim, Marta, Aaron, Anne, Jerry, Kristin, Kari; Polly, Nancy, Bob, Lindsay, Jon, Natalie, Tyler, Julie, Andy; Catherine, Matt, Mary, Sarah, Margaret, Matthew, Micheal, Penny, Micheal, Joyce; Ashley, John, Jaime, Dan, Carrie, Toons, Nora; Julie, Alex, Mia, Mike, Bill, Tina, Margaret, Danny, Keith, Kale, Shae, Thomas, Natalie, Tristan, Jody; Steve, Cerina, Johnny, Krya, Will; Clarke, Jen, Aiden, Chris; Tracy, Matt, Mia, Sophia, Kellie, Bill, Graham, Brooke, Missy.

I am thankful for each and every one of you. Although you may not have received a dedicated post, please know that a piece of you was in every single one.

Thank you readers for following me on this journey and inspiring me to keep marching on.

And last, a thank you to me for completing the challenge I set forth 365 days ago. It was rough and I am proud of you for seeing it through.

Happy New Year.