Coming to you live from the satellite office that is the in-laws' house in Wisconsin, it would seem that we're just waiting for the news that Dave Huff is heading to Columbus from Pittsburgh in a drive that is actually quite nice this time of year. As for the corresponding move, you would have to guess that Carrasco and Laffey are the first two options and neither has exactly forced the Indians' hand in "not being able to keep them out of Cleveland"…which just goes along with the whole vibe of the 2010 season. In his last 5 starts, Carrasco has a 4.37 ERA, a 1.14 WHIP and 32 K to just 6 BB in 35 IP while Laffey has a 3.98 ERA, a 1.77 WHIP and 9 K to a whopping 15 BB in 20 1/3 IP since joining the Clippers' rotation. If I had to venture a guess, I'd give the edge to Carrasco, although "edge" is a relative term here when we're talking about a pitcher who's given up 10 HR in 77 1/3 innings in AAA.

Regardless of who will be coming up to replace the all-but-departed Huff, let's get going on a Lazy Sunday so I can get downstairs to enjoy the breakfast strata that is filling the house with aromatic goodness and while my Bloody Mary awaits…

Leading off with one of the only reasons to still be reading about these Indians, Anthony Castrovince has a great Inbox as usual , in which he rationalizes how to judge a "rebuilding" process:

Right now, the Indians are utilizing a lineup simultaneously geared toward development and contention, but that figures to change. Calling up top prospect Carlos Santana last week was an important step. Going forward, this club needs to find meaningful opportunities for Matt LaPorta and Michael Brantley in the everyday lineup. That could/should mean moving Russell Branyan and/or Austin Kearns, as neither of those guys fits into the Tribe's long-range plans.
--snip--
The Indians still have a wealth of unresolved issues in the outlook for their future rotation. Fausto Carmona has shaken off the instability he had shown the last two years, and Mitch Talbot has been a pleasant surprise in the No. 5 spot. It's a little more difficult to be sold on David Huff and Justin Masterson, though Masterson's last three outings, particularly his brilliant effort against Boston last week, are encouraging.
--snip--
We're seeing the Indians attempt to construct a homegrown bullpen that will eventually revolve around Chris Perez, who figures to take over the closing duties in 2011, if not sooner. Frank Herrmann has stepped up of late, but little has been reliable in the 'pen this year.

Ultimately, what you want to see this season is reason to believe that the next wave of talent is going to be able to contribute on a consistent and meaningful basis at this level. Thus far, the Tribe has been hit and miss in that department in 2010.

You want a couple of sentences that can sum up the 2010 season to date?
That last paragraph is the money shot and brings the whole 2010 season into focus in terms of the veterans and the youngsters and what has transpired to date. Some youngsters were given opportunities (albeit limited) and struggled, while other youngsters have been given a longer leash and…well, struggled. If you're looking for pleasant surprises or even young players that figure in past 2010 that have met or exceeded expectations, the list is confined to Carmona, Talbot, CF Perez, and Santana (small sample size considered) as definites and Masterson, Donald, and…well, that's about it for even the maybes.

The hope would be that the vision PAST 2010 is what starts to reveal itself here in the final 90+ games of the season and that the likes of LaPorta and Brantley can do what Santana has been able to accomplish in short order – to prove that they belong in the Indians future AND current plans. While looking at that list above of which players have been pleasant surprises (or potential pleasant surprises), it is comforting that 3 of the players are starting pitchers, one is a closer and two represent up-the-middle-of-the-diamond talent, which figures to be augmented if and when Cabrera and Sizemore regain their health and (ideally) their effectiveness.

That being said, the periphery of the roster (and that "periphery" is not that far removed from any semblance of a "core") seems wide open for a multitude of players to assert themselves into that mix of being future AND current options. We know names like LaPorta and Brantley

and some of the starting pitchers in AAA, who have disappointed to date. However, even outside of that group, opportunity would seem to be there for some young players (although we thought the same thing going into the season and look where we stand today...almost in July) who may have fallen through the cracks in their journey to MLB. What that says about the Indians' organization and their ability to draft or sign and develop legitimately impact talent is up to you, but the second half of 2010 could represent a perfect opportunity for the Indians to give an opportunity to some younger names that we may have heard about some time ago in an attempt to determine the level of production capable from any and all internal options before augmenting the organization.

On that topic, Adam Van Arsdale has a tremendous piece at LGT regarding "sorting through the detritus" of the Indians' farm system that is simply too good not to read. It effectively analyzes which of the older "prospects" could potentially contribute, and which ones should legitimately have a chance at doing so.

One of the names that stands out to me (and I know that Tony Lastoria hit on this in his Minor Happenings) from Van Arsdale's piece is Jared Goedert. Remember that whole question of who's going to play 3B once Peralta gets traded…um, what about Jared Goedert?

This is not breaking any new ground as I think that the aforementioned Mr. Van Arsdale has essentially made this comparison at some point over the last couple of weeks at LGT, but Jared Goedert's 2010 season calls to mind another older "prospect" who thrived in AA and AAA in a particular season and was able to parlay that success into a solid MLB career. I speak, of course, of Mr. K2…no, not the one who flipped over the handlebars of his crotch rocket:

2006 – Kevin Kouzmanoff (Age 24)
AA - .389 BA / .449 OBP / .660 SLG / 1.109 OPS with 15 HR, 19 2B in 276 PA
AAA - .353 BA / .409 OBP / .647 SLG / 1.056 OPS with 7 HR, 9 2B in 115 PA
Cumulative - .379 BA / .437 OBP / .656 SLG / 1.093 OPS with 22 HR, 28 2B in 391 PA

2010 – Jared Goedert (Age 25)
AA - .325 BA / .382 OBP / .540 SLG / .922 OPS with 7 HR, 14 2B in 186 PA
AAA - .391 BA / .429 OBP / .804 SLG / 1.233 OPS with 4 HR, 7 2B in 49 PA
Cumulative - .340 BA / .391 OBP / .598 SLG / .990 OPS with 11 HR, 21 2B in 235 PA

Just to put a bow on this, Kouzmanoff was a 6th Round Pick in 2003, who actually was promoted to MLB in that same 2006 season, never to return to the Minors and Goedert was a 9th round pick back in 2006, meaning that Goedert's prospect path has not been as linear as that of Kouzmanoff. To that end, certainly the continued success of K2 in the Minors (.975 OPS in 2005, .910 OPS in 2004) is not something that Goedert can claim (.657 OPS in 2009, .709 OPS in 2008), although Goedert did burst onto the scene in his first full season in the organization, when he posted a 1.020 cumulative OPS as a 22-year-old in 2007 in Lake County and Kinston.

When Peralta gets moved (not if), it's possible that the Indians give 3B to Andy Marte or some platoon of Andy Marte and Luis Valbuena. As I shudder at the latter possibility, let's realize that

it's entirely possible that the Indians use the remainder of the 2010 season to see what they have in guys like Goedert and Josh Rodriguez. We're already seeing it somewhat with Trevor Crowe (and color me unimpressed) in terms of the Indians giving some of these guys who have been labeled as "prospects" at one time or another and give them an extended look at MLB, whether it be Crowe trying to prove that he's even a suitable 4th OF or giving Goedert a chance to serve as the bridge between Peralta and The Chiz.

Moving on, Mitch Talbot is getting some run as a legit AL ROY candidate, with SI.com's Cliff Corcoran listing him as #3 on his ballot right now, saying (among other things) that:
Talbot is playing with fire with his miniscule strikeout rate, but has gotten by thus far with an excess of infield pop ups and double plays and some luck on balls in play, the last of which runs counter to his team's poor defensive showing thus far. Correction is coming, but I can no longer deny his performance to this point.

I've been saying it for a while, but I don't know how he's doing it and the last Indians' rookie who started strong out of the gates (one Mr. Jeremy Sowers, circa 2006) with poor peripherals eventually had his "correction" come with a vengeance. I'm not saying that a similar fate awaits The Fury, but whether he's able to keep up his current level of success will be an interesting subplot for the rest of the season.

As for the other subplot in the rotation that figures to play out in the next 5 weeks or so, the inclusion of Fausto Carmona on every list of "available" starting pitchers at the Trade Deadline nationally has continued to raise eyebrows. To date, I have always scoffed at the notion that the 2010 season is the time to trade Carmona as he's still working his way back from the no-man's land in which he has resided for the past two years. That being said, David at the terrific SABR Tribe site put forth the best case that I've seen for trading Fausto Carmona in that it's well-researched, wildly logical, and certainly gives pause to the idea that holding onto Carmona is the best path for the Indians to take.

While the piece raises some excellent points, the reason that I would balk in considering a trade of Carmona to be the most prudent path to take for the Indians is one that he himself mentions in the piece when he discusses Carmona's walks. He says that Carmona's "walk rate has lowered each month the season so there is some logical optimism in thinking that his improvements are not only legitimate but will even continue to progress" and that's where I think that the Indians need to let Carmona's "recovery" play out. After his performances recently, I think that he's closer to coming back than many people are giving him credit for (and it's folly to think that he'd recapture v.2007 immediately) and after nursing the wounded animal back to health, it behooves the Indians to find out if Carmona can recover a level close to his 2007 form.

What is lost sometimes when looking at a total body of work for a season is the improvements, however incremental, that a player is making. Carmona, who was literally "lost in the desert" out in Arizona last year has put together a 3.21 ERA in his last 7 starts, but more importantly has struck out 33 and walked 13 (6 of those coming in one start) in 47 1/3 IP. His groundball rate over those last 7 starts is 65% and his K rate is 6.97 K/9 with a K/BB rate of 2.53.

Want to know what those numbers were in 2007?
2007 GB rate – 54%
2007 K rate – 5.7
2007 K/BB rate – 2.25

Obviously, those improvements from even his 2007 peripherals come in just his last 7 starts and 7 starts is not enough to draw conclusions, but one of those 7 starts included a 2 K, 6 BB "performance" and in his last 2 starts, he's struck out 14 and walked only 1.

Ultimately, Carmona's career (in Cleveland or elsewhere) could be a roller-coaster ride rising to the peaks of v.2007 and falling to the valleys of v2008/v.2009 throughout the course of the season. However, with his performance finally trending in the right direction and with the club-friendly contract that he has (he's guaranteed just $6.1M next year with club options for $7M in 2011, $9M in 2012, and $12M in 2013…and compare those numbers to what's been paid to Westbrook since 2007), I would prefer to keep him around to see if he can front a rotation and set the tone for some young arms around him.

Perhaps some of that is still emotional (and we all know how well emotional attachments work out in the realm of following the Indians) as the idea that Fausto – the pitcher that made Torii Hunter feel hung-over, the one that pitched his way through the midges to plow through the Yankees – could be coming back to his former self is too much for me to divorce myself from as this guy, who bounced off of the mound in Game 2 of the ALDS is not one I'm ready to give up on.

An interesting corollary to the handing of Carmona and the potential trading of him is that what the Indians decide to do with Carmona is going to tip their hand in terms of how close the Front Office thinks this team is to legitimately contending. If they move him (and Westbrook, assuming they do), they go down to a rotation devoid of many MLB starts, much less MLB success. That, to me, would signal that they don't think that they're close and they're willing to throw in the towel for 2011 and probably 2012. Certainly, that's a conclusion that they could draw (they did it when they decided to move CP Lee and Vic, deciding that the 2010 team would not be a contender with or without Lee and El Capitan), but the manner in which the affordable – and club-controlled – contract of Carmona goes so far out into the future is going to be telling as to how the Indians' Front Office realistically views the timeframe for this "rebuilding/reloading/whatever" that's currently underway.

What that timeframe for this current build-up is may reveal itself in the coming weeks with the Trading Deadline inching closer. Until then, it's time to kick back on a Father's Day, enjoy some baseball on the XM, some golf on the TV, all while having the drink in my hand replenished by somebody throughout the course of the day…in an ideal world, of course.