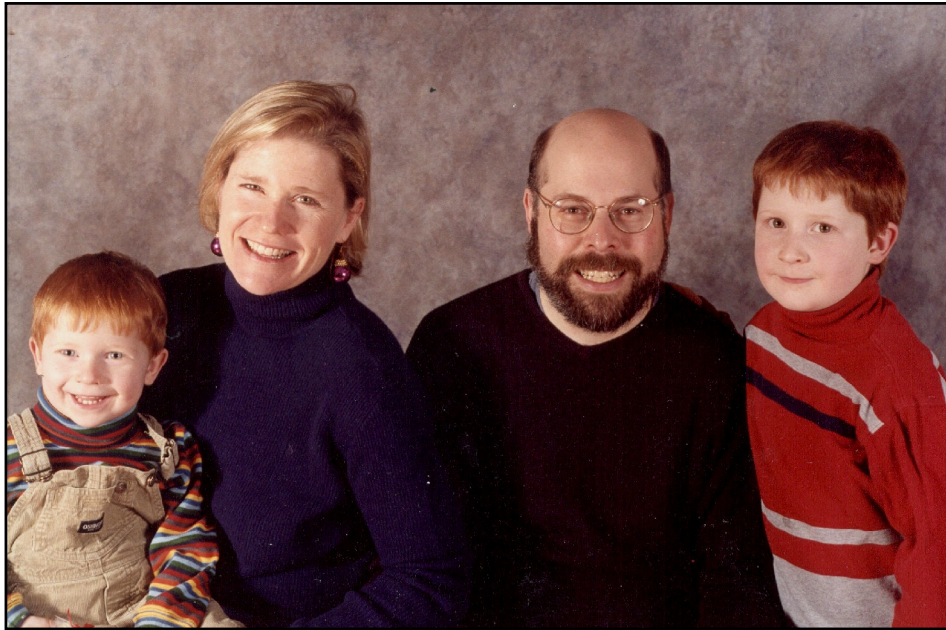

Grossman/Swart Chronicle

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Winter Edition

FAMILY / TRAVEL / BUSINESS / POLITICS / SELF-ABSORBED MUSINGS



Wendy writes...

Given our crazy schedule (see Travels at Large, p.2) how can I possibly get a full time job? So I teach part time -- 3 classes on Thursday mornings. Press and politics? Fundraising skills? Nope, music and movement to the 3 and under set. I even get paid. SO, I guess that makes me a professional musician. This is a job that isn't a job -- I know these songs; I can be creative and ad lib; I have found my audience! The kids are a riot, but the mothers and nannies are a bit tough. Rumor has it one of my students is part of the royal family, another has a 83 year old multi-billionaire father. So in 2005, I am planning on raising money from these rich kids' parents to start teaching music for free in the projects/estates. The great redistribution of wealth continues.

Josh is cranking along in Grade One (round two). A great decision! He is finally with his peers and is thriving. He enjoys his computer class, science, taking Italian, and anything to do with mythology. He is an excellent traveler, lost his first tooth in Venice, collects snow globes of the places we have been and is crazy about his goodies! He is also starting his own religion involving the power of the sun. He is starting to take names and collect money -- consider yourselves forewarned!

Simon is in a nursery program three mornings a week, loves music and singing goofy songs -- mostly about trains. He thinks he is a puppy dog named Oreo and wakes us up each morning with, "Oreo Puppy wants a bone". His smile remains infectious so who cares if he refuses to give up the nappies.

Take it away Evan...

Work has kept me pretty busy over the past twelve months, but things have started to settle down and business has been picking up. My company, BlueCube, provides back office software to large retail and hospitality

Dear Gentle Reader,

A bit of weak sunlight is making its way through the high window in my tiny office on the top story of our house. It is the depths of the bleak mid-winter but we have turned the corner. Sunlight starts 2 minutes earlier each day. It isn't raining. Josh is happy in Grade 1. Simon is doing brilliantly in reception. Evan hasn't traveled for a fortnight. My notes are in order for teaching next term. I gained less than a stone over the holiday season. There are biscuits in the tin and a kettle on the hob. I fancy so many British turns of phrase I don't recognize meself.

We received many wonderful holiday greeting over this past December and January. We are so lucky to have family and friends so many places who remember us... favorably! We are starting to acquire a history here in London but to hear from folks who know the real us (warts and all) and not just what we choose to tell people is always so heart warming.

We had a quiet Christmas. For the first time in 10 years we spent the holidays without extended family around. Which then raises the question: "What are our traditions? What are we instilling in our children during this commercialized

holiday time?" We light the Hanukah candles, spin the dreidle, read about the great miracle, put the star of David and the various Hindu Gods ornaments up on the tree, prepare for the Christmas pageant, set up the manger, bake cookies and buy gifts. And what does it all come down to? Weight gain and too many useless plastic objects. Here we are, building our family, as so many of our friends are. Trying to instill compassion and empathy in our children and be living examples of good people who nonetheless eat too much and play too little. But at least we are trying. We are all trying. Given the destruction of the Tsunami we are humbled as we make our way through our incredibly blessed lives, reminded of what is truly important.

May 2005 bring you and your family good health, a sense of purpose, time for reflection, well behaved children and something to laugh about every day -- even if it is just yourself.

Finally, we invite you to come visit! As the 47 people who stayed with us last year can attest, we have a comfortable guest bed and London is a fun town!

Much love,

Wendy, Evan, Josh, and Simon

companies. And, I split my time between sales, client management, and traveling to sales calls and clients.

Taking my EMEA (Europe, Mid-East AND Africa) responsibility seriously, I've started developing some clients in South Africa. Cape town is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and it is incredible to see how the third and first worlds intersect from one block to the next (large shantytowns next to the new airport, mule carts competing with Range Rovers on some streets, etc.) Seeing, ten years later, how the country has transitioned non-violently from Apartheid to freedom with remarkably little bitterness on the part of the "previously dis-enfranchised" (may as well use the PC term) is inspiring.

There never seems enough time to take advantage of all London and the UK have to offer, but we keep trying our best and have certainly appreciated having visitors who are up for trying new things.

My Winter Break

By Joshua Grossman, Staff Writer

This was one of the best Christmases ever, even though all the rest of my family didn't come to our house and stay for Christmas like they did last year.

It all started with a big party. There were over 50 people in our house. We



ate thousands of goodies including chocolate cake, potato latkes and Christmas cookies. We painted ornaments, we played

dreidle and I won the dreidle competition – I got the most Hanukah gelt in the whole entire game. We drank a ton of beer and whiskey too. Oh and by the way, don't forget the wine we drank. My favorite was red wine.

A couple of days later we got our Christmas tree. We went to Homebase and found the perfect tree. I preferred another one myself but that was the one that was on display so we couldn't take it home.

There was a play at church. I was one of the three wise men in the play. I was the very first wise man to give his gift to baby Jesus. Baby Jesus was a fake plastic doll. Simon, my little brother, was the cutest pig in the manger. He walked across the stage and everybody laughed because he was so cute.

We also went to Prague before Christmas and went across the Charles Bridge. We saw the astronomical clock and went ice-skating. By the way, do you know Kew Gardens Ice Skating rink? The ice skating rink in Prague was much better because it didn't have any puddles because it was (-) 3 degrees. I loved the Christmas markets and seeing the cod for sale in the tubs of water. Tatiana, our Slovakian babysitter, told us that when she was little they would buy a cod before Christmas and kept it in the bathtub. The day before Christmas her father would whack the cod dead with a piece of wood. Tata always stood back and went out of the room when her dad killed the cod. They would eat the cod for Christmas dinner.

We also saw a dead fox on a stick too. I mentioned I might like one for my birthday dinner but I didn't really mean it because I was just joking. There were beautiful stained glass windows at St. Vitus Cathedral, we wanted to see if Good King Wenceslaus was buried there but you had to get tickets and they were way too expensive.

After Christmas we went to Butlins'. The breakfasts there were absolutely deep fried and horrible. Although my dad, Simon and I loved it, my mom hated it. There was a parking lot facing the beach so we never got to go on the beach. There were a lot of smokers but luckily I got an air purifier for Christmas. There was a great swimming pool that was called Splash Water World and there were lots of water slides. I didn't go on the serious ones, I just went on the smaller ones but I still got pretty wet.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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Travels at large

January 2004 - Agadir, Morocco
Being with Rick, Bonnie and Dow; Evan parasailing; Josh learning to bargain for souvenirs in the souks; Simon thinking all beaches come with camels.

February - Amsterdam

Excellent science museum (Nemo), the canals, hanging with cousin Karen Dahl and her Dutch partner Marteen, marijuana for sale in the cafes, and prostitutes sitting in the windows. Try coming up with a good explanation when your inquisitive 6 year old says, "Look mom, a model!"

March - Barcelona, Spain

The architecture, the beach, the aquarium, the Miro Museum

June - Budapest, Hungary

Seeing Viki (Josh's babysitter from Boston) and her fiancé Barnabas, the Danube, Fishermans Bastion, the caves, Margaret Island

July – Venice & Tuscany, Italy

Being with Garret, Lalitha, Adam and Elliot, Sienna (just before the Palio), hiking along the Cinque Terra, the food, staying on a working farm!

August - Vermont

Seeing friends, sitting by the lake, enjoying the mountains!

October - Edinburgh, Scotland

The castle, the chocolate, the train ride there, climbing Arthur's seat.

November - Vermont

Family Thanksgiving traditions.

December – Prague, Czech. Rep.

The Christmas markets, the nutcracker at the National Theater, the hot wine.

January 2005 - Bruges, Belgium

Evan's 40th b'day! The canals, the beer, the chocolate, the architecture.

