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

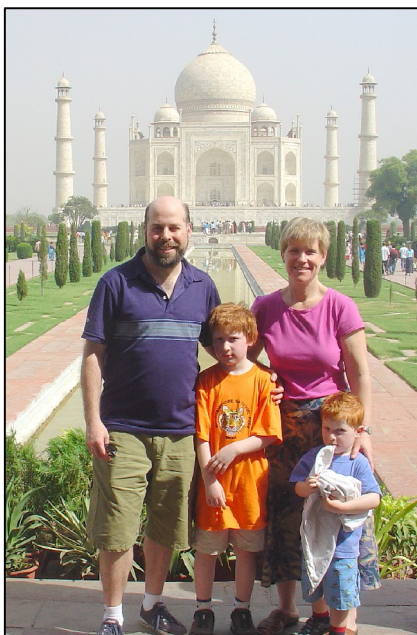
Dear Gentle Reader,
D We are back. Did you miss us last year? We realized the Holiday Season had passed when we awoke from our champagne induced hangover in mid-March thinking maybe it was time to take down the tree. By June, when we had time to write, it seemed a little odd to send Holiday Greetings – not that Flag Day and Father’s Day don’t count. Plus it is virtually impossible to find Christmas stamps in June. Note: Please check your envelope that is now on the floor - undoubtedly ripped open in frenzy when you realized this was your long awaited Swart/Grossman Chronicle. Is it sporting a holiday stamp? If not, oops, we were too late again!

It is December 2006. But wasn’t it just 1996? And what about 1986 when Mike Dukakis won his re-election as Governor? Wasn’t it just yesterday we were campaigning during the bi-centennial election in 1976? And, while we’re reminiscing, “What ever happened to John Anderson?” Perhaps we are getting older.

But here we are; the festive time of lights, reflection, revelers, holiday parties, good food, mulled wine, and useless plastic objects. December marks not only Christmas and Hanukah in our house but Simon’s fifth birthday and our annual holiday party. Holy Moly!

This is our fourth Christmas in Jolly Olde England and, being new home owners – story to follow – it won’t be our last. We are fully prepared this year to hand deliver Holiday Cards to neighbors (which, according to some Dickensian scholars, was started after Charles Dickens big, but not financially lucrative, hit “A Christmas Carol” in 1834), we have booked tickets for a number of pantomimes (Pantos, as they are affectionately known, are kids plays with a whole separate dialogue written for the adults that can be quite bawdy and incredibly funny. They also feature men in drag. What is there not to love?), we will be ice skating around the Tower Of London, and visiting Father Christmas at Kew Gardens where he has set up residence in his Woodland Dell.

With all that activity who has time for reflection? However, on the agenda for



2007, much to the family’s chagrin, is a family discussion on value-based decision making and re-looking at how our actions reflect our values. But until then, bring on the grog!

May 2007 bring to you and your family good health, a sense of purpose, time for reflection, graceful aging, well behaved children, regular dental check ups, and something to laugh about every day – even if it is just yourself.

Much love,

Wendy, Evan, Josh, and Simon

The House that eBay Rebuilt...

Yes, we bought a house. Same street, 16 houses down towards the Heath. Wild story involving hand written notes, freshly baked cookies, a drumming circle featuring Simon shaking his posterior, a pinball wizard, an outdoor loo, and a solicitor’s firm straight out of the Pickwick Papers. Let us know if you are interested in writing the screenplay for “A Year in Golders Green” and we will give you the details. What? Golders Green, the Hassidic enclave of London, doesn’t have the same caché as Provence? Pish.

In January we will be ripping off the top and pouring in money so that by June, we hope, a lovely house will pop out.

As many of you know, Evan is a shopper and now that he can shop on-line he regularly fills his habit. So far we have a fireplace, 8 stained glass windows, a stereo and a bathroom basin courtesy of eBay. Is this a good thing?

Our contact info will stay the same except #9 Corringham turns into #41.

Updates...

Those of you watching the ongoing saga of Wendy and Her Work Life will remember that I re-appeared in London as a Music And Movement teacher for the three and under set. I am still “The Woman with the Guitar”, but instead of getting paid to teach rich kids, I am now a volunteer teaching poor kids in Harlesdon – mostly refugees from Somalia. Fascinating; Fulfilling.

In addition I am doing a lot around community service at the American School in London. Check out www.asl.org for the article.

Evan continues to run the European operations for BlueCube software, which is now part of the larger RedPrairie Corp. He’s no longer the only permanent employee in the region and now has about 10 people working for him over here. He has been very focused on the new house (which will have built-in speakers and Cat-5 wiring throughout, whatever that means) and continues to spend more money on toys (albeit technological ones) than Josh & Simon combined.

Josh is now in third grade at the American School in London and we are confident he will make it to fourth. He is studying London and the Victorians this year and loves making things, skiing, sushi, and his friends.

Simon is in reception at our local council school – a mile long walk from our house. He is a funny, smiley, goofy guy who routinely has tea parties with his guest Power Rangers and stuffed animals.

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Interviews

Joshua, 9 ½ years old

What classes do you like in school?

Italian, art and science. I think Italian is quite fun because you get to do cultural stuff and activities with the language. Seniorina. Ernestina [his teacher] does all kinds of fun stuff like the pasta jar. Plus she also even celebrates holidays with us and we get to do all sorts of fun stuff like her friend Linda who's a cook at an Italian restaurant comes in and makes tiramisu with everybody.



Your dream vacation?

It would be a great experience to go to the North Pole because it would be really fun to see what it's like in the cold air and feel all the snow and if we're really lucky I could even take a picture of a polar bear.

What do you like around London?

I enjoy the zoo, the natural history museum, the science museum and the aquarium. Because I completed all 6 passport activities I myself am now a member of the Natural History museum. I can go to the special members room and do all sorts of activities – art stuff, movie making and behind the scene tours. You also get a member's discount at the gift shop.

Your favorite holiday?

Probably skiing or Vermont. Skiing it was really fun to be with all my friends. Vermont it's just really fun to be with my Grandma and Grandpa and get a really nice taste of the summer. Plus the alpine slide rocks!

What books have you liked?

With my dad I enjoy reading *Inkspell*, *Inkheart* and all the *Harry Potter* books. By myself I enjoy reading all the "ology" series – *Wizardology*, *Dragonology*, *Pirateology* and *Egyptology* and they're going to come out with way more. Plus I also like to read mysteries, like the A-to-Z mysteries but no big fat books like *Sherlock Holmes*.

Best thing about having a little bro?

I don't know whether to say getting a slice of his birthday cake or getting him to do almost anything I say. Plus he does great hugs.

If you were king of the world?

I would make mints of money, but all of the money would go to saving the polar bears in the arctic. And also I would own one of every polar bear stuffed animal in the world, but no more than one of each because otherwise it would get too confusing. And, everyday would be Ben & Jerry's free ice cream day.

Anything else?

If you want to know more, come straight over to London, there's a guest room waiting for you.

Simon, 5 years old

What do you like to do on vacation?

[Photo of Simon searching for Amnites on the Jurassic Coast in Southern England] I like to go souvenir shopping and getting toys, especially Kinder Surprise Eggs which are chocolate in an egg shape and inside there's a little pod that holds a little toy and there's lots of different things like little dancing mushrooms and little space probe-y things and toys from the movie *Cars* and other tiny things. And you get to eat the chocolate.



What do you do during recess? I go on the climbing frames. They even have a whole football court but you can't play football there.

What did you like best about this month?

I liked getting presents on my birthday, especially the power rangers.

If you were king of the world?

If I were king of the world, I'd make every day Christmas, my birthday and Halloween all together, every day.

What's the best thing about having a big brother?

He sends me on missions and tells me special stories at night.

Where would you like to go on vacation?

China.

Why? To see Pandas, what else?

Anything Else?

My favourite day is Thrilling Thursday when Mommy and I have adventures to the Royal Air Force Museum and the Dino-history museum.

Travel Highlights

Feb. 2005 & 06 – Skiing in Austria

April 2005 – San Diego

How lucky we are that Wendy's mom lives in such a fabulous city. We'll be back in April 2007 for more time with Mama Jo.

July 2005 Paris & Aix En Provence with Garret, Lalitha, Adam and Elliot. The annual pilgrimage with Wendy's brother and family.

July/August 2005 & 06 – Winhall, VT Seeing friends and Evan's family. We have a big house and love to have people visit. We will be back July 22 – Mid August.2007. Book now!

October 2005 & 06 – Hiking England's Southwest Coastal Path Yes, the kids are old enough to have adventures of the physical kind. Wendy's Dad has joined us these past two years for hikes along the spectacular coast. Wendy's brother Rick, wife Bonnie and daughter Dow have been living in London these past 2 years and joined us for the hike to Penzance as well. We've now completed 30 miles of the 400 mile path.

November 2005 & 06 – NY & VT Family Thanksgiving tradition.

April 2006 – India

Visiting Patti Madigan, Randy Kolstad and sons Will & Grant. We sponged off their hospitality in New Delhi while visiting the most vibrant, fascinating, sad, mystical, magical, rich and poor combined country. Josh and Simon were instant celebrities with their red hair. We also spent time in Agra and Jaipur with a stop at the Ranihambore National Park for a Tiger Spotting.

June 2006 – Budapest, Hungary

Josh and Simon were asked to be in Viki and Barnabas' wedding; so wonderful to be with our Hungarian family!

July 2006 – Turkey

Another fabulous holiday with Gar, Lalitha, Adam and Elliot. The ruins of Ephesus, the ancient roman bathes, the incredible coast. Our lodging was on a hillside farm with braying donkeys, thousands of lavender plants and the loveliest people you could imagine.

Dec. 2006 – Rome

Quick break to the other city of seven hills (not Somerville). A great walking city where you can get pizza and tortellini in every restaurant.