

# Swart/Grossman Chronicle

Volume 1 Issue 10

Price: For you, still free.

Winter Edition, Feb 2009

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

Dear Gentle Reader,  
We are back. Did you notice we were gone? Not that we really went anywhere. And now we are here. Writing to you. To tell you about us. Why? Because somewhere back in 1995 we started writing these Holiday Chronicles and they just sort of stuck...but we forgot last year...or maybe we were just too lazy.

In a break with tradition, and a nod to reducing our carbon footprint, we are emailing our Holiday Chronicle to our US based friends, relatives and random people we met on the bus, as well as our international and UK-based friends, neighbours, relatives and people we met on the Tube.

*Welcome to more information than you ever wanted on the Swart/ Grossman family!*

A few short weeks ago President Obama was inaugurated and needless to say it was hard for us not to think back to the last time a Democrat was inaugurated for his first term -- January 1993. While the rest of the world was rightfully blown away by the historical significance and excitement of it all, Evan and Wendy were wallowing in personal remembrances of days past and how important they use to be. As many of you know Evan relived his glory days and helped out the Presidential Inaugural Committee with the train trip to the Inauguration and was able to witness the excitement first hand while Wendy held an inauguration party in Golders Green. Check out our article on the BBC:

<http://tinyurl.com/evanwendybbc>

Can we say it? 2008 was filled with sadness, weirdness and uncertainly and while we are hanging on to the fun pieces we are not sorry to say goodbye. Focus on 2009 shall we? Happily we spent our holidays wallowing in the love of our combined families in California and New York. In brief, we are all fine and trying hard to age with grace and wisdom.

Simon was sad to say good bye to six but has been embracing seven and the idea of going on sleep over's. Josh at 11 is enjoying new found independence and an



*In front of Christmas tree at before San Diego Symphony pops concert in December*

email account. Evan at 44 loves the symmetry of his age, and Wendy at 46 is pretending she is 44.

2009 will have us saying good bye to Jolly Olde England after close to 6 remarkable years. Read below for related article.

May your 2009 be full of reflection, (...but not too much or you will drive yourself and everyone around you nuts), respectful children, good dental check ups, strong joints, and something to laugh about every day --even if it is just yourself.

With all our love and respect,

*Wendy, Evan, Josh, and Simon*

## **The House that eBay and IKEA Rebuilt, pt. 2...**

Yes, we bought, renovated and moved into our own house 16 months ago, just in time for the big housing crash. Timing has never been our forte. Our 18 week project that somehow turned into 42 weeks finally ended in October 22, 2007 when we moved into #41 Corringham Road. After living out of suitcases in various parts of North London and Vermont for 5 months it was great to unpack. Our migrant days reminded us

again how little you need to be happy. The art is hung, the 100 year old hand painted Staffordshire toilet flushes, the beds are made, and Evan's 45 kg cappuccino maker that we have carted around for the last 9 years is working again! Book your reservation now - the guest room is up and running through June 2009.

## **Updates...**

When last we checked in Wendy had reappeared in London as a Music And Movement teacher for the three and under set. I have hung up my guitar (but will happily take it down to lead a few verses of Puff the Magic Dragon) and am back consulting to charities and NGO's. I just finished an exciting strategy project for The Science Museum of London. Check out [www.karantswartconsulting.com](http://www.karantswartconsulting.com) for more info.



*Halloween 2008*

Evan has worked hard over the past few years to build the European division of RedPrairie Retail (software for inventory and workforce management) into a self-sustaining operation. When I arrived (in

## **Contact info thru June 25, '09**

41 Corringham Road  
London NW11 7BS United Kingdom  
011 44 208 201 9179 or  
1 678 388 9189 from the US (ip phone)  
wswart@usa.net / egrossman@usa.net

2003) we were doing less than \$2m in revenue per year, and in 2008 we did close to \$20m (and quite profitably). Unfortunately, I did a little too good a job of making the business self-sustaining, so over the next few months (through June) I'll be completing the transition to local management and integration within the broader RedPrairie organization and then heading off for adventures still TBD (let me know if you are aware of any interesting job opportunities starting May 2010 when we conclude our year of travel). After working too hard and not spending enough time reading, exercising or hanging out with the family, I'm looking forward to re-balancing my priorities, losing weight and spending whole days without glancing at the Blackberry.

Hi I am **Josh**. I am in 5th grade at the American School in London. I now play the viola and so far my favorite piece of music in Ode to Joy by Beethoven. This fall I was on a robotics team known as the Griffin Cubs <http://www.griffins1884.com> in terms of robot performance we tied with our school's 8th grade team when we were just 5th and 6th graders.

The transition to middle school was big but I felt I handled it pretty well. The biggest changes are the hot lunch and the fact that we have over 4 times as much homework as last year. My favorite books that I read this year are definitely Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman and InkDeath by Cornelia Funk. I am definitely looking forward to our wild and wacky year in the RV. .



Josh at First Lego robotics competition

## Fiction by Simon Grossman

### The Craziest Day Ever

I woke up one morning and I was a piece of bubblegum and everything was completely upside down. And in the small little brain that bubblegum has, I knew it was going to be a crazy day.

My Mom had turned into an elephant and my Dad was a kangaroo. My brother Josh was a Mermaid. I knew it was a Crazy Day.

For breakfast we had baked, stewed and boiled spaghetti covered with water and cheese. It was a Crazy Day alright. And then I found out that everyone else in the world had turned into a humuhumunukunukuapuaa fish.

Then I woke up – it was all a dream!



Simon "the Red Bullet" won Silver in Val Gardena

## The Road Forward

<http://www.familyadventureyear.com>

The stars are aligning and we are channeling our inner adventure spirit. With Evan leaving his job and Wendy's consulting gigs in the nonprofit world just not profitable enough, combined with the boys growing up faster than we would like – it is one of these rare opportunities to regroup, realign, and recharge.

We have loved living in London the past 6 years but our accents and loud voices can't deny we are Americans. Our kids don't remember living in the US and, in some ways, neither do we. It is time to move home to the land of drive-through banks, Fourth of July parades, Trader Joe's, and smiling faces of friends and family.

But we aren't yet ready to settle down.

We are pulling the kids out of school for the 2009/2010 school year and hitting the road. When else will we have this chance? The boys are at fabulous ages where they will remember the adventures, can read their own chapter books and write their own journals. And, Josh is strong enough to carry a full size suitcase...with wheels of course! Yet they aren't old enough to be too embarrassed to be seen with their parents.

Most sailors know that sometimes it's better to ride out a storm at sea, and rather than trying to settle down in the midst of the greatest financial crisis in 80 years, why not put the cash in the bank, resist taking on any new debt and have some adventures in the process?

We have to move anyway, all our stuff will be in storage and we won't own a house. Is this irresponsible or is this just taking advantage of an opportunity? Party on Garth!

Enough with the justifications!

This is an adventure on many fronts:

- 1) Explore the US - Washington DC, Philadelphia, Lewis and Clark, National Parks, compare the circumferences of the largest Balls of twine in Cawker, Kansas to the one in Darwin, Minnesota, explore baseball stadiums and laundromats;
- 2) Physical well being - biking and hiking;
- 3) Spiritual - as Unitarians we are hoping to check out various UU congregations;
- 4) Community Service - we are looking for a charity to work with in a meaningful way;
- 5) Family history and genealogy - hoping to spend time collecting stories and video taping family lore;
- 6) Our own family-of-four dynamics - Are we a democracy or benevolent dictatorship.

An RV is in our future for the US portion and then backpacks for the international pieces. Needless to say we will be blogging, facebooking, journaling, parking in your driveway and mooching off your hospitality.

Go to our Web site and sign up for our mailing list (via Google Groups) to ensure regular updates and a copy of next year's Holiday Chronicle.