

The Miksovsky Family Journal

Christmas 2008

Happy Holidays! Somehow these crazy dawn-to-midnight three-ring-circus days keep adding up to a year. The good news was that 2008 was way better than 2007! Here are some highlights...



Sabriya covered more milestones going from 5 months old to 17 months than we're likely to have in the rest of our lives. Early in the year, simply rolling over was a huge accomplishment. (First use of this skill: rolling until within reach of little choking hazard playing pieces on the floor.) Bree graduated from bottle feeding to baby food to dining in her high chair, where she enjoys using food as shampoo. She developed her motor skills slowly, investigating the house by skootching around on the floor on her belly like the Pathfinder robot exploring Mars. She learned to sit up, then to stand, then to walk, then to toddle after a ball and kick it. She's mastered numerous modes of expression: sign language signs ("More", "All done!"), early words ("Baba" for papa, "nana" for banana), and pointing insistently at the refrigerator. Her most distinguishing trait is her calm. When we named her "patience", we had no idea how true this name would be. Sabriya recently fell out of her crib and *broke her arm*—but it was hard to tell because she eventually calmed down and wanted to play. The emergency room doctor guessed there wasn't a break because, "She'd be screaming her head off." An X-ray revealed breaks in both bones of the forearm. Bree's finishing the year wearing a heavy cast, but remains both indomitable and unspeakably cute.



Liya is an intrepid and thoughtful 5 year old. She enjoys her weekly dance class, swimming at the pool, and going for real bike rides (which she's learned to do ahead of Anya). Early in the year we agonized over whether Liya was ready for kindergarten—her birthday is just three days ahead of the Seattle school cutoff date, putting her in a class with kids well over a year older than her. With the encouragement of her preschool teachers, we enrolled Liya in the same K-8 school as Anya. Liya has settled in just fine, and is fortunate to have the same great kindergarten teacher that Anya had. Her most distinguished accomplishments might be in drawing. She can execute a drawing that has, say, a tricky figure and background relationship, using surprising instinct and skill.

Liya's also begun to read. These developments are often balanced with some truly off-the-wall commentary: "On a flower bus, the seats would be vases." She delivers these notes with a sparkle in her eye, and often barely suppressed giggling.



Anya focuses intently on whatever she's doing. She had a reading breakthrough at the beginning of summer, and can now be found most mornings curled up in her pajamas with her nose in a book. (It's even better when we wake up to find Anya reading to Liya.) Anya also became interested in rock climbing, and celebrated her 7th birthday at a climbing gym with a handful of her 1st grade friends. Her circle of friends has discovered the joys of sleepovers, and Anya's always looking forward to her next sleepover opportunity. She enjoys math and kibitzing on Angela's Sudoku and Kakuro puzzles. Anya played soccer this fall for the second year in a row, and her coach was beside herself with pride during games to see Anya demonstrate footwork she had learned in practice. This degree of focus cuts both ways. Anya once melted down during dinner over a slice of bread. She wanted her slice cut in half, and Angela ended up giving Anya two halves *from different slices*. It was really, really important to her that both halves come from the same slice, a point she drove home with a half-hour tantrum. On the other extreme, she displays a sense of humor, often with wordplay. Favorite joke for 2008: "What's the opposite of Antarctica?" "Uncle Arctica!"



Angela is officially starting to look for work as a part-time associate pastor. In the meantime, she's guest preaching, teaching Sunday school, and will begin an internship at her church on Mercer Island. Her days as ringleader, chauffeur, and sherpa of the family three-ring circus keep her wondering where all the time went. Still, she's managed to oversee a number of improvements to the house, including a home organization project and the construction of a cool tree house in the backyard. She couldn't resist adding a block and tackle to a nearby branch that lets the girls haul up snacks and treasures to the tree house. (Jan used it to haul up his laptop when he discovered that the house's WiFi reaches to the tree.)

Jan has been so busy this year he didn't have as much time as he'd have liked for fun projects with the kids, but there were still a few. The standout project was the Caveman Barbecue: Anya and Liya watched Jan and friends Brian, Joe, and John spend an afternoon trying to make a fire for a barbecue by rubbing sticks together. Everyone's families were invited for dinner, so there was real pressure to make fire. Jan, Anya, and Liya had prepared by gathering wood on several outings for the "bow drill" technique the cavemen would try. On the big day it took a while to get set up, carve a good spindle, string a bow, and so on. After many, many false starts, we were eventually able to generate enough friction to produce smoke and hot sawdust. The bad news was: the kind of wood you use really matters, and we broke our best piece of spindle wood. Rather than give up, we set aside our bow drill and jammed a piece of the broken spindle into a Makita cordless hand drill, which we then drilled into a



piece of cedar. This worked rather better, though it was still remarkably hard to produce a concentrated lump of sawdust hot enough to ignite. After an extraordinary amount of work, we finally produced an ember we could tap into our tinder bundle, which Jan held cupped in his hands and blew on like mad. For many minutes it seemed like nothing was going to happen, when suddenly the whole bundle burst into flames. Yay! We weren't quite prepared for the appearance of actual fire, and in retrospect dropping the flaming bundle into a paper bag full of kindling was a bad idea—but we did manage to light a candle from this fire and get the flame all the way to the backyard where, in the spirit of Olympic opening ceremonies, we could finally light the grill. While we still had made recourse to modern technology, everyone felt like we had learned a lot about making a fire.

Jan's company Cozi, now 3½ years old, has about 30 employees and a family-friendly vibe that makes it a fun place to work. The company was extremely fortunate to take a significant investment from newspaper giant Gannett just before the economy imploded. New deals with business partners Dell, Best Buy, and Better Homes and Gardens have also helped. The company completed its shift from a PC focus to a web focus so that families can run Cozi on any computer or mobile phone.

Jan recently celebrated his 41st birthday with a surprise weekend trip organized by Angela. A series of envelopes with clues and boarding passes led him to join up with his brother Chris for some great hiking in California's serene Channel Islands National Park.

Each season of 2008 brought its own family adventures...



Winter saw our third family ski trip to Whistler, British Columbia. Anya and Liya's skiing improved to the point where they could join us for runs down the whole mountain. One humorous moment came when Jan and Angela went off on their own to ski the Symphony Amphitheater on the far side of Whistler Mountain. On a very steep stretch of moguls, Angela fell down and began to slide down the mogul field. She slid... and slid... and slid for so long and so fast that she passed another skier. To avoid being skied over, she helpfully sang out "Falling...on your left!" as she slid by. Later in February, the girls got to travel with Jan and his mom Lyn up to snug Friday Harbor in the San Juan Islands while Angela took Bree to visit her parents in DC.

Spring brought us to our 10th wedding anniversary! We returned to Washington, DC (the city where we were married), and spent some quiet time there while Angela's parents watched the girls. In the springtime Jan began considering taking Anya and Liya camping, and for a while both girls wanted to sleep in sleeping bags every night. We invented a game called "Slug Tag", which involves crawling around on the floor in sleeping bags chasing one another. This game turned out to be one that, to some extent, even Sabriya could play.



Summer was, not surprisingly, the richest time for outings. Jan did take Anya and Liya camping at gorgeous Lake Kachess just across the Cascade Mountains. The girls got to try s'mores for the first time. (Truth be told, s'mores were in fact the main point that sold the girls on the whole camping trip.) We did more outdoor activities on a summer return trip to Whistler. Despite the fact that it drizzled the entire time, and the entire town was cut off from the outside world for a week by a massive rockslide, we managed to squeeze in numerous walks, bike trips, and rock climbing for the girls.

We explored many places closer to home, often on geocaching trips: using a GPS to find a hidden box somewhere in a park or public place. We made numerous trips to the woods and wetlands of the nearby Arboretum, including a couple of safaris by foot and canoe to see the elusive beavers of Madison Park.

The highlight of the summer was a visit from Jan's stepmother Marlee Henry and her sister Brooke. (The entire Henry clan was stunned the two sisters actually made it west of the Mississippi.) We gave them a tour of Seattle landmarks, then we all took a fun two-day side trip by ferry up to Victoria, BC. The city is famous for its not-to-be-missed Butchart Gardens, which Jan and Angela discovered is much more fun when you see it with two people who actually know something about gardening.



Fall brought more visitors (Angela's parents; friends Ute and Roy, formerly of Jan's New Jersey hometown) and visits (to Angela's brother Johnny's home at Rancho Palos Verdes, CA, with a fun side trip to Legoland). In September we walked as a family in the annual Seattle AIDS Walk, which sounded daunting but turned out to be all of two miles long. And nearly all of us began taking Mandarin lessons (even Sabriya!) in preparation for a trip to Taiwan and China next year. It'll be our first trip overseas with Bree, so we'll see whether she shows "patience" on the long flight!

We hope this letter finds you enjoying the holidays with family or friends, and wish you a warm 2009.