

The Miksovsky Family Journal

Christmas 2009

Happy Holidays! It's the time of year when (according to one of our daughters) the wise men brought gifts of gold, Frankenstein, and myrrh.



We celebrate New Years' on Hawaii's Big Island. Poor Bree, still recovering from a broken arm, has to wear a cast. It's waterproof, but on the beach she has to keep her cast in a bag to avoid sand. She's undaunted, albeit lopsided.

Winter mornings bring their own special flavor of wake-up chaos. Scene: Jan hears a loud *thump* of something heavy falling somewhere. Jan: "What was that?" Anya: "Nothing much! Something you don't need to know about!"



Angela begins a pastoral internship at Mercer Island Presbyterian Church that runs through the end of the year. The part-time position in adult ministries keeps her busy: preaching, leading worship, and teaching classes. Her favorite part is doing pastoral visits.

Liya and Anya's school has a tradition: no Friday classes in January and February; the kids ski or ice skate instead. Angela sees both girls growing as able skiers. Anya demonstrates a propensity to explore cute little trails on the side of the big runs—including trails leading to precipitous black diamond descents. Liya is a champ at getting out of predicaments her sister has gotten them into.

Some nights, Liya can't sleep because she's afraid of a monster. Angela tries many things, then finally asks: "What is the monster afraid of?" Liya considers. "The monster is afraid of *bees*." We dig up a plush yellow and black purse that looks like a bee. Liya carries it at night as a monster talisman.



All the girls enjoy a weekend at a water park hotel called Great Wolf Lodge near the Oregon border. Anya loves it so much, she refuses to take off her plastic park entrance wristband until it falls off (many months later in the summer).

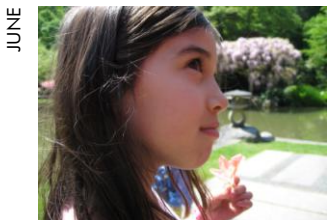


To introduce the girls to their extended Chen relations, we make a trip to Taiwan. In preparation, Jan and all the girls (even Bree!) take Mandarin lessons. Learning a foreign language again makes Jan's head hurt. For the trip itself, Angela's parents come along to help us and join in the fun. The journal is *long*: Sabriya won't fall asleep on the cross-Pacific flight, and only collapses at 4:00 am (home time) on the *second* flight. Once we get there, the girls promptly start taking turns being sick. Still, it is fantastic to tour Taipei and Changhua again. The Chens have a reunion every February for the lunar New Year, but defer it this year so the girls can meet a banquet hall's worth of relatives they didn't even know they had. Strange food begets homesickness, remedied with bagels and vanilla steamers at Starbucks. The girls' favorite part of the trip is a cool hotel (another waterpark!) whose every part has been designed especially for kids.



We celebrate our 11th anniversary. Angela: "By George, I think it's working!"

Angela takes Liya away for a weekend with some of her schoolmates. For all their squabbling, Liya and Anya are very close. While Liya's away, she and Anya have their first phone conversation ever. They mostly talk about s'mores.



This is the year Angela and Jan begin riding bikes again. Last year, Anya had fallen shortly after her training wheels had been removed; she'd been hesitant ever since. When grandma Lyn helps her hop on a borrowed bike, Anya rides for several minutes before realizing it doesn't have training wheels. We attempt a family bike ride around the neighborhood. Bree calls quits after five minutes.

School lets out. Anya and Liya enjoy local summer camps, especially art camp. They also enjoy being flower girls at the wedding of friends Angela and Jason.



We travel to the memorial service for Jan's maternal aunt Ginny at the Sims family compound in Au Gres, Michigan. The occasion is sad, but it's wonderful to reunite with the entire extended Sims clan. Combined with the earlier Chen reunion, this year we've met up with pretty much every relative we know. The girls enjoy playing on Lake Huron's beaches with their cousins.



Bree turns two. She remains wonderfully even-tempered and self-amusing. She can entertain herself indefinitely, and adds a running commentary to the entire day. We are putting more baby gear behind us: the last baby gate, the last onesie, etc. We're trying to enjoy bedtime stories and lullabies while we still can.



AUGUST



SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER

All three girls love to read. For unknown reasons, Bree's favorite book is, *Roscoe Riley Rules #1: Never Glue Your Friends to Chairs*, a lengthy chapter book for kids her sisters' age. Bree doesn't even find the story interesting, but carries it everywhere regardless. She wears out the book; we buy a replacement. Anya and Liya love reading fairy books. Lots of fairy books. *Shelves* of fairy books. When not reading about them, Anya and Liya draw pictures of fairies. We rig up a light table for them so they can trace their favorite fairy book covers.

The Cozi office shuts down for its summer vacation week, and we make the short ferry ride to Puget Sound's Whidbey Island. We rent a house on sheltered Penn Cove, where the girls enjoy low tide walks each morning. We get in some (short) bike rides, and some nice hikes at the island's scenic state parks. Bree continues to puzzle out the relationship between twisting the handles on her tricycle and riding off the sidewalk a moment later.

When our friends the Nakanishis move to Seattle, we're happy to host them while they look for an apartment. Bree becomes fast friends with their son Towa. After he moves out, Bree keeps searching around the house: "Towa? Towa?"

Liya asks for a "mystery treehouse party" for her 6th birthday. Jan creates a short dramatic mystery for Liya and her guests to solve, written in the macabre style of author Lemony Snicket (*A Series of Unfortunate Events*, a new favorite of Anya's and Liya's). Angela creates detective kits (including deerstalker caps) for the young detectives, and Jan includes a secret code decoder crucial to the mystery's solution. The girls have great fun running around the house and the backyard (and the treehouse, per request) in pursuit of clues. Anya, the first to solve the mystery, nearly bursts from trying to not shout out the answer.

At the summer's end, Jan's brother Chris comes up from San Francisco, and the two brothers take Anya and Liya camping near Mt. Rainier. The girls return to school: Anya to 2nd grade, Liya to 1st grade, and Sabriya to co-op preschool. Anya resumes soccer, which she *loves*. Liya's not quite as gung-ho, but gives it a try. Liya's monster is still keeping her up at night. Angela concocts a jar of monster repellent (cinnamon, cloves, and other spices) for Liya to place under her bed.

We fit some short trips into the packed fall calendar. At Suncadia in the Cascades for the first time, we get in some great hiking, biking (and finally longer bike rides!), and swimming for *hours* at the aquatic center. (Water=fun) Angela and the girls also visits her brother Johnny's family in L.A., while Jan and Chris make a trip to nearby Catalina Island ("The Land Cuisine Forgot").

Anya's a good sport about getting braces. Her orthodontist said some work now would avoid worse later. A huge swath of the candy spectrum is now off limits—just in time for Halloween. For costumes, Anya and her best friend Jane make their own matching dresses. They look just like girls wearing matching dresses.

We are always discovering new facets of our children. When Anya celebrates her 8th birthday with a slumber party, we learn she'd rather have chocolate fondue than chocolate cake. At a parent-teacher conference for Liya, we learn Liya enjoys reading non-fiction books about almost anything.

Angela flies back east in November to be with her father Cheng-nan as he undergoes a very long surgery to correct his scoliosis. All goes very well, but he has a long recovery ahead—and must also get used to being three inches taller!

Jan's company, Cozi, is now 4½ years old. Jan keeps reminding his partner Robbie that they should start their next company during a tech boom instead of a global recession. Despite the economy, Cozi is still getting by. In early December, Cozi work takes Jan to Japan for a week that feels more like tourism than business. And it's nice to return to a language he almost understands!

As the year ends, we'll spend Christmas at home, then New Years' back in Hawai'i. With no cast this time, Bree will finally get to enjoy the ocean!

Here's wishing you a warm and safe 2010. With no monsters.

We publish these stories throughout the year at family.cozi.com/miksofsky. We send out the latest stories each month by email; if you're not getting those emails but would like to, please let us know at jan@miksofsky.com or angela@miksofsky.com. (And if you have any interest in using Cozi to share your own stories, please try it. It's super quick, honest!)