

Lefton/Steinbart Holiday Letter 1998

WARNING: This letter has not been tested for the Y2K millenium bug.
It may report the wrong dates if you are reading it after the year 2000.

Once upon a time, Bambi was walking through the forest and he met Snow White. She said let's go to the seven dwarves house for a pot of honey. They found Winnie the Pooh (and Tigger, too!) in the house along with three little bears. Suddenly, Scar the mean lion jumped out of the closet and chased them all around the room. They got on Aladdin's magic carpet and flew away to Sesame street where Elmo and Big Bird were about to sit down to tea when the teapot started singing "Be our guest, be our guest!" and then a witch popped out! It's a good thing the Magic school bus was there to rescue them!

This story is not just a way to distract your preschooler when washing her hair. It is actually a fairly accurate approximation of the chaotic pace of our lives these days. But first of all, we want to wish you a very happy, healthy holiday season, and a fantastic 1999. We hope that good things far outweighed bad for you last year.

HANNAH:Favorite Song: Tie: Spice Girls "If you wanna be my lover" and "I believe I can fly" (which she does!)
Incredible Achievement for 1998: Was not beaten to death by her sisters.

Hannah is now 5.5 in earth years which makes her appear 17 to the untrained eye. She's in kindergarten at Hynes Elementary, and she's doing great. She's in the French immersion program which means that for the first half of each day, she gets all her math, science, & social studies from a teacher who only speaks French to the kids. In the afternoon, she gets her reading, writing, and English in English. Children learn a second language much more easily when they are regularly exposed to it at an early age. Hannah loves to read, and she's making lots of new friends.

NATALIE:Favorite Song: Whatever Hannah's favorite song is.

Incredible Achievement for 1998: Was not beaten to death by her sisters.

Natalie, now 3, has come a long way this year. She did it in a very short time because she runs everywhere she goes. This kid is strong. If I can't open a jar, I give it to her. We're talking Bam-Bam. Natalie's in the Snail room at UNO Children's Center, now that she's finally potty trained (HOORAY!!). She loves putting together puzzles and doing things all by herself. In 1998, Natalie got the first stitches (three in the knee) for our kids.

MONICA:Favorite Song: If you're happy and you know it.

Incredible Achievement for 1998: Was not beaten to death by her sisters.

Monica is also 3 (what a coincidence!), and she can frequently be found wistfully recalling the good old days when she was 2. Monica also enjoys the full rights and privileges of being a potty trained Snail. She's still a big doll lover. It's interesting to see how different the twins are. Not only physically, but even behaviorally. For example, when all three girls are together, Monica sometimes assumes the "baby" role while Natalie acts like a middle child trying to keep up with Hannah. Monica speaks very clearly and seems to have a very manipulative streak. Hannah bosses, Natalie forces, Monica beguiles, and we're loving every minute of it!

ENID & LEW:Favorite Song: Silence **Incredible Achievement for 1998:** Survived.

We both continue to teach, do mathematics research, and work hard at the UNO math department. We traveled kid-free to Berlin for the International Congress of Mathematicians and a 10 year anniversary trip. Lew's sisters Linda and Charna split the week watching the munchkins. Literally. They had some challenges, including a dead minivan and an opportunistic family of streptococcus bacteria, but they all pulled through fine. We boarded up our house and left town for hurricane Georges but fortunately for us (and not for Biloxi) it went a bit east. Our only damage was a burned out AC compressor which was covered by insurance. We probably wouldn't have lost much anyway since every electrical and/or mechanical item in our household failed beyond repair this fall. In the course of about 6 weeks we lost a car, a VCR, a camcorder, an answering machine, a phone, an exercise bike, and a microwave! Lew still performs comedy with his efforts mostly directed at the improv sketch group Brown! these days. He also was a major organizer of the first New Orleans Comedy Festival in August which went fairly well for a maiden voyage. Enid is getting more involved with the Mothers of Twins Club and she still enjoys simple pleasures like baking cookies, taking walks, and applying for NSF grants. Three good reasons to come visit us in New Orleans soon: (i) We're remodeling our bathroom (coming soon: water pressure!) (ii) An opportunity to play grand master level Candyland, and (iii) you gotta break your diet sometime....

Merry Christmas!

Happy Chanukah!

Happy New Year!