
The Autistic Family Greet's You and 1995 with Joy and Aplomb

Cool Hand Luke

He's eight; he's huge; he's 80% good kid, 20% Tasmanian Devil. (What 8-year old isn't?) Pushing a hundred pounds now Luke weighs more than his teacher (which makes for comical "time outs" we hear). But he "minds" better than his sister does. If he'd get over this scatophilia (betcha don't see *that word* in your other Christmas greetings! Hope not, anyway), he wouldn't be so bad. He's run away only about ten times this year and is still into everything, like a 2-year old stuck in time, but it makes for a bunch of stories the "normal" family never gets to tell. He's become a puzzling person this year in the prosaic sense; Luke's up to the 100-piecers now and his method is interesting to watch. He doesn't start with the border as most do, but with the piece in his hand. Even so, he's quick at it and likes puzzle piecing.

Kate Communes with Nature

Kate's favorite spot in the backyard is up in the left side corner, under the big pine. (Since it's not an oak, at least we know she's no Druid.) That's where she spends most of her time, getting good and dirty! She started preschool this fall. (You haven't lost a couple years in our communications; Special Ed starts at three.) She has the same teacher Luke had when we settled here in '92. Kate sleeps like a cat and is tough to get through to, but babbles all the time and occasionally says a word or reacts like any kid her age. She discovered water this year, at one point taking up to a dozen baths a day (in her clothing). Her "problem solving" skills keep getting better. She's at least as good at keeping us on the go as Luke was at 3, probably better. Those who say autistic individuals are generally mentally retarded as well don't live with autistics. Mentally from another universe, but there's no retardation.

A Beach is a Beach is a Beach

We did manage a week in Wildwood in August and four days in Florida this year. Cathy "won" "free" lodging for the Florida trip, so we "vacationed" in Daytona and Orlando Thanksgiving week.

Cathy the BeautiController

In addition to being a "full time mom" (which makes Jeff's working as a DOE contractor seem like a paid vacation), Cathy's image consulting client base is slowly growing. That and fantasy novels (of which she reads at least one a week) are her two main "escapes." During Jeff's 2-month stay in Washington (see "Gumby" below), Cathy had the feral kids alone. All survived, Cathy with most of her sanity remaining. But it wasn't a pleasant springtime. Summer brought back the usual chaos, but Cathy did get a short break to attend BeautiControl's Nashville convention while Jeff's parents (bless their hearts) watched L&K.

Other Creatures Update

Tribble's still alive and still with us, though he's run away more than even Luke. In his fool head he's not a ten pound Tsih Shu, but one of the big dogs he runs with. Woodstock and Arnold created a couple canary chicks last summer but the one who lived longest made it only nine days. The dog and birds, even our goldfish and algae eater--we're either an autistic family or the Addams Family. The house is a museum. . .

A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Washington State

In February, Jeff accepted an offer on a job in Richland, Washington. In April, he left (the family to follow in June). In May, the DOE client at Hanford decided "never mind" and Jeff returned to Oak Ridge Memorial Day. In August, Jeff was one of seven (out of 150 people in the division-what luck!) given a "pink slip" effective the end of September. In October, Jeff started a new job with another division of the same company. This job is a one year assignment, which means he may or may not remain with the company in October '95.

About the same time the Richland job came up, Gumby Romanczuk was accepted for UT's Information Science masters program. Jeff postponed that deal when he left for Washington, then "reponed" it in time to start school (again) in August. His goal is to get a "steady" job sometime before retirement.