

This Year:

Puzzle palace

Slinging rabbits

Summer school

"Shut up!"

Ain't gonna be no third set o' chains

Imagine us as foster parents

Education: An End In Itself

I'm still plodding through the Information Sciences program at UT, and saw an opportunity to knock off 2 required courses by going every day in June and July. Meanwhile Cathy was accepted for a 1-year Lindhurst program to get certified as a high school Biology teacher. By the end of August, though, her plan was put on hold when the primary childcare provider abruptly stopped and we went through plan A, B, C, and D only to find no replacement. (Bet you find it as tough to believe as we do that nobody wants to watch Luke and Kate.) Unfortunate, because Cathy had a 4.0 GPA and was really enjoying it. My GPA isn't quite that stellar, but the good news is I'm only 15 months away from completing the degree requirements. (That's the plan anyhow, although we try to avoid plans anymore.) Even the kids went to summer school, plus a week of Easter Seals Camp for Luke. Kate will be old enough (6) for this next summer. One of the highlights of Kate's school year was when she told her teacher to "Shut up!" It had the opposite effect, of course, since Miss MaryBeth was so thrilled that Kate spoke a sentence anyone could understand. It was a pretty cruel summer, but it flew by quickly.

Like Being Real Parents

Believe it or not, we attended a 10-week training course last spring to become foster parents. The only results so far are a brief stay by a 14-year old girl and me becoming Secretary of the county's Foster Parents Association. (Our first and last foster child took the accompanying picture.)

Luke disappeared into the night last December. As fate would have it, he arrived at the home of the foster couple who taught the 10-week course (which is one reason we couldn't back out of this training, if you follow that?). Liked it so much, he did the same again in March.

Seasons Best From The Autistic Family

This time the blood hounds and most of the Sheriff's Department spent 3 late night hours looking for him. Now we make sure we know where he is at least every 30 seconds, instead of our previous 2-minute span. If we knew he knew what he was doing, it might not be so bad. It's our fault for naming him Luke, though. "Rabbit in his blood."

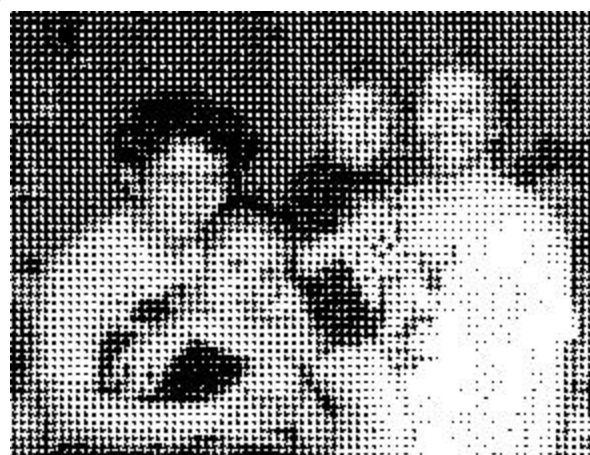
He still loves puzzles, while Miss Kate has gone through several fads. She doesn't leave open the refrigerator anymore, or take a dozen showers a day, but one of her

new tricks has been to soak her stuffed animals in the toilet. (It's amazing how much they weigh wet!) One morning she woke me by plopping a rabbit full of toilet water (and I don't mean perfume) on my stomach. My scream woke Cathy and Luke, and neighbors down the block, too. The day got better after that.

She and Luke still love to hit the open road, even the 700 mile haul up to see my parents. Subtle difference, and we're not sure what it means, but Kate prefers to look at the sky while Luke gets excited about the traffic. Miss Kate never wants to stop, not even for gas. This caused another weird Jeff idea: former Air Force boom operators could work the back of fuel trucks, refueling cars as both move along the highway. Don't laugh; I know there's a market.

Luke "the Bull" Luzinski

Luke played 2nd/shortstop for the Sox of the Challenger League last spring. Six- to 18-year-old county kids with various disabilities got out there each Friday night. The rules are a little different, but it was such a hoot to watch! Luke wasn't too crazy about having to play defense (who is, really?), but enjoyed the attention from the two women who coached. We already warned them that Kate will be on the team next year.



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See You In Cyberspace

Cathy and I have an electronic mail account at jroman@usit.net. I also did a vanity page containing 10 of my poems (<http://funnelweb.utcc.utk.edu/~jroman/poetry/poems.htm>).

Hope for 1997, and Beyond!

Due to ongoing cutbacks at work (though I've avoided the pink slip so far, I was never very good at dodgeball), both of us have been job hunting. Like Education, the hunt itself is pretty amusing. Interviews are like tennis matches, or chess games. Anyway, we may be moving again. We'll let you know. Keep your fingers crossed, or your hands together in prayer, or both.

So ends another whirlwind year. Peace to all in 1997.-The Romanczucs