

Happy Holidays 1997-1998

Volume 5

Moved Again

After 5 years in Tennessee, we were afraid moss would start to grow on us, so we headed Southwest. The truth is the company made me an offer I couldn't refuse: stay in Tennessee and be laid off or move to Albuquerque and get promoted. Tough choice.

City Slickers

On the advice of the director of the UNM Autism Project, I limited the house-rental search to the northeast quadrant of Albuquerque. As much as I've always disliked city living, special education from the schools out in the cowboy country of the Rio Grande valley is supposed to be even worse than it is in the city schools. (See "School's Never Out" below.)

So here we are. Bad enough for me, who grew up in a crowded, dirty, centuries old city. Moving my hillbilly country girl here shocked her system. "They're unfriendly." (True.) "They drive like crap." Even compared to Tennessee, this is true.

On the bright side, we no longer have to live in lock-down since Luke has stopped running away. Miss Kate has made strides in potty training, but remains unconvinced that it's the way to go.

Another ASA

The NM chapter of the Autism Society of America seems better so far than the East TN chapter (which we quit due to its emphasis on higher functioning autism). Cathy and I even volunteered to work the state conference next year—me on the call for papers committee and Cathy on registration. The national conference is July in Reno and (for the first time) we're getting serious about going.

Worst Landlords Ever

As proof that nobody can do all things well, we have to admit we stink as landlords. We have a couple of high-maintenance (I had "whiny" but Cathy made me change it) tenants in our Tennessee house and aren't used to the strain. For the 7 years we rented out the Texas



house we had low-maintenance renters and didn't realize the blessing it was.

Softball Trophies and "Most Helpful Washer" Award

Kate earned her first trophy this year, for Challenger league softball in Blount County, TN.

We hear they have a "handicap league" here in Albuquerque too, but aren't sure we'll go for it. Kate mostly just played with the in-field dirt and Luke basically challenged his coaches, as he did last year.

They both attended Camp Easter Seal, too. Again, Kate for the first time. From the pictures we got back, Kate must have spent the week in the pool. Luke earned the "Most Helpful Camper" award for doing everyone's laundry. (Not coincidentally, he came home with 4 extra underwear, 2 pairs of socks, and 2 shirts. Gratuities?)

School's Never Out

I'll be graduating from the University of Tennessee in May. Having started my first masters program in 1983, it's unbelievable to be closing in on the sheepskin, finally.

Luke and Kate started an extended school year (ESY) program with the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) in August. (ESY means the same 180 days, but they are spread over 10 1/2 months instead of 9.) That they'll have only a 6 week summer break is good, but as for their placements we would have been better off had we stayed in Tennessee. The APS prefers to spend its money on litigation rather than classroom instruction, so the learning supplies are "homemade" and field trips are a rarity. In my struggle to keep these annual reports upbeat, I'll just move on.

Moving Again?

Between the school situation and the city living, I'm hoping Cathy doesn't just get fed up enough to bolt for "home." The topic has come up, but so far she's willing to work on improving our lot here because she loves me so much. Who can blame her?

All the best from the Southwest. Have a great 1998!

- Jeff, Cathy, Luke, and Kate