

Warning!!! This newsletter may not be suitable for all ages!

True story - Chris and I are walking to the car after a nice evening out when I double over in pain. Chris asks what's the matter, so I tell her. "I just punched myself in the balls." Not on purpose mind you - can't imagine any man would do that on purpose. But I did it, nonetheless. Seems my lightning-fast reflexes were quick enough to catch my keys when I dropped them, but not fast enough to stop before landing a lethal below-the-belt blow. Kind of describes the year - all-in-all pleasant, with any pain largely self-inflicted.



Took a trip to Hilton Head with four other families. Great time - a minute walk to the beach, fish in the morning, swim in the afternoon, fish again in the evening. Haul frozen bait to the beach in a soft-sided cooler. Haul thawed out bait back to house to re-freeze for later use. It doesn't get any better than that (Chris thinks it does, but, hey, we see things differently). Anyway, at week's end, a simple clean up - heave the leftover bait and cooler, which now smell somewhat like Jefferson's shoes, into a trash can on the beach (a trick we've also used with Jefferson's shoes). Then drive back home. And download pictures from the trip. But first, find camera. Scour car looking for camera. Search through 17 pieces of luggage that four people needed for six day trip. Check every pocket in every garment worn (for me, that's about four pockets). Then remember that soft-sided cooler was not only great for hauling bait, but also for hauling camera to get shots of the day's catch. What a dolt. Only one other person could throw away a camera and punch himself in the groin (pictured).



Chris hates - HATES - rollercoasters, but bought Kings Island passes anyway (to use the water park, not ride coasters). Ah, but the rest of us love coasters and probably took 150 rides (2 visits/week x 6 rides/visit x 12 weeks, plus a trip to Cedar Point = a lot). And when we weren't actually riding coasters, we were talking about them. A lot. But since Chris only took one ride all year, she often had little to add to the conversation. So one day during dinner, not wanting to feel left out and wanting to prove that she, too, was cool like their thrill-seeking dad decided to change the conversation to something ALL could enjoy. So in the midst of a discussion of the vertical drop and angle of descent of the 92 mph Millennium Force, she asked what any hip mom would ask: "Who wants to talk about school?" At least she got us to stop talking with our mouths full.



OK, so we've got the buffoonish dad, the responsible mom and now, the smart-alecky kid. Took Jefferson to New York City to watch the Tigers play the Yankees at Yankee Stadium. Quite an education for a nine year-old boy. At one point, a Yankee fan emerged from the tunnel, turned to face the crowd and made a disparaging remark about Detroit in the inimitable language of a true New Yorker (It was a two word sentence that ended in "Detroit". I'll let you figure out the first word). Unfazed, Jefferson simply took off his Tiger's hat, held it out for the gentleman to see and said, "Speak to the hat, 'cause I ain't talkin'." Lord, one of us is going to get our butt whipped some day, and it better not be me.

I know what you're thinking. Hannah's our Lisa Simpson - smart, responsible, over-achieving. It's true that this summer when Chris told Jefferson she'd buy him a video game if he read five books (the boy would rather make wisecracks to strangers in NYC) and made the same offer to Hannah just to be fair, that Hannah - on her own - chose to write book reports on each. But Hannah's no Lisa Simpson. No, there is only one character that captures her true spirit and essence. She exfoliates crap the way a cat sheds fur. It's not that she can't find a wastebasket. Oh, no, she finds it, then dumps it at her feet. I think I'm going to lose my mind (which I'm sure will be found beneath the compost heap that is Hannah's trail).



Hilton Head wasn't the only place I lost a camera. I also lost one in NYC with Jefferson (Doh!). Of all the pictures I lost, the one I regret losing most was from Ground Zero, which is little more than a construction site with a big fence around it. But I was determined to get a clear shot, running around trying different angles when I saw a plaza across the street that might give me a good perch. I told Jefferson we needed to go, but he said he wanted to just think about what happened for a minute. I turned around to see him sitting next to this sculpture (which survived the towers' collapse), staring up into an empty sky where the WTC once stood. It made for a great picture - the businessman looking down, Jefferson looking up at, well, nothing. But I realized that I was so focused on capturing a picture that I wasn't capturing the moment. I needed to stop and let it sink in - just like Jefferson was doing.



It's kind of like what happens at Christmastime. We're so focused on creating the perfect holiday, that we forget to enjoy it. So take a moment, sit down, relax and just bathe in the real meaning of the season. It's good for the soul.

Merry Christmas And a Happy New Year