

Play Lefton/Steinbart Jeopardy! 1997

The Answer is: This occasionally violent system will bring increased pressure and excess moisture this winter.

Question: What is el niño? Bzzzzt. Wrong. What are las niñas! _____

Dear friends, family, and nosy person reading someone else's holiday letter (you know who you are),

As we sit down to write this letter, it is the day after Thanksgiving. We feel no urgency to begin traditional holiday shopping today, because there has been Christmas stuff in the stores since September. It feels like we have had a great couple years these last twelve months. Our family is holding steady at 2 adults and 3 kids. In fact, if we have any more kids, Lew may have a lawsuit against his urologist. First let's get to the important stuff because we have to do the whole year in one page.

Hannah is now four and a half. The half is very important. If you forget and accidentally tell someone that she's four, may the gods have mercy on your soul. Even with her occasional, age-appropriate visits to the dark side, Hannah is a wonderful, happy, healthy little girl who never stops making us proud. She is very verbal and will tell you about anything you want to know. This is because she already knows everything; just ask her. Hannah is in the seagull room during her last year of preschool at UNO. Her favorite song is "I Just Can't Wait to be King," and she aspires to be a cheerleader. We think this is because cheerleaders get to use pompoms.

On two year old growth charts, Natalie is in the 100th percentile. She is a turtle at the UNO preschool, and she has a great sense of helpfulness. She even helped with this letter by pressing that big (power) button on the computer which Daddy obviously couldn't press because his hands were busy typing. Natalie is very strong in both body and head. She seems to have a knack for accessorizing with beads, hats, bracelets, purses, and of course, that fashion staple: spaghetti-ohs! Her coy flirtatious manner has won many a warm smile from strangers in public. We may have to watch out for that when she's a teenager.

That septuplet mom in Iowa has nothing on Monica. At the ripe age of two, Monica is constantly caring for dozens of "babies." Of course, Monica's babies include not only stuffed animals and baby pictures from magazines but also random chunks of dried up playdough. It is the abstraction of "babyness" that matters. She is in the frog room at UNO. The staff suggested we separate the twins this fall and it seems to be working out quite well for all involved. Monica has an adorable smile and sweet disposition. That is unless some form of sharing is required. Then you discover that she has a really great set of lungs. We may have to watch out for that when she's a teenager, too.

Lew and Enid continue to teach, do mathematics research, and generally handle what always feels like a disproportionate amount of departmental administration service. We had a great sabbatical leave from our teaching duties in January and February. We stayed with Lew's Dad in Albuquerque, and worked with some of the mathematicians at UNM and surrounding labs. Enid attended a conference in Sweden in July. Lew spent that week feeling a great deal of respect for single parents. Another highlight of the year was a week in Colorado with Enid's family celebrating her parent's golden anniversary. The kids loved playing with older cousins and we loved the plethora of babysitters. We enjoyed many visitors this year, too. New Orleans is nice in the spring and fall, come and see for yourself! Chez Lefton/Steinbart is no four star hotel, but at least our drains are really slow.

After a run of over four years, Lew shut down the comedy room he was running, but he still does regular stand up gigs around south Louisiana. He also continues to work out his comedic angst as a regular player in an improv comedy group most Saturdays at midnight.

The bottom line: We're all healthy and happy. We wish the same to you!
Merry Christmas! Happy Chanukah! Happy New Year!

P.S. (for those who vaguely remember something about a snake in our letter last year). Squeezy, the fictional boa constrictor, is no longer with us. Sorry to disappoint those of you who were hoping for a continuation of the saga. Since several close family members actually suffered serious health consequences after reading our letter last year, we promise not to put anything completely fictional in our holiday letters again. We really have no pets. Except the monkey.