

Happy Holidays 2009!

This year has been an fantastic one – filled with family, joy and growth across the board. It will be hard to summarize it in a page or two, but I've always liked a challenge! So let's dive in.

Just to shake things up let's start in the middle of our family – Cohen. What a little joy he has continued to be. This time last year Alisa thought he was going to be a little Buddha baby: laid back, relaxed and at peace with just being there in the moment. Not so much. Over this past year we've resoundingly heard one word in particular that people use to describe him: BUSY. We agree! He is happy and independent, but LOVES to flush the toilet, climb out of his highchair, stand ON the rabbit's cage, take things out of the garbage, babble away non stop, and mostly be an on-going concern! All while grinning like a madman.

Marley seems to have turned into a responsible adult sometime in the last year. They say the eldest tends to be one to quickly mature, but at this point it feels like we could give her the keys to the car and house and go on vacation for a week! She's a loving and thoughtful helper – taking care of Cohen, Dazy the dog and Shale the bunny. She even takes care of Mom and Dad. Just last night she lectured me on needing to be nice to Mommy, suggesting I buy her some flowers every once in a while. I wasn't even aware that I was in trouble! She's become a vary fast and competent skater, and has moved up in gymnastics to a class where parents aren't actually allowed to help with the class. She also continues to swim like a fish, again enjoying the class where parents aren't allowed to help.

Alisa remains a half time counsellor at the school around the corner. She continues to look at private practice as a next step. She has continued to grow her professional credentials by presenting her passion and thoughts on anxiety to other practising counsellors. She also managed to get away this fall for a 3 day course on Vancouver Island, which meant not seeing her children for well over 72 hours. We all struggled with that one, and were thankful that Grandma was able to help out for a couple of days. Outside of her professional life she continues to amaze us all with her ability to run, and for a very long time. She ran 2 half marathons this year, finishing with great times in both cases (Vancouver and Victoria).

Kirk still works within the Product Management department at McKesson's Medical Imaging Group as a Functional Analyst. He was excited to present at the BAWorld 2009 conference in Vancouver on software interface design concepts and continues to look for ways to move into the professional world of user experience design in software. His philosophical views have become a focus this year, and he continues to create time at work to contribute to social and environmental causes. His time at home is strangely bereft of idle time but he tries to show Marley and Cohen social and environmental considerations whenever he can.

As a family we've been very busy this year. We started the year off with a delightful trip to Guayabitos, Mexico where we met with Grandma and Poppa Hicks and Uncle Rob and Sophie Hicks. Marley and Cohen quickly became fans of swimming in the pool, though we found our fair-skinned children still managed to get too much sun (even when strapped down in the shade, cloaked with shades and hats and caked with sunscreen). We should invest in Coppertone or Banana Boat today, because frankly we're going to be keeping them in business for the next few decades.

Marley's 3rd birthday came upon us with a bang on May 5th – a "Little Einsteins"

themed party with friends. We were lucky enough to have good weather for the party itself, and rain right after the guests left. The winds of chance smiled us that day. Marley seemed to change when she turned 3 – she shed her shy skin and slipped on her sovereign shawl. As I mentioned before she's a wonderfully helpful big sister and our big girl.

Over the summer we visited the woods for our first camping trip, and spent some time on the water with Grandma and Poppa on our first sailing trip. The camping was a wonderful introduction for Marley and Cohen, and Dazy seemed to enjoy the excitement and adventure as well. Marley has already begun asking when we can next go camping, which just warms the cockles of Dad's heart. The sailing trip was a different type of adventure involving PFDs, sunscreen, and swimming pools when at port. Marley loved every bit of it. Cohen found the confines of the boat a little challenging (he is, after all, BUSY). Kirk and Alisa were lucky enough to get a couple of kayak trips in, including one in the middle of a beautiful sunset.

Next up was Cohen's 1st birthday on September 8. After the successful sailing trip we felt a nautical theme would work well. Alisa and her mom took the word "theme" and turned it more into a "joie de vivre". There were sailboat crafts, fishing activities, nautical treats – it was amazing. Cohen certainly seemed to enjoy it – particularly his first taste of cupcakes. He devoured the icing and cake, and looked around for more with a slightly crazed look in his eye. Of course that slightly crazed, half-starved look is not that rare – this boy never seems to be full. He eats, eats, smiles, rests, and eats more. Alisa and I have stopped with the university fund savings for him and switched to grocery vouchers – he's going to eat us out of house and home in his teenaged years if we're not careful.

That about wraps up 2009 for us. Those of you who are particularly observant (or are grammar-oriented) will note that the first paragraph seemed to have a mistake in it. Cohen is our youngest child – how does he qualify as the middle of the family? Ah yes, our last little gift this year. Very little – about the size of a thumb right now. Alisa and I are expecting our 3rd child around the end of May! We don't know the baby's sex and won't until we meet it, but we have heard the heartbeat and can hardly wait. Alisa in particular has had a hard fall, feeling very ill and drained of energy. However she's on an upswing now as we move into the second trimester, and the entire family is starting to make plans for our newest member's arrival.

So 2010 looks to be another active and exciting year for the Bridgers. We'll be busy, as most of us are nowadays. However we do hope to connect with everyone in some manner, and the sooner the better. If ever you're in our neck of the woods please drop us a note or stop by – Marley will make some cookies and Kirk can brew some tea. We'll let you see what a BUSY Cohen is like, and Dazy would love to give you a quick lick (please forgive her breath, we're working on that). Maybe if you time it right you'll get to hold the latest Bridger in our house.

In any case, we all wish you a very happy holiday season, and a new year filled with love and laughter.

Alisa, Kirk, Marley, Cohen, Dazy and Shale (and baby X)