



Merry Chaunnawanzaa!

And happy Winter Solstice, for those friends who are secretly Wiccan.

So. Our little nuclear unit still numbers four and we're all healthy as hogs. The baby can count to eleven and our oldest recently mastered the concept of compound interest. Jeff is right, you can explain anything to a four-year old if you use pennies.

That's the short version. Read on if you're snowed in or the cable is on the blink.

Jeff is still engineering a better world at

the Trigen Syracuse power plant, which, for those of you who are keeping track, lowered its emissions significantly this year. He is also earning his MBA by taking one class each semester. By 2032 he'll be on the fast track for an entry level position at Walmart.

Heather is teaching 25 or 30 aerobics classes per week, depending on how much sugar she can mainline. The rest of her time is spent

editing pro bono full-length documentaries about earwax, changing diapers and fixating on cleaning products. There's a good chance this winter she'll go quietly mad.

Then there are the boys, Harrison (4 going on 76) and Alexander (who, although 2, prefers to be referred to as Baby.) This September, Harrison made a valiant bid for a Montessori education. He learned to move things around with chopsticks and say "thank you VERY much" before being asked to leave the campus permanently. We're working on

getting him into a more active preschool environment, one suitable for superheroes and hummingbirds.

Alex is adorable and cuddly, a cross between a kitten and a baby manatee. He speaks in complete sentences, eats sausages with a fork and knife and can bench press 20 pounds. He does not, however, have the least desire to give up his diapers, baby bottle or the pleasant pastime of being





carried around everywhere. We've been setting up a lot of play dates with children his age, so he can observe them drinking out of sippies and going to the bathroom, but he tends to ignore them, or worse, pummel them if they get in the way.

Our 29 resplendent chickens continue to loll in the sunshine, eat everything in sight, and produce a paltry four eggs a day. C'est la vie, but it still hurts when I think about our shining hopes for establishing a cheesecake factory. On a positive note, our biggest rooster, Orville, attended the New York State fair this year, where he won a second place ribbon and learned how to sculpt butter.

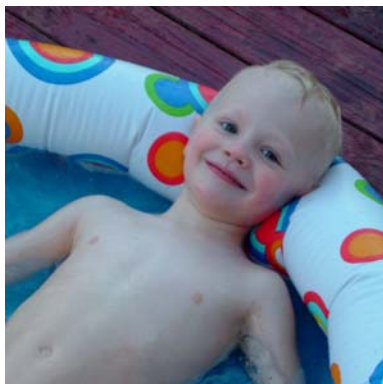
Our crotchety ten-year old cats—Alfonso and Gussy—were joined by a teenaged tabby this year. Emma was this pitiful little stray who wandered around our church parking lot, scavenging for leftover



C o m m u n i o n wafers. It took a week to get her to come in our house, but she has since toppled the old regime and grown so fat that we've taken her to the vet twice to find out when her kittens were due. (Turns out she's spayed.)

That's about it, other than some lovely familial weddings, a volunteer trip to Maine, vacation time in Vermont and a short jaunt to Tanzania, where we solved a triple homicide and recovered the royal model train collection, to the great delight of the crown prince.

Have a fantastic Chaunnawanzaa, and a wonderful 2005.



Hugs and kisses,

