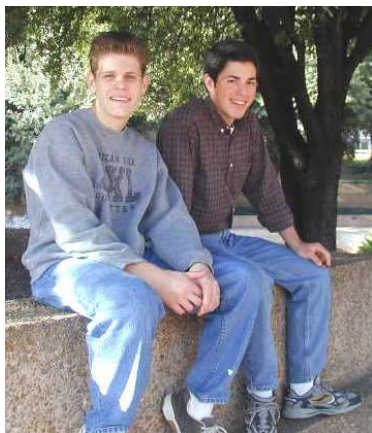


Dear Friends,

One of the recurring questions we receive as people come to grips with the size of our family¹ is about the kind of vehicle we have. I often dream aloud, when asked, about Carrie driving around in one of those smaller yellow school buses.² But the fact is that, in today's norm of oversized SUVs, our 15 passenger extended Ford van is not so far out of the realm of practicality for most people we meet.

For us though, utilizing its limited capacity to the fullest extent is challenged with each succeeding road trip. Our latest adventure to Ruidoso, NM during the Christmas holidays was no exception. I suspect that unless you have experienced first hand the packing of 14 bodies (12 humans and 2 canines) with the necessary food, ski paraphernalia, clothing, and staples necessary for a 10 day trip into a singular motor vehicle you might not fully appreciate the intricate details that combine the precision of an engineer with the creativity of an accomplished artist.

The task of fitting more into the van than it is physically capable of holding has, as of late, fallen to **Wesley (16)**. According to Monica, "Wesley is a veritable Jack-of-all-trades as of now, much to dad's glee. For the Honey-do list has successfully been transformed into a Sonny-do³ list. Wesley has graduated from cutting wood⁴ to rendering the whole house a favor by taking charge of the two smallest ones: Packy and Andy (much to his chagrin, I might add). You know what that means – changing diapers, feeding little ones, changing diapers, getting little ones dressed, changing diapers...you get the picture. Recently, he remarked with dismay that he might as well go into the business as a professional nanny.⁵ Actually, Andy has responded to his manly authoritarian style so much better than to us girls. He does an excellent job, and the girls and mom are very grateful for his success.⁶



"Wesley has been kept busy this year with on-line classes, getting his drivers license, chess, some web-page designing, guitar and keeping up with the programming he is teaching himself. However, with the general delight of the drivers license came the joyful duty of taxiing and ferrying his siblings around to guitar and chess club, which relieved a lot of extra car time for Mom. Wesley likes to think of himself as charming,

suave and debonair – qualities he hopes to obtain from Dad some day, of course."

So accomplished a handy man is Wesley that the girls are determined he marry a girl with as much ambition as they have for him.⁷ There is a lot of me I see in Wes and, then, there's a lot in Wes I have no idea where it comes from. In the case of the former, please be sure to pray for him.

Ready to go, Wes takes his spot next to the van's sliding door, makes his usual announcement, "Everyone put your fingers in the door!" as the door thuds decisively closed to the mock cries of children in pain⁸, and we're off on another adventure praying that the back doors don't burst open or that we're stopped by the police for overloading.

Directly behind me sits Lindsey and Monica next to Wes. I remember my school bus days when seating was from the youngest to the oldest. In our van, the oldest migrate to the front lest they miss some really interesting conversation between Carrie and I.

Lindsey (18) is the proverbial big bomb in a small package. Quiet and reserved in public, she transforms into an aggressively competitive animal when behind the wheel of a car, coming down the slopes on skis, or involved in some contest or game. We never thought she would be significantly taller than Carrie, but neither did we dream she would barely clear the 60" mark. Thus, she can't even drive the van for she can't see over the steering wheel or, if she could, she wouldn't reach the peddles.

But as to her driving, well suffice it to say that quickly I was the only licensed driver in the family willing to ride with her.⁹ For the most part, she drives like she skis: 0 to 60 in 6 and full steam ahead. Bill Cosby said 40 years ago regarding driving a Volkswagen Beetle, "Once I get to 4th gear I ain't downshifting for nobody." That could be Lindsey's motto.

Pat & Carrie Hurd
401 Pepper Lane
Weatherford, TX 76117
817-596-8725
hurdwfd@airmail.net
www.fortifyingthefamily.com

On the home front, Lindsey finds her two youngest siblings ample material for which to hone her child training skills.¹⁰ Additionally, she has taken an interest in various social etiquettes this year – particularly dinner etiquette.¹¹ Thus, a fair amount of dinner time is spent reminding the boys and me to remove our elbows from the table, to place our napkins in our laps, and close our mouths when we chew. And while Monica has taken over much of the daily meal preparation (and does a rather fizzy job of it), Lindsey really enjoys the creative aspect of preparing new, interesting, and tasty dishes for the enjoyment and pleasure of all the family.



But Lindsey's interest in honor and order go well beyond that which should be practiced in social settings. Her interest in writing (poetry as of late), philosophy, and social issues was greatly encouraged by a weeklong worldview conference she and Wes attended in Virginia last summer. Also, events subsequent to 9/11 have provided her first hand witness to the fruits of a society that lost its way religiously long ago. Being a rather black and white kind of person like her mother, her opinions can be sometimes hard for others to swallow as she and Monica have experienced when expressing their views at the local writer's guild¹² on Thursday nights or the internet debate club of which they are members.

Speaking of **Monica (15)**, now there's an odd mix of the chirpy and intense. She truly enjoys the piano and voice lessons she shares with Lindsey. She has a distinctive style for both – crisp and energetic on the piano and a developing soprano voice. And like Lindsey, she has a distinctive and most entertaining writing style. She may be our most avid reader and especially seems to enjoy British authors. She doesn't consider herself a Tolkien fan, but a Tolkien fanatic. Accordingly, she and Lindsey both confidently assert the inferiority of Rowling's *Harry Potter*¹³ much to the disdain of too many Christians, I'm afraid.

And she continues to enjoy her animals very much, though this past year was a bit frustrating. She did buy herself another horse from the previous year's puppy proceeds.¹⁴ But two attempts to breed her older collies failed and the show-quality puppy she bought last year to breed this spring was recently killed. However, Monica is looking to regroup this year and is certainly enjoying having two horses and the fun of riding with family and friends.

Monica's fun countenance makes her a favorite among the students and teachers of the internet classes we use. Her quick and witty style is contagious in class, her in-box always full of emails from other students, she can't go online without being inundated with IMs, and we get regular comments about her upbeat and refreshing writing style from her teachers. She has always exemplified her middle name – Joy.

Past experience reminds us that we must be sure everyone is in the van before going too far.¹⁵ The countdown from Lindsey (#1) to Allison (#7) usually goes pretty smooth. But when everyone tries to cue **Melody**, who recently turned 5, to say "8" the argument ensues, "I'm not 8. I'm 5." Melody, still in the bossy stage, works both sides of Lindsey and Monica. If Lindsey is being inattentive at the dinner table, Melody is quick to pick up the slack, "Evan, get you're a-bone [translated: elbow] off the table." Melody is also a lover of animals. We think that is mainly so because they are the only creatures she can successfully boss as of right now.



Melody, aka Melodrama, often carries on whole conversations with whatever animal she may be fellowshipping with at the moment. Perhaps that is how she arrived at her tendencies toward the dramatic, thus her nickname. Whether it be a role as some super-hero, telling a story, or reciting a poem, Melody puts her whole being of expression into the work, including volume.¹⁶ One night she cried when told that Roy Rogers and Trigger were dead. The next night she again cried because it would be so long before she died and could see them in heaven. She is also mad at mom because she won't let her be a boy.

But Melody isn't the only one in the family with leanings to the dramatic. **Micah (12)** is the most expressive guy I know when it comes to plain dealings with day in and day out life. Carrie recently kicked him off of her side of the dinner table because he was too distracting. You've never seen someone enjoy eating something he likes with his whole body, soul, and spirit the way Micah does. He's not necessarily ill-mannered, it's just that the euphoria is too much to ignore. But the opposite is just as gruesome as the euphoria euphoric. You would think the guy was going to fall over dead from poisoning over a little quiche.¹⁷



Micah's euphoric personality personifies itself in his sense of humor. He is one to roar and roll at a corny joke, Sunday's comic strips, political cartoons, and those Paul Silhan music satires.¹⁸ But he has his serious side too. He is consistently the first to grab and hog the *World* magazine. Granted he goes to the political cartoons first, but he does find most of the articles consistently interesting. We have labeled him Mr. Quirky, as he often runs around with one shoe on and one shoe off, or in the summer, with long sleeves. Micah, as much an avid reader as Monica, manifests a most creative vocabulary which testifies of the hours he spends lost in book. This is Micah's first year enrolled in internet classes taking a Grammar and essay writing class. He is enjoying the academics and interaction with students from all over the country very much.



Clarke (10), compared to Micah, is Mr. Stoic. He and Micah both are showing some very good signs of handiness having had plenty of learning opportunities the past few years. Clarke is probably the most likeable chap you will ever meet (he gets that from his dad). He's personable, very conscious of his personal grooming, and self-confident. He is the one who will wander around the room striking up chess games with perfect strangers between rounds at tournaments.

Clarke can be very intense when concentrating on a task. Sharing classical guitar lessons with Wes and Evan, Clarke is the one who you can see is really concentrating on his play by the way he sets his jaw and his face tenses. His concentration skills are probably one reason he is the reigning chess master of the family this year. This first year of chess and going to tournaments has been a very good learning and social experience¹⁹ for all the boys and Allison.

But there is something about that freckled face blonde that people immediately pick from the crowd and surmise, "I bet he's very mischievous." Well, they're right: mischievous, pestiferous, and ornery are the most common adjectives his fellow family mates use of him. This too, I'm afraid, he takes from his dad.

Glancing over my shoulder toward the rear of the van, after Carrie had taken over the driving duties, I observed various kids in various stages of consciousness and the two collies jockeying around for preferential treatment on someone's lap or at someone's side. Suddenly, there was a jolt of the van, and the sound of shivering glass resonated throughout the van whilst glassy fragments flew through the air like sparkling confetti.²⁰ No, Carrie didn't have a wreck, but she did take a corner a little sharp thus dislodging a box stacked high over Evan's head. From the box a jar of salted peanuts landed square on his hard head breaking the jar and scattering glass and its contents all over the back of the van requiring us to pull over, evacuate the van, and clean the glass and mess.

Evan (8) was undamaged. The jar couldn't have targeted a more appropriate subject as there is no one in the family more obsessed with blowing things up than Evan. This kid comes up with more ways and devices designed for mass destruction and killing than anyone I know. He obviously spends hours planning in his mind the most fantastic explosive devices. Carrie recently required him to write his ideas on paper before presenting them to her.²¹ If he were a public school kid he would have certainly been kicked out and labeled an international security threat.



Ask Evan what he wants to be when he grows up and he will respond, "A nuclear physicist." Carrie and I seem constantly queried about the results of mixing acid with water, detonating explosives in outer space, or combining sulfur with saltpetre and charcoal then applying a match to the mixture. Perhaps Earth will be spared certain destruction if the government applies professional regulations to nuclear physicists like it does to doctors and lawyers before Evan turns 18.²²

While not the chessmaster of the family, Evan does very well within his age level. He took first place in two local tournaments (Allison took second place in one of those) and finished 38th out of over 200 in the recent Graded Nationals held in Dallas. He and Allison spend a lot of time doing school together as well as playing chess together.

Allison (7) believes she is Lindsey's twin sister, just born a little late. Thus she often has difficulty understanding why she can't do what the older kids do. After being told by mom, once again, that she could not go on the evening "adult walk" until she was 13, she quickly bemoaned that Carrie would be too old to walk by then.²³

Like Lindsey, she really enjoys the homemaking arts. She likes to sew, has become the dessert girl (someone has to keep up my figure), and is fairly artistic. Also like Lindsey, she's not much of an animal person. In fact, one might say she disdains animals, "Monica, get the dogs out of my way - they stink!"

Allison is bright and quick to catch on, thus it becomes difficult sometimes to keep her busy and occupied. She did so well in her first few chess tournaments this past year she was dubbed "The Barracuda" by some in the chess club because of her wipe-them-out killer style. As of late, though, her mothering instincts have crept in as I have actually caught her coaching her opponents during the game. Thus we have resorted to paying her in cold cash for each game she wins. Cash or compassion - hummmmm.

According to Wesley, **Andrew (3)** has made great strides in his talking abilities this past 3 months since mom removed the video player from the house and started assigning different children to read books to him. His favorite book for me to read aloud is GO DOG GO! Just this last month he graduated to saying "please", volunteering a "yes ma'am" after being corrected, "outside" to attend to his favorite activity, "Bye bye! See ya later," and more consistently saying "thank you."



"Andrew loves music and is always begging us to turn on the CD player so he can waltz and twirl around the floor. Much of Andrew's day is spent outside, wandering everywhere, investigating everything, and hunting down the fire ant beds in our yard. It's a very dark day when the rain falls, severely tempting mom to bring out those brain-cell sucking²⁴ videos to distract him from all the trouble he constantly gravitates to in the house.

"Andrew's best friend and partner in crime is Patrick. They spend a lot of time together playing, sharing colds, fighting over toys, and trying to be the first to get to Mommy. Andrew is turning into a little gentleman, whenever he is asked to do something he says "yes ma'am," he waves and shouts "good-bye" to exiting guests, and blows kisses before bed. All in all Andrew seems to be very much just another little boy, but in slow motion, sometimes to the chagrin of mom."²⁵

Patrick (1) is actually 16 months now. According to Lindsey, "Packy isn't about to let his place as tenth child intimidate him. The boy seems on a veritable mission to break all babyhood records set by his elder siblings. He developed a full set of teeth

with scandalous rapidity, walked at eleven months and now, at sixteen months, is well on his road to talking. Considering these accomplishments, it would seem he has reason to grin. This he very widely does, tromping through the house, lone brown curl standing atop his head, and showing as many teeth as possible. His own special grin emerges when especially goofy: the laughing blue eyes squench together and the tongue curls



Carrie (44),²⁷ who will always be younger than Pat, prefers his company to all others. More evenings than not are spent at “the point” rehearsing the events of days past, the victories and the failures, and making plans for tomorrow and beyond. Carrie has been especially challenged the last couple of years coordinating the academics and extracurricular schedules of the older kids, keeping up with the work and progress of the middle kids, and starting all over again with the younger ones. While the internet classes have been a life saver for Carrie, the rigid class schedule makes juggling classes with other activities a real headache at times. These challenges she shares with me one night, makes an adjustment the next night, drop a class here, add a class there, we’ve got to get this class in somewhere soon, this child is not doing his work, another child needs some help with his work, etc, ad infinitum.

Spending individual time with each child continues to be a challenge for both of us. She and the girls are pretty adamant about the whole family eating dinner together. While the boys are cleaning the kitchen and dishes, Carrie solicits Lindsey and Monica for the evening laps around a ½ mile route on the property. Many times Wes and I accompany them.²⁸ Carrie takes Allison grocery shopping every week while the older girls are taking their voice lessons. Time with the boys and Melody are more sporadic and spontaneous.

Rumor has it that Carrie is mellowing in her old age and such mellowing is showing up in the lack of discipline in her younger children.²⁹ Well, there’s nothing wrong with a little rumor to make one aware of a slippage. According to Carrie, “A little shame experienced today because of a mother’s children should be enough to move her and thwart the possibility of greater shame tomorrow.” Thus she has a renewed conviction to enforce the Hurd standards with the older kids and make sure those standards are implanted in the younger ones. To encourage and equip herself, she has loaded up with a whole new set of child training material, much to the chagrin of the children. According to Carrie, she finds no greater joy or fulfillment than disciplining, discipling, and educating her children and then seeing the fruit of those disciplines as each child matures.

Thus Carrie’s primary function is to promote and protect order in every sphere of family and home life and vigilantly keep watch against the dark side of confusion and disorder.³⁰ Sounds like the making of some kind of super hero or something, eh? Of course, we know some of you are thinking that Packy’s 16 months old now and, well…… well??? You know who you are. Well……we’ll just have to see.

It is New Year’s Eve here in the mountains of Ruidoso as I finish this letter. It snowed several inches last Monday between our two days of skiing. It is snowing again tonight as we prepare to head home tomorrow. **Administratively, it is necessary that we purge our mailing list.** Therefore, if you have made some kind of contact either by card, letter, or by the guest book on our web page at www.fortifyingthefamily.com in the past year, you will stay on the list. Otherwise……

On the bigger front, post 9/11 America is certainly different and still evolving. For sure, the terrorists won the battle. The evidence of their victory is the rapid decline of what few personal freedoms are left in our country.³¹ That is the aim of terrorism – to encourage people to sacrifice freedom on the alter of personal peace and prosperity.

But they will not win the war, nor will the United States and its coalition of nations. For the battle is not the UN’s, the US’s, nor is it a coalition of pluralistic religious faith’s, but belongs to the one and only triune God of the universe. The suddenly awakened religious fever of post 9/11 America is very telling of how long the Church has been asleep and how far Humanism has overwhelmed our culture. Jesus Christ is not the Super Star of the ‘60’s but has become the Super Mom of the new millenium: someone we run to when a big bad bully hurts us and we expect her to make us feel better, bandage our wounds, defend us, and hurt the bad bully for us. But like the spoiled child we are, Super

over the grinning top lip, he tips his head back and stomps around like a miniature soldier.

“Amidst all his charm (for I’m convinced there was none more charming than he), it must be admitted that the exuberance of his nature is subject to punctuations of –dare I say it?– fits of passion. Perhaps flops of passion would be a better description. He’s, ahem, working on that though. And it’s a good thing he has a big brother like Andy to keep him out of trouble. If Packy has the audacity to open a kitchen cabinet, Andy will be sure to pull him away with a “no, no!” and shut the cabinet door. Of course, you know something’s wrong when immediately afterwards, Andy opens the very same cabinet and pokes his head in. Packy just shrugs his shoulders.”²⁶

Faithful Are Her Steps

A better mother we could never find;
Beautiful of face and clever of mind.
Since days of infancy she has us cared
Faithfully, though her law we often dared.
Discipline, not of whim but good and true,
Claimed us as often – her wise foresight knew.

Days flew.

Years passed.

Found faithfulness unmarred.

Now in outlandish position she stands,
Teenagers and babies her time demands.
Sweeping piles of dirt do fill a day,
Putting away legos and crayons may
Seem her sole achievements. But all in vain?
Little grains of sand build a mountain.

Faithfulness,

Detail:

Staircase to success.

Little drops of dew swell mighty oceans,
Mighty souls swelled by Godly devotions.
Vain may seem to those of vision tiny,
Yet her strength transforms them to loft beauty.
Regarding not defeat does she proceed,
Though gloom may oppress, she will not concede.

May God crown her labors with victory,
Grant her Joy of faithfulness sprung.
The best of her story yet to be sung.

- by Lindsey H

Mom doesn’t have the right to demand anything from us – she is our servant and at our disposal at our sole discretion.³²

It is an interesting fact, though, that even though Humanism has declared itself the supreme religion of the United States and is supported as such by the Supreme Court and Congress, our citizens did not cry out to the nothingness of Humanism to ease the national pain. Instead, we sought after a distant memory; one of a God once revered and honored by our forefathers. Perhaps the silence of the ACLU regarding the religious expressions all across our nation and in every sphere of government for a couple of months since 9/11 is really just an acknowledgement of the impotence and irrelevance of such vain expressions to a distant memory.

Modern hyper pietism has lopped off the connection between religious faith and national blessings or curses. No one seems to wonder aloud why the greatest advancement of civilization in the history of mankind didn’t originate from Latin America, South Africa, or Asia. The Christian answer is a politically incorrect one. Instead, Humanism answers, “It was a matter of evolutionary fate and chance, of natural resources, that made the United States the epicenter of all civilization. Certainly nothing to do with a religious structure of faith.” Satisfied, the American Christian returns to his internalized and personal religion.

President Bush is right – terrorism is a threat to civilization.³³ Not because of its anarchist and revolutionary ideologies, though, but

because of its pagan underpinnings, its pagan religion, that support and produce such a destructive ideology. But it is wrong to say that a coalition of religious beliefs is the strength of our nation.³⁴ It is not. The land of opportunity is just that because of the Christian heritage established here and the consequences thereof. For men, who left the consequences of their culture in search of opportunity, to insist that Christianity give national credence to their foreign and destructive culture and thus insist we suffer under the same consequences of the religious faith they themselves left is violently wrong. That is the real revolution, the real threat to civilization.

Our society responded to 9/11 by crying out to the vague memory of a god who had long before been jettisoned from public life. We cried out to the wrong god, publicly scourged the 2 or 3 men who dared speak publicly on the airways of the judgement of our national sins,³⁵ and have turned to the only savior that is constitutionally approved by the masses – the State. The hour grows late.

But time is a dread only to the faithless and non-Christian who sees nothing but continual degradation and pending death and whose only hope is the abolishment of time itself either by attaining Nirvana or some secret rapture out of its death grip. For the faithful Christian, however, time is an ever present ally and hope – created and ordained by the one and only true triune God – giving us present opportunity to faithful and productive work. But it must be worked; it must not be wasted by frivolous priorities or laid stagnant by laziness. The faithful is to “redeem the time...”

The hour may be late and the problem before us may be enormous. President Bush has vowed to take captive every person remotely connected with the 9/11 atrocity and bring them to justice. This is his duty and the right thing to do. But he is unable to even speak of the root of terrorism (even if he were so inclined he could not without also being publicly scourged) and, thus, give us the personal peace and prosperity to which we think we are entitled. Be prepared to take off more clothes if you want to fly.³⁶

If there are any who desire to see a change in the course of our nation, you can rest assured it won't begin with the UN, our

Federal government, or even our churches (however “church” might be defined). The vision must begin with today's parents by training and equipping the next generation with a Christian faith long ago lost in our society – one willing and capable of taking every *thought* captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

May God bless you this year and for many more to come.

The Hurds

Paul Carrie Lindsey
 Monica Clarke Melody
 Evan Micah Andy
 Allison Wesley Packy



Front: Allison and Melody
 Middle: Evan, Clarke, and Micah
 Back: Patrick, Pat, Carrie, Monica, Lindsey, Wesley, and Andrew

¹ Other questions include, “Do you know what makes that happen?” and “Are you going to have any more?” and “They’re not all yours, are they?” and “Are they foster children?” and “What does your husband think about having so many children?” and etc. ad infinitum.

² We more appropriately identify yellow school buses as government church buses.

³ Sonny-do is a copy righted expression of Wesley Hurd probably stolen from Shayne Bernier (pictured to Wes' left waaaaaay back there on the front page). But you have permission to use it if you like it that much.

⁴ Wes will deny the truth of this statement; he only wishes he could so graduate.

⁵ Poor Wes. It's not that we're trying to feminize him, but he has done such a great job with Andy - and Patrick has just kinda come along. Besides, it takes a very strong stomach to change a 3-year old's diaper – it's not just woman's work, you know. You're our hero, Wesley!

⁶ Training a down syndrome child to sit at the dinner table and eat the food put before him has proven to be a monumental task, but very much doable.

⁷ Such a vision by Lindsey and Monica causes Wes much consternation for he is certain they will accomplish their task.

⁸ You're welcome, Dawn.

⁹ In reality, I've never experienced anything quite like riding with our two student drivers. I think the kids will testify that they saw and heard a side of me they hadn't seen much of, if ever.

¹⁰ Actually, no one from Dad down is outside of her scrutiny and improvement.

¹¹ Her interest in etiquette was also encouraged by our attendance to this spring's *Belles and Rebels* Civil War era ball thanks to the Tankersley's and Driggers.

¹² The Weatherford Writer's Guild is an interesting mix of traditional Christian, humanist Christian, atheist, agnostic, and indifferent folks who are really mostly kind to Lindsey and Monica when criticizing their Christian ideals.

¹³ For an argument asserting the reading of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and other fictions as required reading to a vibrant Christian faith, see Douglas Wilson's, *Future Men*, Chapter 12 “Giants, Dragons, and Books” available from Canon Press (www.canonpress.org). Though we did let Lindsey and Monica read the first *Harry Potter* book, we don't advocate reading the books or seeing the movie. The inferiority of *Harry Potter* is more consequential than wizards and magic.

¹⁴ General is a nice compliment to Liby – he makes her look slow. An older and faster quarter horse gelding, he gave Monica her worst scrape yet by running her under the trees, knocking her off, and breaking the horn off her western saddle.

¹⁵ The incidences of leaving children behind over the years are too numerous to detail here and would only serve as evidence against us by Child Protective Services.

¹⁶ We are hopefully mindful that Monica, who was nick-named Deci-bell, did finally outgrow the “volume stage.”

¹⁷ We've never tolerated picky eaters. But somehow Micah has this thing about “mixed” foods and honestly we've feared he was going to return dinner back to its maker right at the table at times.

¹⁸ We discovered this year, much to our embarrassment, that the little kids don't know the traditional carols very well by memory but they know every one of those Clinton satires by Silhan and Shanklin.

¹⁹ They observe behavior they never thought possible, much less something one could get away with.

²⁰ I bet you could tell I didn't write that sentence.

²¹ This was strictly a defensive maneuver to keep Evan from capturing her unaware with what seemed like hours of detail descriptions while all else in the house went to waste.

²² Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be enough money in regulating nuclear physicists as of yet, so we're all doomed.

²³ Quite astute, don't you think?

²⁴ Scarcity of brain cells is an economic problem for every person – they shouldn't be sacrificed to the black hole of TV. According to Melody, watching TV will make you fat and stupid.

²⁵ One advance that Wes failed to mention is that Andy now knows how to turn on the faucet to get a drink of water rather than getting his drinks from the commode.

²⁶ Packy walks away because Andy is bigger and heavier than he is. We've already seen a couple of wrestling matches between the two. It will be REAL interesting in a couple of years.

²⁷ I intentionally waited until after Carrie's birthday to send the letter so she would be a year older.

²⁸ We can't express how much we enjoy our teenagers. We wish we could find everyone who years ago said, “Oh they're soooooo cute *now*. But just WAIT till they become teenagers!!”

²⁹ Observe that they are “her” children.

³⁰ You thought I was going to say, “having babies” didn't you.

³¹ Remember your mother warning you to always have on clean underwear in case you were involved in an accident? Now that warning applies should you have to go to the airport and fly.

³² This is one reason why angels are “in” and God is “out” today. We like the idea of the supernatural benefits of a guardian and benevolent being without the requirement of worship and obedience. Angels require nothing of us. God requires sole obedience and worship.

³³ Sept 20, 2001 Bush speech to the nation. Read an on-line transcript at www.fortifyingthefamily.com

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ See “The post-Sept. 11 world is potentially confusing”; Oct 11, 2001; USA Today; at www.usatoday.com/life/2001-10-08-potentially-confusing.htm

³⁶ I'm sure you've heard the suggestion, mostly in jest, to cure airport security issues by requiring everyone to fly naked. Well.....