



They came and fixed our mailbox on the 10<sup>th</sup>! It is so nice to have it fixed again. We had to buy the stuff to put the flag on but Jared did a great job! So it's fixed, it's no longer full of rust and our flag no longer has trouble remaining upright, it's



a win-win-win! Except that I got a phone call a couple of days later from the Laurie, the claims lady that they hired to handle the case. Seems that Pedro didn't want to give them his social security

number so that they could cut a check, go figure, she kept telling me that they would need mine. To which I politely refused, more than once in that conversation. Then I got a nasty letter from her saying that Pedro was now threatening to tear down the mailbox if he didn't get paid and she would need my social security number to process the claim and on and on and on...So I called the guy I talked to at SAIA and told him that Laurie was bugging me and Pedro was going to tear down my mailbox if he didn't get paid. He told me he would take care of it and I haven't heard anything else from Pedro or Laurie.

L-3 held it's annual children's Christmas party on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It was really fun and not as crowded this year, though there were still plenty of people there. The kids got some neat toys and we bumped into Tim and Amanda too. They seem to be doing fine and it was nice to seem them for a minute.



I wish we had gotten a picture of Tess pulling Santa's beard off but sadly we missed that photo op.

Jared and I celebrated our 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 15<sup>th</sup>. And how did we celebrate you might ask? By going to both the ward Christmas party and the Joy School Christmas party. Both were fine though not really how I wanted to spend my anniversary. The kids did a really cute hand puppet nativity play at the Joy School party and sang some cute Christmas songs. I forgot to bring a camera of any kind so we had no proof, luckily Brenda got a few cute shots. Noah stood up behind the puppet table for the whole play...it was great. The dinner at the ward thing was really good; they had smoked turkey from Costco that was AWESOME! I had to bring a pan of potatoes that didn't end up getting used, but oh well...we had them for dinner a couple of times. The kids were being a huge pain while Jared sang at the ward party so we left as soon as he was done. We were all partied out! Jared did bring me some flowers at some point in the day...but we decided to put off official celebrations until Valentine's Day.

On Christmas Eve I tried to make sugar cookies from scratch. I haven't done this

before, I'll admit that I am a big fan of the kind that you buy already rolled out, so all you have to do is cut and bake. We tried to roll them out and let the kids use the cookie cutters but it was a huge



disaster, which resulted in me bawling over the moronic cookies and swearing to never bake anything ever again. I rolled up the dough and sliced in into rounds and baked them. Then I

opened a can of frosting and the kids made Santa some lovely sugar-coated-heartburn cookies. What a memory...

Of course we did the Christmas Eve pajamas thing too and were very relieved when Tess readily accepted the not pink PJ's into her jammie drawer. Here's a cute picture of my clean and jammied kids not sitting still for the camera:



Christmas morning we all stumbled out too see what Santa had done to the living room. The kids had a ball with all of their new toys and Tate had a good time

touching all of everyone else's stuff. Jared and I got the kids a bunch of new clothes this year, since I have gotten to be fed up with all of the toys everywhere. They were actually really excited to receive them and they got plenty of toys from Santa and extended family. It was a really nice Christmas and we had a good time.



We made our own Honey Baked Ham this year and it turned out great! If I

remember right we had Sam and Cameron over for desserts later than evening and the kids "shared" all of their new stuff.

Andi turned the ripe old age of 5 on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Due to obvious reasons Sam decided to postpone her birthday party for a few weeks.

Jared's family arrived here in the evening on the 27<sup>th</sup>. We had a good time visiting with them and picking on Bree a little bit. The kids loved to have them here to play with and they also enjoyed the second round of Christmas they brought with them. We were glad they got to come and look forward to seeing everybody when we come home this summer, probably in July.

Sherry's birthday was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, just like last year...we gave her her gift while she was here. I picked out a set of fancy socks and some fabulous foot cream from Bath and Body Works, seemed like we hit the nail on the head with that one! Happy Birthday!

While they were here Jared's dad hired him to help with a few programming things or something, if you want specifics you'll have to ask someone else. All I know is that he's enjoyed it and the extra money has been really, really nice.

Noah went to the Fire Station on a field trip on the 4<sup>th</sup>. He had a ball and Brenda once again got some really cute pictures for us. I love this picture:



It was pretty quiet around here until the 10<sup>th</sup> when the kids and I ventured out with the Children's Field Trip Group in our ward. We went to a neat park and had a picnic (can you say Happy Meal?) in some rather chilly wind. The kids got to play until Tess peed her pants and then we went home...

The Elder's Quorum also started playing basketball with the stake league on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Jared has been several times since then and he enjoys it.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> Andi had her birthday party! There were lots more kids this year than last year, and she had an awesome cake that some wonderful person they know made for her. ☺ Noah had a ball and we had fun chatting for a minute afterwards.

When the party was over we grabbed Noah and headed for Best Buy to see



about getting a new camcorder, digital in format, so that we would be able to post videos to our website. We

found a really nice camera for an awesome price and have been very happy with it so far.

Sometime around now our little Joy School group decided to boycott the Joy School curriculum in favor of something a little less...cheesy and made up. Twyla spearheaded the rebellion and we're going to start a new program called *Five In A Row* on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February; I'll let you know how it goes. It's one of those literature-based curriculums; the first unit is centered on the book *Ping*, the one about the duck in China. It looks really cool so far and I am excited to do something much less phony than Joy School. The kids have totally lost interest in all of the ridiculous Joy School mush and frankly, so have the rest of us.

I also got to take Tess to the doctor when her fever spiked to 103.4 with a temporal artery thermometer. She had all the symptoms of a UTI so they ordered a culture, after I got to make her pee in a cup (insert eye rolling here) and he started her on some antibiotics. Of course the stupid fancy drugs weren't on my insurance company's list of favorites so it cost us \$40 just for the ten days worth of medicine. She was also dehydrated so we bought a million different drinks and cups in an effort to get her hydrated and avoid being

admitted. The next day her fever had dropped dramatically and she seemed to be in much better spirits. The day after that Dr. Kotas called to report that her culture had come back negative so we could and should stop giving her the medicine-o-gold. It's just a virus...by the 5 day mark her fever was gone and she was fine. She is still a pain in the butt about having a drink. We make her drink a full cup of something at every meal and she'll occasionally sit there for an hour and half before she touches it. She is so stubborn...don't know where she gets it.



My Baby Tate turned one on the 18<sup>th</sup>...sob, sob. We had his party that night and invited the Carter's as well as our other friends, the White's, over for



cake and ice cream. Tate got a lot of neat stuff, and seemed to do okay until we tried to give him some cake and ice cream. He

cried the whole time he was in the high chair and didn't touch it once.

The next day he developed a fever and we decided he had some thing close to what Tess had just had. He slept in the swing with the humidifier and whined a lot for the next few days. His fever also disappeared on the 5<sup>th</sup> day but he is taking a bit longer to get back to himself.



He totally lost his appetite there for a while. I felt so bad for him that I bought

him a bag of his favorite cheese puffs...so at least he didn't totally starve. He's eating normally and drinking more everyday.

Jared went to the Pinewood Derby the day after Tate's birthday. He had a good time and was happy to be able to help out. I was glad when he finally got home and it was my turn to have a break from the whiny sick kids...



On the 25<sup>th</sup> we celebrated Tess' 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. I invited the Carters, the Davis's (Joe and Bekah and kids) and

Michelle, our local Relief Society president. She lives just across the street from the Carters and Noah has taken to calling her “Andi’s Grandma.” Bekah and her kids and Michelle didn’t make it so it was just the Crookstons and Carters again, but we had a good time. Tess got a lot of neat, pink things and was thrilled to get a party of her own. We put up balloons and streamers and got a piñata and everything. It was fun and she was cute...she did make us buy these stupid, itchy, sparkly Tinkerbell headbands that she refused to wear. Sam, Andi and I ended up with them and you can see it in all of the pictures that I couldn’t get out of.



We had some issues with the photo card in the regular camera while she was opening presents, in that it got to be full. We did a little swaperoo with another card we had (a tiny one that held 20 pictures) and continued on. Later we discovered that the card we usually use was toast. The card reader in the computer just freaked out every time we stuck the card in. We could get the pictures off of it just fine with the USB cable, but that’s slow and takes a lot of battery life from the camera. So we got the few pictures we needed off and bought a new card that is twice as big and cost less than a third as much as the original card three years ago, stupid computer parts.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> we dropped Noah off at the Carters so they could take him to the birthday party of one of the little boys

from our Joy School group last year named Brandon. We then headed to the far away mall to get new pictures of Tess and Tate taken. Tess did really well and totally hammed it up for the camera. Tate pouted, cried and clung onto Jared for almost every shot. They turned out pretty cute anyways...



We stopped and had lunch and then picked up Noah and Andi from the birthday party. It seemed like the party had been a success, though I am sure that the highlight of the day had to have been when the birthday boy brought a

bird that their cat had killed in the garage into the house and then made his mother chase him down to get his hands scrubbed. Ewww, gross!

We all went home and had a little nap and then Jared fed the kids while I went and picked up our new favorite babysitter Hayden, whose sister Hope is in our current ~~Joy~~ School Group. Jared and I left all three of the kids with her and headed to the Elder's Quorum social. This was the first time that I left Tate with someone who wasn't Sam. He cried when we left but got over it pretty quickly. Jared and I had a good time at the party and ate waaay too much really good food. We did a little shopping on the way home and Hayden had all the kids in bed when we got there. I drove her home in the psycho creepy fog and then we stayed up way too late not doing anything around the house we should have done.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> Jared got a new calling at church. He is now the Cub Scout Master in our ward! Yippee! He won't officially take over until the current Cub Master moves in May, but our troop is in the process of being re-chartered and they are trying to save themselves some paperwork down the road.



We were also sad to hear that President Hinckley passed away on the 27<sup>th</sup>. He was amazing and we will miss him but we're glad to know that he is reunited with his sweet wife. It's hard to imagine the church without him, but

we're also looking forward to getting to know President Monson.

I took the two younger kids to the doctor on the 28<sup>th</sup> for their annual checkups. After the trauma of peeing in a cup at her last visit Tess announced to the whole place that she did not need to go potty as soon as we got there, she had the nurse in stitches before we left. She weighed in at 28 lbs and was 36 inches tall. Tate was a little more than 30 inches tall but came in at only 17 lbs 14 oz. I was so hoping we would get to turn his car seat around but it looks like he has a little weight to gain before then. Tess made it out of there without getting any shots, while Tate had to get three. He was not a happy baby.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> I left just as Jared walked in the door. Sam, who was just called to the committee, and I headed to the church to prep for Enrichment. It turned out amazing! They did an awesome progressive theater thing on the parable of the ten virgins and then we let everyone into the cultural hall for the "wedding feast." We had people bring wedding things (pictures, bouquets, centerpieces, cake toppers...) and decorated with all of that. We put some Christmas lights under some gathered and arranged tablecloths on the display tables and the room just glowed. It was soooo pretty. (A daughter of one of the ladies in the ward told Sam and I that when she gets married she's calling us.) They had a ton of really good food, including a chocolate fountain (don't buy one; they are a horrible, miserable nightmare to clean!). The gal in the presidency who was there helping with all the set up and take down told me that she didn't think that we had ever had so

many people at enrichment. Yay for us! Even though I didn't get to leave the church until after ten it was awesome and I am excited to see how the next one turns out!

## EXCiting Noah News

Noah started a new primary class this year. He is now a CTR; he got a little ring and everything. It is so cute. So far he has loved it and it makes me feel even older than I did last year.

Recently Noah told us that he was going to have 19 kids...I feel really bad to the poor woman he talks into doing that.

Another funny Noah story...Noah got a small bag of candy at a birthday party and I had been letting him have a few pieces each day. I left the bag on the counter one afternoon and Noah, being the little bandit that he is, snuck a piece.

I came into the kitchen and he was making this horrible, sad face clutching a small piece of cellophane wrapping. He'd chosen an Atomic Fireball. I asked him if he had helped himself to some candy



and he made a sad noise and nodded his head up and down. "Is it burning your mouth?" Same noise, same nod. "Do you want to spit it out?" He promptly spit it into his hand and tried to hand the nasty, mouth-burning thing to me. I told him I

didn't want it but that he could put it in the sink. Funny dang kid.



*Pretending to be "a mouse with green ears."*

## Tess is Terriffic!

Tess started her last year of nursery at church. Since her birthday is in January and you don't start Sunbeams until the year you turn four she has a whole year of nursery left. She doesn't seem to mind though. Jared still does singing time for them and she really loves having her Daddy come and see her in nursery.

After we got Tess' pictures taken we stopped at the Disney store at the mall before we left. She had some birthday money and I was sure she would like being able to pick out some princess stuff. She loved it!



She touched everything they had there that had a princess on it and ended up with a cute tea set, which the kids have loved, some sparkly, pink, Princess flip flops and a small velvet bag of plastic

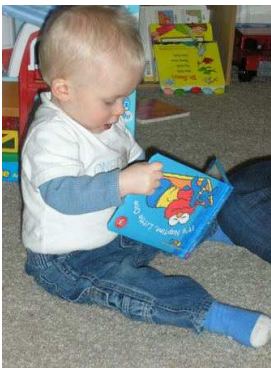
jewels she got to handpick out of this big treasure chest. It was so cute!



When I asked Tess what she wanted for her birthday dinner I wasn't really too surprised when she said she wanted peanut butter and jelly. I don't think I have ever known a kid who loved PB&J as much as Tess does. We compromised and she had PB&J for lunch and we made Peanut Butter and Jelly Pizza for dinner. It was surprisingly good!

## Talkin' Bout' Tate

Tate has been cutting teeth left and right lately. He has seven now and a few more



that I am sure will pop through any day;

Which made me even more willing to start weaning him. He is totally weaned now and happily takes milk from a bottle. We hope

to have him drinking from a sippy cup in the next month or so.

We also started trying to get him less attached to his pacifier, lest we should have to fight the battle we fought with Tess. Now he only gets it when he goes to sleep. Go figure that he has gotten to be really chatty lately now that he hasn't always got a plug in his mouth.

Tate got his second haircut on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December. Two haircuts before his first birthday!? Who is this kid? He is already starting to get to the point where he needs another one...

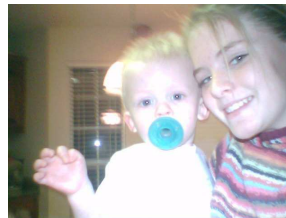
When we went to the Elders Quorum social we left Tate with his first non-Sam and Cameron babysitter. He was really unhappy when we left but apparently he got over it and was just fine. We're really glad that he doesn't hate out other babysitter.

## What's Noah Lookin' At?

Here are some samples of Noah's latest work, or at least the pictures that were on his camera. I'm not sure if he took them or not...



*Tess making weird faces.*



*Our babysitter, Hayden, and Tate.*

Well folks, I think that's it.

Happy 2008! Love you all! Till next time...