



Christmas, 2009

**USA
O'DAY**

NO. 1 IN OUR HOUSEHOLD



All the news that matters to us.
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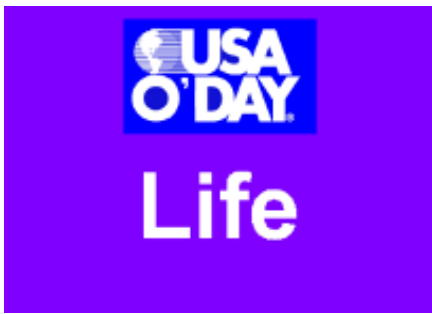
A look back at things that have happened in the Mattison/O'Day household since our last Christmas letter.

Hatfield is the Real McCoy

Our most recent big news is the new home. Given that Holyoke has one of the worst school systems in the state no matter how you evaluate such a distinction, and because Grace will be ready to attend school in a couple years, we've been looking to buy a home in a new town for some time. In October, we placed an offer on a beautiful old Victorian-era farmhouse in Hatfield. Twenty-four hours later, our bid was accepted; in less than a month we closed the deal. We're still in Holyoke for the time being, because the new house needs wiring, painting, floor sanding, etc., but we expect to move between Christmas and New Year's. Our new address is 1 Valley Street, Hatfield, MA 01038. However, the old address will still work for a while because we don't expect to put the Holyoke house on the market until Spring. The new place has 0.84 acres plus eight rooms, which means there's plenty to keep Handyman Larry (Mimi's dad) busy for many years. It also means there's plenty of room for you when you come to visit, which we hope will be soon!



Given that we're in mid-move and we have our hands as full as ever tending to our darling girls, this year's Christmas letter will be a little shorter on content, and shorter on rants & raves, than usual. We're confident that you'll understand, and that some people will be thankful for the lack of rants & raves.



June 8, 2009: Mattie & Grace's newest cousin, Cole Christina Mattison Gulotta, was born.



Grace and Mattie, at a typical bedtime, looking typically un-sleepy.



The Girls

The girls are at such fun ages. As of last year's Christmas letter, Mattie was just 3 months old and didn't even crawl. Now she's walking and communicating very enthusiastically. When we started working on this letter in late November, her spoken vocabulary was pretty much limited to "mama" and "quack quack" (Stephe's wondering how it is that a duck rates higher than he does). Now, the second week of December, she also has words for Grace, Nanny, Jack, Cole, keys, and milk. She also expresses herself quite well with a limited sign language repertoire, pointing and of course, screaming at the top of her lungs. At the start of the year, 2-year-old Grace went through a stage when she responded "why" to everything either of her parents said. That phase has passed, and now our nearly-3 future biblioholic has become fascinated with spelling. She's constantly asking how to spell things, plus she recites the letters on signs, saying afterward, "what does that spell?" Grace and Mattie both took two music classes and a swim class this year; their parents keep wishing there were time for more such classes.

Grace constantly amazes us with some of the insightful, adorable, and hilarious things that she says. For example:

Mimi, after receiving some pretend tea from Grace: "Yum. This is the best tea I've had all day. What's your secret?"

Stephe, whispering to Grace: "Tell her it's made with love."

Grace, turning back to Mimi: "It has chocolate in it."

Grace and Mattie's Parents

Beyond the new house news, the adults in the house don't have a lot to report, because everything revolves around the kids. Mimi's still at the Northampton VA Medical Center, and her 4-day-a-week schedule will return to 5 days in the new year. Stephe is still QE Supervisor at VCI. We're both still immensely grateful to Mimi's mom ("Nanny") for watching the girls every week so that can both continue to work and the girls' "daycare" is family. There are a couple items of note:

- In April, we found our new spiritual home, and started attending the Unitarian Universalist Church in Northampton. The organization's liberal views and actions-speak-louder-than-words philosophy seem to be a very good fit for us.
- Our house was burglarized in June. Although nothing of significant monetary value was taken, we have reason to believe that the thief may have been in the house when Mimi got home with the girls that day. We're thankful that we're all safe, that more was not taken, and that we'll be moving out of this town soon.



Health

Mimi Sees the Light- And Everything Else

The good health news of the year is Mimi's: she can see. Thanks to Lasik surgery, she can see the alarm clock in the morning and her feet in the shower. So Stephe and Mimi now both see without glasses or contacts, and we highly recommend the surgery.

Have a Nice Trip! See You Next Fall!

In March, Stephe fell down the stairs of our house while holding Mattie. Although he ended up with a broken tailbone, we are all thankful that Mattie didn't get hurt at all. The tailbone has healed, but Stephe still is accused regularly of being a pain in the rear.



Doctor, Doctor, Give Me the News

Until Christmas, 2008, our girls had been the pictures of health, rarely even getting so much as cold. Although they are healthy once again, they had their share of illnesses over the last year. Both were hospitalized last Christmas and then again in March for a lung condition called bronchiolitis. Mattie even had a milestone in the hospital: she started crawling while in her special hospital crib (which looked more like a cage). Grace was hospitalized in January as well, for Kawasaki disease. It's an illness of indeterminate origin that can result in long-term cardiovascular issues. Thanks to some outstanding medical care, there will be no long-term consequences resulting from any of these illnesses. There may have even been a medical benefit to having Kawasaki disease: it put Grace at the top of the list for the swine flu vaccine when it became available.

Grace also had a near-miss with Lyme Disease in July, but it was caught early and she was treated with antibiotics to ensure that the disease could not develop.

We're thankful we have such good health insurance, and hopeful that universal health care will soon be a reality in this country.

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Travel



In May, Mimi and Stephe had a weekend getaway in Burlington, Vermont that included trips to Ben & Jerry's, a winery, and Magic Hat Brewery. In August, the extended O'Day family got together in Burlington at a cottage on Lake Champlain. There was kayaking, Ben & Jerry's, Montpelier, Cabot Cheese, a Lake Champlain cruise, a wildflower farm, Magic Hat Brewery, a bike ride, a few games of Scrabble and some amazing family meals. As proof that the O'Day family is as abnormal as they come, nobody wanted to kill anybody else by the end of the week, and all have indicated that they had a good time.



Left: Grace getting her toes painted by Bev, who visited in May. For weeks afterward, it seemed that Bev was all Grace talked about.



Right: In March, Mimi and her family went to see a taping of The Martha Stewart Show in NYC, and also saw the musical "Hair".



Left: In Provincetown, during our August vacation on Cape Cod. Above: Stephe's parents came out for Mattie's first birthday, in September. Right: Stephe and nephew Kyle go ziplining during the July visit of Kyle and Stephe's sister, Kathleen.





Grace, to the misbehaving window shade in the car, with suction cups that would continually come unstuck from the window: "You're in time out!"



Grace, looking at the TV and computer monitor side by side: "Which is bigger, the TV or the computer?"
Mimi: "The TV."
Grace: "Maybe when the computer grows up, it will be that one [the TV]."

Stephe: "You sure woke up on the right side of the bed."
Grace: "No, the left side."



Grace, who likes sitting with Stephe at the computer and looking up animals on YouTube, but at this time was sitting at the computer by herself: "I'm e-mailing my zebra."

Mimi: "Grace, are your shoes on?"
Grace: "Yes."
Mimi: "No they're not."
Grace, very seriously: "Yes. Pretend ones."



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Mattie, Grace, Mimi and Stephe!