



Laugh WITH Me!

A selection of Wacky, Zany, and Silly Stories.

Yep, these really happened
in our Autism Family.

Kyle and Alek Jetsel

Forward

There was a time when we were in REAL TROUBLE as a family. The stress was overwhelming and causing real discord. The low, lows of difficult moments were over-shadowing the seemingly inconsequential happy moments that we were experiencing.

As we attempted to capture and more fully enjoy those “small moments” we decided that we’d share – every night – any and all, silly, wacky or zany moments. It became a nightly habit prior to going to bed and generally left us laughing and smiling together as a family. Something... at the time – that was REALLY needed.

Those events, as simple as they were, began to CHANGE the way we viewed our family.

From embarrassment... to laughter. From being annoyed at others stares... to the joy of watching others confusion. From “on the brink of family disaster” and saying, “Oh no, not again...” to starting to thrive as a family and saying, “Oh yes, that’s going to be a great story to tell.”

Not only was it freeing for our family, but we also saw our 2 sons on the spectrum starting to more joyfully and openly express themselves... what they saw and lived in THEIR own unique way, and build confidence that their unique way of viewing the world was... A-OKAY!

For us... laughter is invaluable.

We hope you’ll laugh WITH us and you read this selection of silly stories.

Authors Note: Some of these stories date all the way back to 2007.

Cannonball

Let me paint a picture for you here. Imagining you are in a hotel swimming pool thousands of miles from your home with other hotel guests that you don't know and will never see again. Do you get embarrassed when your kids do something crazy?

Do you? Well, let me tell you... you do.

Here is what happened.

Everyone was happy and swimming – specifically there were about 6 or 7 older folks soothing in a rather large hot tub that was separated from the pool. Kids were jumping and splashing wildly and playing games – and then it happened. Ricky headed toward the hot tub with a smile on his face.

As he got closer, he screamed “CANNONBALL” at the top of his lungs, launched himself OVER a few unsuspecting old folks and landed right in the middle of the hot tub and sent a WAVE of water over the top of all of them. By the time any of them had recovered from the shock and awe, Ricky was safely back in the big pool swimming happily.

I'm not sure, but I don't think they know who it was and I'm sure he has NO idea that what he did was bad. Although there are some old folks that will tell that story for years.

Erik Disappeared

Erik had disappeared.

We fanned out through the house to find him. Keep in mind this can be a game for a child on the spectrum. He won't necessarily answer if you call him – no matter what your tone – he'll just stay hidden and giggle.

We knew this and looked everywhere only to find he was gone. He was nowhere in the house. So, we headed outside and fanned out through the neighborhood. All the neighbors were alerted to be on the lookout and we knew shortly if he was anywhere nearby, we would find him.

After about 5 minutes – that seemed like 5 hours – we were starting to get desperate.

This had only happened a few times before. And if you've ever had it happen you know the feeling; the one where you get a pit in your stomach and you start to REALLY worry that maybe this time, he's gotten away. Maybe this time you need to call 911.

As I turned to my older boys to ask them to look in the same places again and look a little bit better this time, I noticed something moving in the window of our neighbors' house. The curtains had moved. I was sure of it.

I knew the neighbors were gone on vacation, so it attracted my attention immediately. It was Erik. He was inside the neighbor's house! First, I yelled at the boys that I had found him and then walked to the front door to open it and get him out, but it was locked. We went around to the back door and found it was locked too.

After asking him nicely a few more times to come out – he opened the curtains wide and started to taunt me. Opening the curtains – doing a little dance – shutting them again and then repeating his taunt over and over.

And it seems he was mistaking my anger (somehow – that little rat) for being entertained.

Well, after about 10 minutes we were able to extract him from the house through – that's right – through the doggie door.

It wasn't funny, but when I told my neighbors the story they were in stitches. And kind enough to offer forgiveness for those (kids on the spectrum) who trespass against us.

Put Some Clothes On

Today we went swimming at the community pool (Erik and Ricky love to swim) and we learned something about Ricky. Keep in mind we aren't really ever surprised by most of what they do, but more surprised by what we didn't know they knew.

As more people arrived and the pool got a little more crowded, Erik and Ricky were generally unaffected – except for the fact that they now had more people to view.

Also, keep in mind Erik and Ricky have no fear of rejection, retribution, they don't care what you think of them and they certainly have no conscience when it comes to dealing with others.

Again, we were reminded of this as Ricky saw a young lady dressed in a modest bikini. (That is... assuming there is such a thing as a modest bikini.) He swam up to her as she was putting her legs in the pool and said, "You need to go home and put some clothes on." Then as quickly as he swam up, he swam away.

You could almost see her brain start to work. It appeared she immediately looked to see if there were any parents watching him closely in an attempt to identify who it was that had raised this "smart-mouth" kid.

When she looked in my direction, I simply turned my head and looked away smiling.

One of our neighbors happened to see this happen and had a grin from ear to ear as she swam up to us.

She asked if I had seen what had just happened and I when I said yes, she asked me if I was ever afraid he might say something rude. Maybe like if he was to call someone big and fat or something. I had never really thought about it before but realized later that we typically don't use that kind of language in our home, so I wasn't too worried.

I'm sure as the time passed Bikini-Lady knew Ricky was mine as he spent much time near me and talking to me, but I guess it wasn't important enough to her to actually say anything to me about it. Probably

that was a good thing because I typically don't make excuses for their behavior. I usually say something like, "I guess kids call it like they see it."

Super-Hero in Church

At the age of about 6 or 7 Erik became fascinated with the idea of superheroes. He acquired 4 or 5 actual costumes (masks and all) but preferred to be Robin... for which he CREATES a costume. A red polo (he adds an "R" sticker to the polo for authenticity) a pair of skin-tight pajama bottoms... with – get this – he pulls a pair of underwear up over his tights, and then he tops it off with a Lone Ranger mask.

Also, he's usually great about putting on his church clothes for church but twice this year he would not relinquish "the mask of choice." So, one Sunday we attended church with him wearing his "Lone Ranger" mask... and another... he decided a SKI MASK was his super hero mask of choice.

A FLORESCENT ORANGE ski mask – a FLORESCENT ORANGE ski mask that he wore – covering his face – for the entire block of time.

They understand Erik has some special needs, but you should have seen the Clergies faces when they stood to start the meeting and saw Erik's TEETH smiling back. Very rarely will you see clergy holding back laughter, but you could see it... and it was funny.

So funny, that later they apologized – through giggles – for the offence they might have caused.

We agreed – right then – together – that God must have a sense of humor – or we're ALL in trouble.

Don't Rub That Off!

One summer we took a vacation back home to Texas as a family. Let me set the stage for you here. 1700 miles... one way... with 6 kids all crammed in to a Toyota Sequoia. You can imagine, huh?

As we pulled in to Salt Lake City on the last leg of our trip home my older boys spotted a Chic-Fil-A Restaurant. This is significant because we have no Chic-Fil-A in our town and we were not going any further until we stopped and ate their yummy chicken.

It just so happens that they also have a playground – almost a pre-requisite to any dinner we had on the entire 3-week trip. As we walked in, the cooped-up kids went wild. Running, jumping, sliding, screaming... you know – all the things they couldn't do in the car.

They were in kid heaven – and I didn't see any of them again until a few minutes passed, and they realized they hadn't eaten yet. As Ricky approached me he caught site of a little Indian (Hindu) boy (maybe 3 or 4) with a red dot on his forehead and made a beeline for him.

Before I could get close enough to him to see what he was up to he said, "you have something on your head," licked his finger and was in the process of helping him remove the discoloration by rubbing vigorously.

Needless to say, I was VERY apologetic. There's no sense in having a child on the spectrum create an international incident.

Pants OFF!

At the age of 4 Ricky developed – for no good reason – a major disdain for pants. The first thing he would do when he entered the house was yell, "pants off" and remove them. This may seem a little funny to you now, but it wasn't so funny when it happened in public.

At the time we were struggling to teach him when he could and when he could not drop his pants – you know... you gotta pick your battles with these kids.

And we were fairly confident that he had learned that the ONLY time this was faintly acceptable was when he was inside.

It did not occur to us – until it was too late – that the McDonald’s play land was... you got it... INSIDE.

Shortly after we arrived, we heard the “Pants Off” warning only to see his pants come sliding down to the bottom of the slide – without him inside of them.

NOT funny.

As I looked up to see him a good 20 feet above me in a netted cage he turned his rear toward me, slapped himself on the fanny, and screamed – BIG BAHOOKY. He then disappeared into the maze of fun.

After about 10 minutes, 25 disgusted looks from other parents, thousands of giggles from Erik and Ricky and at least a few complaints to McDonald’s management later, I was able to pull him from the play land and re-clothe him.

Only to have the event REPEATED... less than 5 minutes later.

I’m a Hotdog

Yesterday at Church, Ricky decided that he would rather not go to his class, due to the fact that he has had quite a few different teachers in the past few weeks and as we all know... That Crap ain’t gonna fly with Ricky. Either give him consistency or give him a fight.

He spent the next two hours NOT going to class, but instead performing acrobatics in the door breezeway. If you aren’t familiar with a breezeway, picture a glass box about 6 feet square with doors going to the outside, and doors opening to the inside.

And picture it sound-proof. Well, maybe not soundproof to Ricky, but certainly soundproof to your average everyday child. How is it that OUR kids can deem the word “soundproof” a misnomer? Just lucky, I guess.

These acrobatics were by no means for the faint of heart because they included lips and tongues and resulted in slobber, and artwork that was visible to anyone walking by. The term, “that can’t be very healthy” was heard more than a few times.

In addition to the slobber art there was “the rolling of the mat.” You know those entry mats that are placed on the floor to wipe your feet so you don’t track dirt into the building? Yeah those. Well, Ricky decided that he could a) roll himself up in it; or b) roll it up and lie on the ensuing rubber mat. Either way, there was major dirt involved.

But in my eyes, massive amounts of dirt can be wiped off, and his muffled yell of, “look Dad... hotdog” as he rolled himself into the mat made it easy to allow his continued joy. Even as the “that can’t be very healthy” claim echoed in my head.

Obviously, better than the alternative if I made him stop.

Bucket – Head

We were sitting out on the driveway one day and were amused when we saw Ricky heading towards us with... get this... a five-gallon bucket on his head. I guess he had found it in our neighbor’s garage. He started coming towards us and as he heard our laughter, he really hammed it up.

He started wobbling and bobbing and weaving and was able to make it from about 50 yards away, through the neighbor’s front yard and in to our driveway before pulling the bucket off his head and smiling really big.

As he got closer Erik saw him and could not pass up the opportunity to pull the old “Tom and Jerry bang the pot while it’s on his head trick” to both of their amusement.

There's No Booing in Church.

Ricky loves to watch baseball on TV with me – but only because it makes him laugh when the umpires say, “STEEE-RIKE”. It cracks him up. One day while we were watching Erik came in about the time the umpire made a bad call and the crowd was booing vigorously.

For whatever reason Erik decided he liked the idea of “the boo” and joined in. Erik and Ricky and I then had a little talk about how booing meant you were unhappy with the umpire’s choice. It was a short-lived and pretty neat little discussion to have with them since I thought they understood how it worked.

THEN the inevitable:

As church was getting started and the prelude music was finishing up a clergyman was treated to a chorus of... that’s right... the same kind of loud vigorous booing usually only reserved for umpires.

Needless to say, as soon as I heard the ovation, I sprung in to action and knocked over a few chairs on my way to covering the mouths of Erik and Rick.

I’m sure from behind – because of the speed alone in which it happened – it probably appeared as if I was smacking them in the mouths. I promise I wasn’t.

For Good Luck

Visitors aren’t usually accosted in our home, but one Sunday we had a unique event.

First, let me tell you about this visitor. He was from our church, he was a younger, newly married fellow with no kids. AND he was very proper and formal. So proper and formal in fact that he was a little surprised that we did not call our entire family down to sit quietly and meet with him while he shared his message... and I think he may have even been a little “put-off” by that fact.

However, his smugness quickly turned to shock as Ricky came flying in to the room in a full sprint, launched himself in to the guys lap and started rubbing his fuzzy bald head.

No kidding, I almost fell out of my chair I was cracking up so hard. I'm glad Shelly (my wife) didn't see it – she would have been SOOO embarrassed.

Let's Adopt Him

We are lucky enough to live next door to one of the friendliest, most humble... just flat-out good families to ever walk this earth. Not only are they tolerant of our kids and all their wackiness – and they don't let their dog crap in my yard – but they have almost adopted Erik and Ricky as their own.

They even refer to Ricky as their “moholo.” Hawaiian for “family.”

Many times, I have found Ricky missing only to walk next door, ring the doorbell and have it answered by... that's right... Ricky himself. At that point, when he sees me he immediately makes a mad dash towards the back of the house to escape.

I'm not really sure if it's his striking features; blue eyes, dark brown hair and a tan to die for; or the fact that he allows the three little girls that live next door to dress him as one of their own.

All I know is that they claim when he's in their home he sits down at the table for dinner, he's relatively well behaved, and if we ever decide we can't take him any more he's automatically a member of the Garcia family.

One year for Easter, he even sat in on their “Before Easter Sunday Church” family portrait.

Potty Mouth

One day we were at the park with friends for a little family night get together. As more and more families and kids showed it became apparent that Erik and Rick were starting to get agitated by the laughing and giggling of the others on the playground.

After about the third or fourth grunt by Erik, I could tell he was getting too aggravated to leave to his own devices - so I stepped in.

“Erik” I said, “it’s okay, they aren’t laughing at you, they’re just having fun” - to which he started to walk away angrily and mumbled something under his breath.

When a friend asked me what Erik was saying I told the truth. He’s cussing me out in autism – he’s “Autism Cussing.”

Ricky’s Milk

In 2007 we had 4 sons.

Not because we ever planned on having a big family or only wanted boys – but because every time we had another son, we would wait for the allotted amount of time and try again for a girl. After the #4 son, we decided we were done - until 6 years later when we decided together that one more try for a girl was in order.

We were so sure that this one was going to be a girl that we used a Chinese birth chart, ate only girl-inducing foods and applied at least 4 other “wacky ways” to ensure a girl would be the result. And can you guess what we got? That’s right – Holy Crap! – we got TWINS.

Lucky for us??!! – and a few months later we found that at least one of those seeds was a – that’s right – a girl. The extra boy was a bonus, I guess.

Erik and Rick were fascinated by the whole thing. Especially fascinated by the size the human stomach can grow to when filled with two babies.

When we allowed them to hold the babies for the first time they would gently hold them for about 10 seconds after which they would say something like, “that’s enough” and give the babies back – to go back to their business of playing.

When Ricky (who had just turned 6) caught site of my wife nursing our new - #5 son (Jack) for the first time, he got a real contorted look on his face. “What’s that”, he said, to which my wife said, “I’m feeding Jack some Momma’s Milk.”

Ricky thought for a moment, lifted his shirt, pinched himself and said, “How bout some Ricky’s milk?”

Back Off JACK!

Sometimes other people just can’t understand what we go through and can get a little agitated. Case in point is the time we were in the Science Place in Dallas and Erik had waited and waited until it was his turn to play with the giant bubbles.

You know the one, right? There’s this HUGE tray with the bubble mix inside and only about 5 or 6 available wands that are the size of 5-gallon bucket lids.

To be honest, Erik had NOT waited patiently. Every 10 seconds he would say, “my turn” to which I would say, “ALMOST” over and over and over and over. This lasted for at least 5 minutes until the other parents, who didn’t know Erik was on the spectrum were so annoyed and disgusted with his constant badgering (and his bad parent doing nothing about it) that they all left.

Finally, it was his turn and he was immediately in big bubble heaven. He could do this all day – and I think that was his plan. I stepped back to watch his overwhelming joy.

Then the inevitable happened.

As the other wands were snapped up and kids started to make their own bubbles, a few more kids (and their parents) arrived and started to wait their turns.

One lady in particular that had walked up to Erik and stood in Erik's line started to get a little restless as her sweet little daughter waited patiently to take her turn. With no idea that this would be like taking food from a hungry lion, she made her move. With a little bit more than a little attitude she leaned in and said, "I think it's time to let someone else have a turn."

Erik turned his head slightly towards her and without even looking at her yelled (very loudly I might add) — BACK OFF JACK!!!

The poor lady reeled as if Mike Tyson had hit her with an uppercut. I thought about walking over and counting her out while holding up my fingers but realized she had suffered enough and left her alone.

You're FIRED.

One of the movies in Erik and Rick's rotation for a while was the Mike Myers version of the Cat in the Hat.

We were unaware that they were quoting lines from the movie in their everyday life until one day as my wife was picking the boys up from school, she saw one of Ricky's school aid's smiling.

As she approached you could see she was trying to hold back laughter as she told the story.

Apparently, Ricky had gotten in trouble for something and was being "talked to" by one of the teachers. As she was finishing, Ricky exclaimed... YOU'RE FIIIIERRR DUH!

The teacher was not amused and gave instruction to his aid to make sure we were aware.

Well, we were aware...that the aid - and we - saw the humor in the situation. And we became immediately aware that we had better review all movies that they were watching.

We sure didn't want to get reports that he was telling teachers that "he could feel it in his nuggets" (Surf's Up) or that he had told them to "Take it EEEASY" (Nacho Libre).

Alek look! "Blue Steel!"

By our typical son, Alek

Sometimes it's hard having a brother with autism, especially when being the oldest and the main source of baby-sitting for your parents. My brother's biggest pet peeve is when his DVDs skip. He often goes into a fit of rage when this happens. On top of that, I have to keep things quiet because the babies are asleep upstairs. You can imagine the chaos that ensues. After nearly a half an hour of wanting to pull my hair out, I finally try to get another movie on. Erik will come up to me, pursing his lips together, and raising his eyebrows, quickly followed by Alek look! "Blue Steel!" "Do you wanna watch Zoolander?" "Uh-huh" It's hard to stay mad at a ten-year old whose favorite movies are Zoolander, Tommy Boy, and Nacho Libre.

Night Swim

Camping can be a lot of fun – but not necessarily for us. Case in point is a few years back we went camping with a bunch of families with their promise that the other families would help us "keep track" of where Erik and Ricky were at all times.

Of course, you know how that works right? Those who don't have kids with special needs don't really realize the gravity of NOT keeping track of them. (They can disappear in to the woods in a second) so we can NEVER really leave it up to others to help.

We tried to prepare as best we could and even went out and bought “glow stick necklaces” that we could hang around their necks so we could see them better after it started to get dark. But as soon as we got to the campsite chosen by friends we almost left immediately.

No less than 50 yards away there was a lake. Not the choice we would have made for sure.

Things seemed to be okay while the sun was out, but as night fell and the campfire started, things got a little sketchy. First there was the open fire, which we found was a magnet for Erik and Ricky. Not that they were going to get so close that they could be burned, but more likely, they would burn someone else as they found sticks, stuck them in to the fire and flicked hot ashes in to the air.

Then they moved away from the fire. Luckily, they were easy to spot with their glow stick necklaces wrapped around their necks. Then the glow sticks - in unison - made a mad dash towards the water and flew in – in the blink of an eye.

I was up and in pursuit in a flash and remember fear - and freezing water – coursing through my veins as I hit the water with a splash and started scanning the surface for 2 sweet (and in trouble) kids.

As my eyes got used to the darkness and things started to become a little clearer, I looked back to the beach and saw Erik and Rick standing on dry ground looking at me with confused looks on their faces.

They had thrown their necklaces in the water and were wondering why daddy had decided to go for a swim in the cold, cold water. Especially after daddy had told them it was too cold and not to go near it.

Not-So-Easy Riders

For most children, accomplishing simple feats of balance and dexterity are applauded. For kids on the spectrum, simple feats of balance and dexterity are to be gloated over.

Not so much because they are incapable of such things, but because the common failures leading up to the accomplishments can be a horrific experience for the child– and not so much fun for the parent either.

And because I have two on the spectrum, the horrific failures can be magnified by competition.

Yep, that's right. If one can do something, the other ought to be able to do it too. And if the second can't, the fireworks can really heat up.

At about the same time, my two kids decided that riding their bikes without training wheels was the only way to go.

Now, most kids can understand that it takes some time to learn balance and how to steer and what not and are okay to fall a few times. As long as they get back up and dust themselves off, they will get it eventually. Not so much for my kids on the spectrum.

When THEY fall down, it means the poor bicycle is “out to get them” and deserves a good yelling at – you know... autism cussing – and if it hurts a little more than average then maybe even a kick to the spokes for good measure.

Then there is the escalation in to crying, stomping, growling, gritted teeth and clinched fists. If we're lucky it stops there – until an hour later and they are ready to try again.

Imagine washing your hair. But instead of Lather, Rinse and Repeat, its Smile, Fall Down, go into a Fit of Rage that can last hours, Repeat.

So, what do you do? I have the answer – RAZOR SCOOTER. That's right. Give your child a razor type scooter (the ones that are made of aluminum with the in-line skate type wheels) and let them go. It teaches them balance, how to turn, that they need to keep moving or they will tip – all the stuff necessary to ride a bike.

The results are dramatic. And you should see them now. The freedom they seem to experience, and their smiles are indescribable. And the pain and suffering you can avoid is a pleasant surprise.

Now THAT'S A Birthday Dinner

One of the traditions we have for our children is that they get to choose what we eat for dinner on their birthday. Typically – like all kids – it's Pizza or hamburgers at McDonald's. Then as they get older, they graduate to Applebee's and Chili's – you get the idea.

But we were recently surprised to hear Erik's request for his Birthday dinner. His one-word answer was... TOAST. That's right... TOAST.

Not jelly toast or cinnamon toast or anything special. Just TOAST with a little butter spread on it.

Needless to say, the rest of the kids in the family – whose mouths were watering for a treat – were a little disappointed. Especially my 14 and 16-year-old typical sons.

Mannequins Have Feelings Too

Mannequins can be fun. Especially for kids that have no fear of being judged. Take as a for instance a few days ago when we took Erik and Rick to Old Navy to shop for school clothes.

Things were going fine until they spotted a group of mannequins that included Men, Women, children and even a dog mannequin – I guess that would be more of a "dogequin" wouldn't it?

Anyway, Erik and Rick approached the group, introduced themselves, and commenced to having what appeared to be a meaningful and delightful conversation – even taking a few moments to reach forward and pet the dogequin. It's only polite, right?

As funny as that was the humor was intensified as a few other – we assume typical – kids between the ages of 4 and about 12 approached and tried to understand what was taking place only to turn back to their parents with confused looks on their faces.

I guess it takes a special kid to understand the plight of the mannequin – not just anyone gets it, huh?

Formal Introduction to Four-Year-Olds

Apparently, Erik has watched a cartoon that has resulted in a very formal process. Question: Is there a “How to Win Friends and Influence People” cartoon? If so, I’m sure that’s the one he was recently watching. Here’s how I can be so sure.

Yesterday at the community pool Erik made his way over to the kiddy pool where 2 unsuspecting – what looked to be 4-year-olds – were playing.

As he extended his hand to the little boy and in a very nice voice he said, “you must be...” and waited for a reply. When he got no answer, he simply tried again – again while extending his hand. “You must be...”

After the second failed attempt he simply said, “What’s your name?” To which the little boy said, “Tim.” So, you must be Tim? Nice to meet you.

Not knowing what to do the little boy now extended his hand to match Erik’s and Erik grabbed it and shook it. Then he turned to the little girl – and the cycle repeated itself. “And you must be...” and waited for a reply. When he got no answer, he – just like before – tried again – again while extending his hand. “You must be...” Just like before he then asked, “What’s your name?” To which the little girl said, “Mary.” So, you must be Mary? Nice to meet you. Now the little girl had seen what to do and extended her hand to which Erik grabbed it and shook it.

It was quite a formal introduction. Then all the kids started talking and playing and having a good time.

The neat part was to look over and see what appeared to be Tim and Mary’s parents pointing and grinning from ear to ear. They had seen the whole thing.

I couldn't help but wonder what the parents were thinking as the event was sooo formal. Maybe he was royalty? Maybe he was from England? Are they polite and formal there?

Shooting the Finger

Each winter Erik and Rick get to choose their matching hat and gloves for school. You know the ones, right? It's either Spiderman or Batman, or Ricky's favorite (at least last year) The Hulk. Well as winter goes on their hats and gloves can get a little frayed.

Last winter, as Erik slipped on his gloves as he was getting ready for school, he noticed that his middle finger on his right glove had developed a hole. So, he showed me the hole in his glove by bending all his little fingers down EXCEPT for the middle finger and said, "Look Dad."

Well as you can imagine, I couldn't help but smile at the fact that it appeared he was flipping the bird at me. So, I did what all loving fathers and husbands would do. I said, "Go show your mother."

Her response was the same as mine except she didn't limit herself to just a smile – especially since she heard me tell him to go show her. She started laughing pretty hard. We both got a good laugh and Erik smiled from ear-to-ear and all was well in the world – UNTIL.

As we picked up Erik from school, we were greeted by an unhappy teacher who assumed we had taught Erik how to flip people off. Apparently, he had spent the whole day walking up to kids and teachers – and even the principle – flashing a big smile – and flipping them the bird.

Although we felt terrible it had happened, we felt better after we realized that it could have happened on Sunday morning. Can you imagine?

Infomercial from HELL(P)

Ever watch T.V. with your kids and see these short infomercials? The ones where they offer their world-changing product and then – BUT WAIT – we'll cut the price in half. Then the second – BUT WAIT – we'll double the order and you'll get TWO – that's right – TWO whatchamacallits if you order before this commercial is over.

Well, Erik and Ricky seem to be fascinated by the commercials to the point where they'll hear them starting – come running in to the room to watch – KNOW the “BUT WAIT” is coming and will try and say it at the same time the T.V. guy says it – and then look at each other and smile real big. They've also been known to walk around the house saying things like, “For 3 low payments of \$29.95” even though they have no idea what it means.

Well, the other day Ricky was watching one and finally said – when the commercial was over – I WANT THAT. Never before, had he decided that the product was a hit. Never before, had he been “sold.” Never before, had he watched to see what the product was and not simply looked for the “BUT WAIT.”

I was kind of proud to see him advance in his thinking until I realized the product was... The Smokeless Cigarette!?!?

I don't care how much he begs, he's not getting THAT for Christmas.

The Green Hat

Ricky has become very attached to his favorite green hat. Not a baseball cap, mind you, but an Army green, floppy fishing hat with a big white “B” on the front. He wears it always.

The only time he doesn't have it on is at church or school. But as soon as he gets home from Church or school, or wakes up in the morning – he takes it out of the freezer – you heard that right – the freezer

(the hat's off-head storage place), and plops it on his head until he MUST give it up for the next "no hat" event. He wore it so much this summer that he had a visible white tan line across his forehead.

Recently, we decided to try and wean him away from the hat by offering other options. Maybe no hat? Uh, NO! A different hat, maybe? No way! A head band? Not happening! We even tried a "doo-rag,"

Nope, not for the Rickster. Then I had an idea. What if we offered a different hat of the same style and maybe a few different colors to see if he would go for that? It seemed like he might be interested.

As I explained the idea, Ricky became interested enough to describe a newer more stylish –but very similar hat. He said, "Maybe a bright green hat with a blue "B?" That would be good. Can I have a hat like this one but bright green with a blue 'B'?" I said. "I'll see if I can find you a hat just like yours but bright green with a blue 'B'."

He thought for a second and then – because I guess we were talking about what he wanted – added, "Can I also have a jet-pack?" When I smiled and paused to think about his request, he clarified. "You know... a jet-pack. You put it on your back and you can fly around like a super-hero. You know... a jet-pack. Maybe a tank would be good too."

Ladies' Man

Ricky has no fear – especially no fear of ladies of any age. He will say anything to anyone at any time.

The first time we learned this was when my wife was in the hospital for 5 weeks as we awaited the birth of our twins and became regulars at the hospital. Every day for 5 weeks, I would make a lunchtime trip to be with my wife, and then every evening we would all – me and the four boys – take a trip to spend the evenings with her.

Erik and Ricky became very accustomed to parking in the parking garage, hopping on the parking garage elevator – fighting over who got to press the button – walking through the back door in to the hospital,

hopping on another elevator – again... fighting over who got to press the button – and finally entering the Neonatal ward and my wife’s room on the third floor.

We knew all the nurses and doctors and they ALL knew Erik and Ricky. If only because of the sound of CHAOS followed by severe SUSHING and chasing down the halls.

One day while leaving the hospital we as we got on the parking garage elevator, we were met by three older teenage girls. They were huddled in the corner and squeezed in to a tight group as all 5 of us entered.

I tried to give them plenty of space, but was unable to grab Ricky before he slid up next to them, put his arm up on the handrail, and said, “hey ladies... how ya doin?”

First, they grinned slightly and THEN they started giggling. Well, a giggle is a good response for Ricky and he went on a tear with the “hey ladies... how ya doin?”

Since that time – he’s used it everywhere there are ladies. He’s used it at school, at church, at the grocery store and most recently, at the pool.

Lock up your daughters.

That’s Not Right!

Last winter we went to a friend’s house to for a small Christmas party. Typically, we know all the people that are there (and more importantly – they know Erik and Ricky... are special) so that there are not too many real awkward moments for people that are new to our own personal brand of chaos.

This time however – at the last moment – the host family had decided that they would invite a newer family in their neighborhood to join in the fun.

THEN... Ricky approached a lady sitting on the floor, walked up real close. Leaned in – almost touching his face to hers and said, “What’s that in your nose?” To which she replied that it was an earring... or in this case - a nose ring.

As he turned and walked away, he said in a loud booming voice, “THAT’S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THERE.”

Out Shot-Gunned Again

Now that my oldest son is driving, he is looking for opportunities to practice and get better every chance he gets. If we need milk from the grocery store – he steps forward. If my wife wants a fountain drink from the corner store – he steps forward.

A few nights ago, we decided it would be fun to go to the store, grab some snacks, some pop-corn and a movie and bring it all home to have a little family movie night.

As I walked out to hop in the car, I noticed two things. One, my oldest was in the driver’s seat and ready to drive, and two, Ricky (8 years-old) was sitting shotgun. I stopped and said, “Hop in the back Ricky.” Only to hear him reply “I called shotgun.” My driver son started to laugh and plead Ricky’s case.

Since “shotgun” rules are fairly “iron-clad” in my family I kept going and hopped in the back seat. Let me tell you... it’s pretty weird to be riding in the back seat of your own car. But that’s what I was doing – and I must say... it’s pretty comfortable back there.

During our shopping – for some reason – my son handed me the keys and asked me if I would drive home. I was happy to – if only to get back in the front seat. Everything went well and as we were walking out to the car suddenly... Ricky... AGAIN called “shotgun.”

My oldest son was shocked. He was SURE shotgun was his for the taking. “No way, Ricky got shotgun on the way over here. He can’t get it going home too.” But as soon as he had said it, he realized Ricky had out-shotgunned both of us in the same half-hour span and started to laugh.

As he stepped in to the back seat, he said “I was just about to call it but I guess the little sucker got me too.”

REALLY Hot Dog

One of the things we do almost every day is go outside in the front of our house and visit with the neighbors. I guess it’s kind of a Southern hospitality thing. We’ve been known to go out at about 6:00 in the evening and then completely forget to eat dinner until all the kids are famished.

I know, I know. What kind of parents would forget to feed their kids? Friendly parents – that’s the kind – and that’s us.

One day, as we were outside visiting, Erik walked up to me and asked if he could have a hot dog, to which I said, “sure” and then went back to visiting with our neighbors. A while later my oldest son, Alek, came walking out smiling and shared with us the events that had happened inside.

Apparently, Erik took my “sure” as permission to go inside, grab a hot dog out of the refrigerator, put it on a napkin, place it in the microwave, and press the AUTO button – which started the microwave cooking.

When Alek came into the kitchen a little bit later, he was greeted to the smell of a hot dog that had been cooking for AT LEAST a few minutes and still had more than 5 minutes to go. He quickly hit the Stop/Clear button, opened the door and was saluted by a burnt, exploded on the ends hot dog.

Right as he opened the door to the microwave Erik said, “DONE!”

Zit Wars

As my 2 older sons grow (now 14 and 16) they get to experience things we've all lived through. Namely... puberty... and zits. And it's created some moments that can bring us closer as a family. Namely... the popping of zits.

STOP READING HERE IF YOU ARE OFFENDED.

Mom's, you know you've done it – and if you haven't it's only because your kids aren't old enough. You will be there for them when they need it. Your son has a big, juicy one staring at you – a “third eye, so to speak – and you can't stand to just leave it alone.

Luckily, it's a rarity, but when it happens – we are involved parents. And you can't imagine the fun that can result. Seriously, there have been times when we (my wife and I) are chasing my oldest son (all 6' tall, 175 lbs., strikingly handsome) all over the house to try and hold him down so we can perform zit surgery.

But one of the funniest things that has EVER resulted is when we had a hold of him and were “taking care of business” when Ricky walked up and said, “HIS BRAINS ARE COMIN OUT!”
YOU WERE WARNED.

Side Seat Driver

By Alek

Being new to the driving scene, I'm always looking for opportunities to go driving. If a Walmart run needs to happen, I'm the man for my parents. I'll even take a kid or two with me, and what could be more fun than taking my brothers with me for a cruise. Ricky hops in the front seat next to me and puts on his seat belt with a confused look on his face. After about 2 minutes of driving, he decides that he is license worthy as well, and he makes sure I know. “Stop sign! Look out!”

“Thanks, I see it.” “Oh look! Watch out for that car!” “Okay” And finally, pointing to a stop light 500 yards in advance, proclaims “Red light means stop, green light means go!”

What would I do without you? Thank goodness for cartoons making driving look so easy.

And the Best Album of the Year Goes to...

By Alek

A couple of years ago, the Guitar Hero and Rock Band craze swept the nation, and of course our house.

After getting Rock Band, and mastering the drums and guitar, we hosted a party. Inviting all our friends over, we were soon greeted by, you guessed it, Erik and Ricky.

Since no one ever wants to sing, they were both happy to show off their pipes. After a few warm up “la la las” they take the stage singing the classic, Eye of the Tiger. They begin with a power-slide, hitting every high note, even the ones that weren’t meant to be high. Hamming it up to the best of their abilities, they continue to wow the crowd of teenagers.

They end with the continuing “Eye of the TIGERRRRRR!” and constant pelvic thrusts and using the “sweeping point” to all the girls in the room. Hopefully in the next couple of years, you’ll be seeing The Over-Exaggerator’s with their hit single, The Eye of the Tiger.

Eyes Under the Stall

By Alek

As another entry in The Adventures of Walmart, we go to a place of much fun, the bathroom. At first, the “I need to go to the bathroom” warning can be a bit of a nuisance. After leading the wonder boys

into the restroom and watching them split to do their separate business, I notice that Erik wanders away from the urinal. He waddles over to a stall, still having to go pee, and continues to look under the wall at a stranger. I can only imagine the sight he saw after hearing the man yell “HEY LITTLE BOY! What do you think you’re doing?” Erik jumps up and runs back to the urinal to finish his deeds. He then runs out of the bathroom where I hide him until Rick is done and we can make our quick getaway. If curiosity killed the cat, I’m glad Erik’s experience was only a dry run.

Kicked Out of School? Seriously?

As kids will do, they can always find things to emulate the toys they want. You know the deal, right? If your child wants to play with a car and all he has is a block... the block becomes a car. The block starts to make sound and get pushed all over the floor, up on to the couch, on the wall and out the door.

If they’re on a playground and they want a superhero... what-do-you-know? The stick they find becomes a superhero and starts kicking the poo out of all the other stick/superhero’s on the playground.

Our kids are no different.

However, one day, according to the kindergarten teacher, Erik stepped over the line.

Everyone has played with Lego’s. They are an American toy institution. But nowhere on the box is there a warning that if a child on the spectrum creates a Lego/GUN and starts to point the Lego/GUN at other kids during class – he faces immediate expulsion from school – because that’s exactly what happened.

I know this kind of thing is frowned upon and I understand the concern here, but really? An child – who obviously doesn’t understand – expelled for a Lego/GUN? I never thought I’d see the day where my son would be used to set an example for the other kids.

And I’m not sure how I should feel about this. Is this a proud moment for me?

Well, I guess I DID grow up in TEXAS.

Stop European in The Pool

Erik and Ricky LOVE to swim. Especially after we've been traveling all day. As a matter of fact, when we travel it is a MUST that we find a hotel with a pool – and we give them AT LEAST 2 hours of pool time before the pool closes.

This was the case a few years ago as we stopped in Albuquerque, New Mexico for the night.

Immediately as we walked in to the hotel room, Erik and Ricky stripped down and started putting on their swimsuits. A few moments later they were ready and within a few short minutes of hitting room 217, we were all on our way to the hotel pool toting our goggles, fins and all the other assorted items that are a must.

As sometimes happens we were the only ones at the pool AT FIRST. Then the pool got a little busier as more and more people showed.

THEN... 2 women – of a little larger than normal size – entered the pool area. And wouldn't you know it, the one that was AT LEAST 6' tall and had to come in at over 300 lbs. removed her swimsuit cover and – BAM – that's right – was wearing a bikini. (We can't be sure but based on her accent and her choice of suits we guessed she was – EUROPEAN.) As I looked around, I could see more than just a few people had the look of "YIKES" on their faces.

Interestingly enough, Erik and Ricky were too busy swimming around underwater to notice as she walked down in to the water. UNTIL, Ricky turned in her direction – still underwater – and started to swim towards her.

He came up right behind her, raised his head out of the water, pulled off his goggles and screamed, "WHOA!" Then he turned to me and yelled, "DAD, DID YOU SEE THIS?"

Europeans be warned.

Door to Door Salesman

In our family we have an affinity for the cartoon Sponge Bob SquarePants. You know – the whimsical life of a sea sponge and his best friend Patrick (a brainless starfish) and all their misadventures.

Maybe it's because ALL of us – from my wife and I and our 2 teenage boys, through our 2 sons on the spectrum, and all the way to our 2-year-old twins (boy and... ONE GIRL – YEAH!) – really like the show. It's one of the few things that we can all (8 if you're counting... gulp) enjoy together.

We spend quite a bit of our free time (don't be too critical, please) – as a family – watching, giggling, reenacting, and quoting lines from different episodes. As a matter of fact, Erik and Ricky will not eat hamburgers unless they are referred to as “Crabby Patties” and if you ask them if they'd like a peanut-butter and jelly sandwich they are confused. C'mon... it's a peanut-butter and Jelly-Fish jelly sandwich. Duh!?

One episode in particular... that seemed to have a lasting impact on Erik and Ricky was one where SpongeBob and Patrick decided they wanted to make some money to live the “fancy-life” after accidentally receiving Squidward's “Fancy-Living Magazine” in their mailbox. The “fancy life” looked like a winner to them. So...

In an effort to decide the best way to make money, SpongeBob, in his naïve way asks Patrick a simple question. “If you could have anything in the world right now, what would it be?” To which Patrick says, “A Chocolate Bar.” They then start their business as door-to-door chocolate bar salesman and the craziness ensues. The episode is a hoot as they experience misadventures and try all kinds of different ways to sell their chocolate.

There are at least 3 scenes that Erik and Ricky are constantly quoting at school, at home, at church and anywhere else they end up that make them both CRACK UP hysterically.

But we did not know the full impact of the episode until one Saturday morning at about 7:30 when we got a call from one of the neighbors that alerted us to the fact that Erik and Ricky were SOLICITING!

That's right, they were going door-to-door, ringing the doorbell, and then smiling at whoever the poor, tired sap was that opened the door and in their cheeriest, cheesiest voices – keep in mind with no chocolate in sight – saying...

“Would you like to buy a chocolate bar? We are chocolate salesmen you know.”

Super Fly

Occasionally we get a fly in our kitchen. Used to – it would buzz around the kitchen landing here and there and then disappear to wherever they go when they disappear – where is that exactly?

Anyway, one day Erik was bothered a little too much by a fly (we'll name him, Charlie) that was getting too close to his Cinnamon-Toast Crunch cereal, so I took it upon myself to rid him of Charlie once and for all.

To do so, I thought it might be fun to have Erik help me by pointing at Charlie as he flew so I could keep track – but soon after realized that watching him zoom his finger all around was making me dizzy AND making me laugh too much to really be in a “killing mood.” I needed to focus.

We decided together that he would point – when it landed – so that I could sneak up behind Charlie and slap death upon the vile, annoying creature. After a few failed attempts – a few more than I'm proud of – we achieved success as I closed my hands – just above Charlie – until they were about 12 inches apart... and clapped violently. BAM! Charlie was now in fly heaven – again... where is that exactly? And Erik went into a state of euphoria. You Got Em! You Got Em!

He hugged me as if I'd just been named the “Man of the Year” or won a “Pew-litzer Prize.” He even gave me a new name: Super-Fly Clap.

I'd done it – in his mind I was now a Super-Hero. For a few minutes after we talked about a costume, including colors and a logo on my chest and he spent the rest of the day walking around slapping his hands together trying to be like his Dad... Mini-Super-Fly Clap.

Unfortunately, I did not understand the precedent that had been set until the following morning (very early) when I woke to the sound of Erik and Rick banging things all over the kitchen downstairs. Since I thought there was a fight in progress I leapt out of bed, hit the stairs running (I almost fell a few times due to my grogginess) and entered the kitchen in full flight only to find Erik and Ricky with the biggest smiles you can imagine... that's right... chasing ANOTHER fly.

They were SOOOO happy to see Super-Fly Clap (me – if you forgot) and immediately put Super-Fly Clap (me – if you already forgot – c'mon, try to keep up) to work.

Needless to say, it took a while (a looong while – I must say, I haven't spent that much time in just my underwear in 20 years – and it felt GOOD!) but once I finally clapped Charlie in to fly heaven, Erik and Ricky went back into worship mode.

Ahhhh. The things we'll do to see them smile.

For some reason I feel the need to go wash my hands.

Oops. The Pickle Incident

Ricky – well, all of our kids – are lovers of pickles. Maybe it's our southern background. Maybe it's the fact that we ALWAYS have pickles in the house and they're considered an anytime snack. Maybe it's because I have fond memories of seeing kids walk through the neighborhood where I grew up with napkin-wrapped giant pickles in their hands, eating them like candy.

No kidding – where I grew up – in what some might consider – “the hood” you could go to the corner store, grab a big ole napkin, and fish a humongous pickle out of a jar for a snack. There were trucks that would show up at the recreation center where I played basketball and sell pickles instead of ice-cream. Big ole pickles were a big ole part of my life as a kid. I guess growing up in Oak Cliff, in the inner city of Dallas, gives you a unique perspective.

As a kid I NEVER KNEW I was in “the hood” – it was just home for me. I had a great, big, multi-cultural, happy, nobody has nothing, childhood. So, you may have to forgive me for my – what may seem to be – a little off-color language. If this story makes it APPEAR as if I do not respect all people equally – you’d be reading something in to it that isn’t there – because I do. I probably just express myself a little differently than most normal people.

So anyway, Ricky had fished a huge pickle out of the jar – so big he was using two hands – and had wrapped a napkin around the bottom half so as not to drip the yummy juice on the floor. As he came into my view I had a flashback and without really thinking about it whispered something incredibly stupid to my wife. I whispered, “Seeing him walk around with that pickle wrapped up that way... well, it sort of reminds me of black chicks walking through my neighborhood when I was a kid.” She smiled at me – mostly because she had seen the same thing at the State Fair when we first got married – but reminded me that Ricky had the ears of a rabbit and what I had just said – if repeated by Ricky... and taken out of context – could end in disaster. I agreed and shut my mouth quickly.

Can you tell where this is going? Of course, you can. The next time he got a hold of a big pickle he announced to my other kids, “Hey look. I’m a black chick.” Their reactions to this statement were... well, let me just describe them like this. Their reactions were a mixture of shock and awe and fear and wonder and confusion. My oldest son turned to me and said, “What did he just say!?” Ignore him, I said. If we do not acknowledge what he just said, he may forget.

Well, he hasn’t forgotten. Every time he gets a hold of a pickle... he says it. He doesn’t even know what it means. But we know, eventually, we’re going to have some serious explaining to do.

MMA- Mixed Martial Autism

By Alek

It’s always good to know that you’ve trained your little brother into a finely tuned fighting machine. But that usually only happens when they give you a below the belt shot. It was a great pleasure to witness it firsthand.

It was just an ordinary day, at an ordinary Burger King Playground. For some reason, the group of bigger 10-year-olds that normally roam those parts, had a reason to be mad at Erik. From a view below the tube of the playground, I heard the boys shout, "Let's get him!"

My heart pounded as I knew for sure, my little brother would be scarred forever by idiot kids. From that same view, I see the kids crawl towards Erik, and at that same instant, Erik reared back his legs and let them fly. About 3 or 4 of the boys flew backward and came to a crashing halt. A few more fists flew, and one by one, the group came out of the area looking very discouraged and beaten.

Of course, the little stud comes prancing out with his favorite toy in hand as if nothing had happened. As the bigger kids, looked ready to get their revenge, I explained Erik's situation, and they were totally fine with it. Hopefully Chuck Norris isn't gonna cut us in line, because I'm treating this champ to a milkshake.

It's Nothing Personal, It's Just Acting

By Alek

You may have heard of people with photographic memories, but Erik has the gift of a "voice recording" memory. If you sit him down in front of a movie he's interested in, he'll quote it word for word. We discovered this a neighborhood party. Normally, since we have a bigger family, we split up the kid watching, and my responsibility was Erik. We were having a really fun time, especially when Erik saw the circle of older women in lawn chairs that you typically see at those things. For the brief second I wasn't watching him, he sneaks over to them, taps one on the shoulder, and (quoting Spongebob) says in the most believable sad voice, "I lost my best friend." Instantly the lady's mouth and eyebrows start to droop, and I thought she would burst into tears right then and there. Of course, Erik thought it was a hilarious line, and went back to playing with the kids. I ran to the lady who was helpless to Erik's Oscar worthy performance, and I explained what Erik meant by what he said, and she burst into fits of laughter. If only we could get him to watch a movie about math, then he could help me with my homework.

Au-Toy-Tism Story

Erik and Ricky have been impacted – as most kids – by the movie, Toy Story. Commonly we hear lines from the movie and catch them acting out their favorite scenes.

We've seen them stand at the top of the stairs and say, "to infinity and beyond" before launching themselves from the top – but only once. I guess the pain of impact is a good teacher. We've seen them in the backyard trying to spin their heads completely around as the said, "we see everything – so play nice." And we've even caught them setting up "staff meetings" with all their toys to make sure everyone had a moving buddy.

But recently we were surprised to see Erik come strolling downstairs with a big black dot on his forehead. When I asked him what had happened, his brother, Ricky spoke up and said, "it's a burn-manent." When I said, "what did you say" Erik replied, "a burnmanent!"

When I asked what that was, he flipped his foot over to show me the word "ANDY" neatly printed on the bottom of his foot with... you guessed it... permanent marker. I then made the connection.

There is a scene in Toy Story where Sid, the bad kid next door who likes to hurt toys, uses a magnifying glass to burn a spot on to Woody's forehead. Kind of like when you were a kid and used a magnifying glass to burn ants, right – you remember. You don't remember? Neither do I.

Anyway, then Ricky flipped his socked foot over and said, "me too" so that I could clearly see the word "ANDY" neatly printed on the bottom of his sock as well. (Ricky wears socks 24/7 – unless he's in the pool or in the bath.)

We never heard from anyone at his school, but we have to believe the progressively fading DOT in the middle of Erik's forehead was noticed by his teachers – and probably recognized for what it was by any of the other kids who were "Toy Story" fans.

Tug-O-War

At the end of the school year Ricky was invited to participate in an end of the year field day. You know... it's the day all the first graders see who can run the fastest, jump the farthest and any and all other activities that make them all red-faced and dehydrated on their last day of school. It just so happens that one of the events is right up Ricky-street: The tug-o-war.

You've seen this I'm sure. They lay a rope on the ground, take half the class and put them on one end of the rope and take the other half of the class and put them on the other end. They then yell "GO" and see which side can pull the other across the center line. It's a test of strength.

Now, Ricky may not be a lot of things but one of the things he is... is **STRONG!**

As a matter of fact, he's freaky strong. More than once we've been question about his workout regime.

Can you believe that? As if we'd put an 8-year-old functionally autistic child on a workout regime.

To make a long story short, Ricky's side won every "pull" even as they took away kids from his side and added them to the other side. At the end, Ricky was pitted against (7) seven – you read that right – (7) seven kids before they stopped the contest due to a stale-mate.

A Message from Above, Kinda

By Alek

Once a year in church, we have what is known as a Children's Program. This is basically a collection of all the things the kids under 10 have learned in that year. It includes cute little songs, and a little message for each kid to recite to the congregation. It's nice being old enough to not have to be in them anymore, but the even better reward of age, is being able to see all that going on up at the podium. First off, to keep Erik and Rick happy and quiet during church, we give them chunks of modeling clay.

It's no exception for program days, so our family, and everyone else, can see them molding action figures and fighting them against each other, often raising their arms in the air, and making epic sound effects. BIFF! BAM! OUCH!

But as it comes time for them to recite their brief message, which they don't always memorize, a new level of hilarity comes into play. Rick is first this year, and instead of giving the traditional, "Follow the commandments" He says, of course quoting a movie, "No more kitty cats," and walks back to his seat giggling.

I can barely keep myself from cracking up. Soon after, it's Erik's turn. He comes up, pauses for a brief second, clutching his clay, and says "Jesus loves me." I feel myself start to say "Aww!" But then Erik finishes with "YEEEEAAAAH!" Again, I can't help but crack up, and in one of the funniest Children's Program to date, I appreciate that weird reverence.

Aging In a World of Autism

I had a visit from one of my oldest friends in the world this weekend – a fellow I hadn't had a chance to visit with in forever – or about 7 or so years – is that forever?

Anyway, we were out on the back porch talking about old times as Ricky was in the background doing flips and spins on the trampoline about twenty yards away. My buddy was sitting in a chair with his back to Ricky when suddenly Ricky stopped cold, and yelled out, "You're bald" to which my buddy smiling said, "What did you say?"

Ricky repeated now with emphasis, "You're REALLY Bald!"

So, what do you do? My buddy did exactly what I would have done – if I were as smart and quick witted as he – and said, "Come over here and RUB it!"

Ricky smiled REALLY big as he said, "NOOOO WAY!" and went back to jumping.

Well played, Chuck.... well played!

Surprise in the Socks

Obviously, we get to experience things that others may not. Some of those things can be painful and heart wrenching, but not today. Today is the day of a simple weekly clean up in the back yard. The only way you can mow our back yard is to make sure there are no land mines.

Rounding up toys and more toys and more toys... and clothes. That's right, clothes. Specifically,... socks. No kidding, once a week we can expect to find – at least during the summer – at least 6 socks scattered throughout the back yard.

We go through socks as if they are milk – we were at 15 gallons a week until recently – because Erik and Ricky simply refuse to wear shoes all the time while wearing their socks. Luckily for us we can get a pack of 6 socks for about \$5 at Wal-Mart.

But as I collected socks today I got a surprise. After gathering up 8 socks and putting them in a big stack on the back porch I started to shake them out to get all the grass off of them and get them all turned right-side out. As I picked up sock # 7 and started to shake it I realized it weighed about a pound more than the rest. There was something inside. I asked Erik a few times what was inside but he was uninterested in answering me, So...

A little nervous, I opened the sock and tried to SEE inside but was forced to dive my hand down inside to really understand what I was up against. Whew! It was only rocks. When I pulled out a handful of them I turned to Erik to show him and he started singing – without even looking at me...

“Rocks in the Socks, Rocks in the Socks, Dad just got some Rocks in the Socks.”

Apparently, the little sucker knew exactly what was inside.

A Special Day For Dad

This morning I was awakened by quite a bit of noise coming from downstairs. As I walked backwards slowly down the stairs – don't ask... morning knees – I heard the scampering of 4 little feet running for cover and heard in a whisper, "he's coming... hide."

I walked in to the kitchen to find 2 dishrags covering some items and was startled when Erik and Ricky popped out from behind the kitchen island and SCREAMED, "HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!"

I smiled and was almost ready to tell them, "Thanks but it's not Father's Day" until they smiled in unison really big and said, "here's your presents." Presents? For me? There's no way NOW that I was going to ruin it for THEM.

Ricky pointed at the dishrag and said, "open it." I pulled the dishrag off the first item and thanked Ricky and Erik with a hug. Then Erik pointed to the other dishrag and as he hopped up and down excitedly and said, "open mine, open mine." I pulled the dishrag away, thanked Erik and Ricky again with hugs and they were off to watch The Cat in the Hat cartoon.

So, what did I get? This morning for Father's Day I got an empty 2-liter bottle of Dr. Pepper and RC. (C'mon, you know...the remote-control car from Toy Story.)

For those of you whose sons forgot this special day, Happy Father's Day?! to you too.

The END of the World!

Dad! Dad! Dad! Dad! Add a screeching loud, shrill voice and you've just experienced what I heard as I was busy tooling around in the kitchen one afternoon.

No kidding, I was literally frightened for someone's life. Is one of my kids falling out the window? Is someone missing a hand and bleeding out? Is there a child upstairs unconscious? All these things

crossed my mind as I flew – no kidding – FLEW, out of the kitchen, through the living room and up the stairs – 3 at time.

You've heard the stories of people developing super-human strength when put in dire circumstance, right? Well, that was me at that moment.

As I rounded the top of the stairs, cut the corner and headed in to Erik and Ricky's room I found Ricky standing in front – scared now because of my rapid approach – standing in front of his dresser with the top drawer opened wide.

I grabbed him, started to check him out head to toe and when I couldn't find any problems with him asked, "Where's Erik?!" "I dunno but LOOK, Dad!" Whatever it was that was causing him to yell for me was IN HIS UNDERWEAR DRAWER.

I cautiously moved things around and spotted... Hulk underwear, Batman Beyond underwear, Toy Story underwear, Spiderman underwear, Wolverine underwear, and what appeared to be some new superhero (I didn't recognize) underwear; maybe called "The Brown on Back, Gold on Front Avenger." Sorry, I couldn't resist.

Anyway, there was nothing in there that should have caused such a Ricky outrage so I turned back to him and asked, "What Was It!"

He took a second to compose himself and said, "DAD! MY DRAWER RAN OUT OF SOCKS!"

An Early Snowfall... IN The House

It's not what you'd think. No, Erik and Ricky didn't leave a skylight open... or track it in with their snow-boots. This was more of a purpose driven snowstorm – and only happened because of a lack of proper supervision.

It all started when I came home with a new T.V. and carried the box up in to the playroom to get it all set up and working. Everyone was sooo excited at the new bigger screen, clearer picture and the now available chance to hook up the Rock Band video game.

Shortly after we had finished setting it up, we put on a favorite movie and left them to their devices. Turns out... this was NOT a good idea. A few hours later, my oldest son approached me with an “OH CRAP” look on his face. I could sense that there had been a problem upstairs, but it had been so quiet for the past few hours I couldn’t imagine what could have gone wrong.

FYI: Did you know that the white Styrofoam used to pack T.V.s could be broken down into “smaller than BB sized pellets?” I didn’t. At least not until I entered the room to find a fresh two inches of newly fallen snow covering every square inch of the floor in the playroom.

FYI2: Did you know that Styrofoam – in snow-like form – is extremely full of static electricity? I didn’t. At least not until I tried to use a vacuum cleaner to remove it. I ended up spending more than 2 hours trying to sweep it all into one big pile so I could scoop it – with a snow shovel – in to a bag.

At one point I caught my wife – with a big smile on her face – trying to sneak a picture of me shoveling “Styrofoam snow” inside the playroom. Although NOW it seems kinda funny, at the time I believe I made a threat against her and all the kids if she snapped that “freakin” picture.

Needless to say, we now MAKE SURE all boxes and their contents – ALL THE CONTENTS – are disposed of properly so that there are no chances of a freak early Styrofoam snowstorm.

Erik’s Dog “Ham!”

Friday, we had a meeting with Erik’s teachers at school. Seems everything is going well, he’s become exceptionally close to some teachers and a specific principle – to whom we owe more than we can ever repay. And it appears he has developed such a close relationship with one of the sweet ladies at school that he has started to tell her about his favorite pet – his dog named “Ham.”

He's gone on to explain how much fun they have together, that they just love playing together and that Ham licks his face and runs all over the back yard with him.

This sweet lady was so excited – as were we – that Erik had decided she was worthy of his sharing these special experiences and she was very animated as she told us of all the great, long, meaningful conversations and stories he shares with her on almost a daily basis.

Wow! We thought, he really seems to have bonded with an adult outside of our immediate family – but there is just one little problem we may need to sort out.

We don't have any pets!

Jelly, Cupcake and Hair

Every time – and I mean EVERY TIME we take our kids out in public there's a chance someone will be told something that may – or may not – be offensive. Luckily for us, at least our family is prepared – and patient – because it happened again.

This special occasion was a little family get-together to celebrate my nieces, daughter's 1-year-old birthday – a lot of fun.

As we arrived Ricky moved in and headed straight for the goodies only to come across my niece's husband – who obviously by this story was classified by Ricky – and thankfully has a great sense of humor – as a little "stocky." As he reached out to give Ricky a hug, Ricky took both of his hands and placed them on each side of his belly and started to shake his belly as he exclaimed, "I LOVE CUPCAKES!" He laughed and made sure – thanks! – that I was aware of the ZANY moment. We went about the rest of the party with no more zaniness – UNTIL we started to leave and were working the room telling everyone goodbye.

At that point Ricky approached one of his adult cousins who sports long hair, took both of his hands and made them into the shape of guns and as he gave him the cool double barrel salute with his fingers he said, “See YOU Later HAIR GUY!”

My family... victims one and all!

Rickbot

It seems at this point in his life, Ricky is fascinated by robots. He will be a robot for Halloween, wants nothing but robot toys and asked each of us at dinner this last Saturday night to help him make up some robot jokes.

My older boys are more than happy to oblige especially when you hear Ricky crack-up at the not so funny made-up-on-the-spot jokes his brothers threw down. Really... how funny is: What does a robot use when he needs to go to the bathroom?

The RO-POT!

Really??!! Is it THAT funny? Well, it is to Ricky. He howls with laughter till his stomach hurts and his cheeks are sore.

But we were unaware that his fascination had been exhibited – for the past few weeks – at church until we were speaking with his best-in-the-world teacher who shared this story with us as he smiled from ear to ear.

So, it seems Ricky demands he gets to say the prayer in class every Sunday. That’s great, you would think – until you hear why. It seems the only reason he demands to say the prayer each Sunday is so that he can plug-in intermittent robot sounds.

His teacher described it this way: I’m thankful to be at church – beep-boop-bop – I’m grateful for my teacher – bing-blop-bloop – help that we can learn about God – bing-boing-click – Amen!

We're gonna have to work on that prayer – but at least he's bling-blop-boop praying, huh? There's Ricky at Halloween – on the far right:

Ricktoria's Secret

Yesterday I arrived home and walked in to the kitchen to find my oldest son laughing and Ricky grinning from ear to ear. What had just happened?

It appears Alek had walked in on Ricky while he was staring at the Big Yellow Pages directory. As soon as Alek walked in Ricky immediately slammed closed the directory and started smiling. When Alek asked what he was doing he said, "NUTHIN!" and started to walk away. When Alek persisted, Ricky – with a big smile still on his face – proceeded to spend the next 10 minutes flipping through the pages looking for the same page he had slammed closed.

A Side Note – Just So You'll Know: We spend a lot of time and effort MAKING SURE there are NO INNAPROPRIATE words, gestures, pictures, etc, etc, in our home for obvious reasons. But still, Erik and Ricky ALWAYS seem to inadvertently find things we deem inappropriate in the most obscure places – listening to the radio, cartoons and school are the most common offenders. The truth is Ricky has memorized ALL the words he isn't supposed to say and he will let you know each time you add one. It usually sounds something like this:

Dad: Ricky, please don't say the word "stupid."

Ricky: O.K., O.K. – don't say "stupid" don't say "idiot" don't say "what the shell" – thanks a lot... Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles – don't say... you get the idea. His list can go on for a few minutes and get's longer every week.

So anyway, after about 10 minutes of searching Ricky finally finds the page and shows Alek. Alek looks down to see that he's in the "L" section of the Yellow Pages looking at a picture of a girl wearing... you guessed it... LINGERIE. Holy Crap! Who even knew that was in there?

Thanks a lot, Impact Directories. YOU WILL NOT BE RECYCLED. You will go straight to the trash can and will get a call from an angry Dad. Hopefully my wife doesn't catch me reviewing the OTHER directories we have in our house to make sure – and ONLY make sure – there are no more lingerie photos.

What Did You Say?!?

While scooping up some poppy-seed chicken – yummy-yummy – on to a plate for Ricky this evening... I was shocked at what he asked me.

Keep in mind, he's only 8, sheltered from most of the cruel world and all of its craziness, and generally removed from insinuation and crude – okay, maybe not CRUDE – but at least inappropriate comments. That's why I guess I was taken aback when he said...

DO YOU HAVE ARMPIT HAIR???

What the... What did you just say, Ricky? Ignoring my question, he then said, "Let me see!" as he grabbed my hand and started to raise my arm and peer underneath. I said, "No, get back you little rascal." He then proceeded to show me the benefits of NOT having armpit hair as he went on to explain.

No armpit hair means you can put your hand under you arm like this – he stuck his arm down through the neck-hole of his shirt – and then you flap your arm like a chicken and make this sound – PFFFFFFT, PFFFFFFT, PFFFFFFT, PFFFFFFT!

You see? So, do you have armpit hair? At that moment – honestly – I wished I didn't.

A Drinking Problem

Recently while eating dinner Ricky decided everyone should know he was thirsty by loudly announcing:

CAN I HAVE A JUICE BOX?

Ricky knows full-well that juice boxes are reserved for school lunches, so we were kinda surprised by his request. Then the fun – for him – started. His grin became bigger and bigger as the requests flowed.

Dad: No, you know you can't have a juice box

Ricky: How bout a Coke?

Dad: We don't have any Coke in the house and you wouldn't be drinking it if we did.

Ricky: Okay... then how bout some... SOUP?

Dad: SOUP? Are you hungry or thirsty?

Ricky: Thirsty! If NO soup, then can I have some chocolate? (His grin is HUGE now)

Dad: C'mon Ricky... really?

Ricky: Okay, okay... then how bout some Salt & Pepper?

Dad: Okay, I'll get you some Salt & Pepper

Ricky: I said... Dr. Pepper! You just said you'd get me some Dr. Pepper. Oh YEAH!!!

I couldn't help but think now – as I smiled so big my face hurt – did I just get snookered?

THIS... At A Museum?

Ever make the mistake of congratulating a woman on being pregnant only to learn – through much embarrassment – that she wasn't pregnant? That ever happen to you? Me neither – and that isn't what happened while we were waiting to enter the Museum a few days ago. But what DID happen, might have been just as embarrassing – for the person Ricky targeted.

With Halloween only a few days away, Erik and Ricky have been on high-alert for any scary, weird, unusual or candy events. Not one pumpkin, candle, front yard decoration or even a black cat – or any cat even close to black – slips by them without them calling attention to it.

So, I guess it shouldn't have surprised me what Ricky said to a young man wearing dread-locks as he walked towards us while we were waiting in line to get in to the Museum.

NICE COSTUME DUDE!

The poor fellow was shocked enough by the quote to try and get some clarification. "What," he said – to which Ricky was happy to clarify.

I LIKE YOUR COSTUME!

Poor guy. I guess if you can't take the attention, don't ask for the attention the dreads bring.

A Whale of A Story

While watching Saturday morning cartoons this morning Ricky turned back to me and said, "Whales have blowholes."

"That's right," I said. "What made you think of that right now?" Obviously, I was curious about how his mind was working but I also know if I ask more questions, there might be a funny story I can post that emerges. Not so this time. "I was just thing about whales," He said.

I hate to say it, but I was a little disappointed more zaniness didn't spew forth. Until a few more minutes of silence passed and he turned back to me again and said...

"I have a blowhole too."

Yes you do, Ricky. Yes, you do.

Holy Balls of Clay

In baseball, there are skills that are “nick-named” by scouts that indicate innate abilities in players. For instance, if you can run fast – you have WHEELS; if you have a strong arm and can throw hard – you have A HOSE. You get the idea, right?

Well, Jack – who is Erik and Ricky’s little 2year-old brother – well, even at 2 – he has A HOSE. He can throw like a relief pitcher. You know, really hard, but not so accurate, and not for too long. Here is a great example of Jack’s HOSE.

So, at church every Sunday we supply Erik and Ricky with Model Magic to help keep them quiet. If you are unfamiliar, Model Magic is a form of molding clay that stays pliable for an extended period of time and allows them to stay a little quieter while they focus on what’s in their hands. It’s the greatest thing in the world for them and they look forward to going to church if just for the “clay.”

Of course, there are 2 not-so-good side-effects of this clay. First, it costs us almost \$8.00 a week to stay stocked up on the stuff; and second, Erik and Ricky’s younger twin siblings are now “wanting” some – during church – to play with as well. Typically, sharing a little ball of clay with your younger brother and sister would not be such a big deal – but IT IS a big deal for Erik and Ricky.

After a few weeks of pain and anguish, we have finally come to a point where they will each give up a little ball of clay for a younger sibling. Their siblings were thrilled. For the next 20 minutes or so, they were ALL in “clay molding” heaven. We should have known it would not last.

Then Jack handed me the clay, and said, “BALL?” He had done this before, so I didn’t think anything of it as I rolled the clay around in between my hands and produced a grape-sized ball of clay. Jack smiled, took the ball of clay – and before I could restrain him – turned and fired... excuse me... FIRED the ball of clay at least 7 rows forward, barely missing the back of the heads of a young couple and their 1-year-old baby.

Erik and Ricky went in to fits of laughter – LOUD LAUGHTER; then we heard the family behind us – the Curtis family – do the same; then, with a look of disgust on my face, I looked over at my wife to see her grinning and trying REAL hard to hold back her own laughter.

Am I the only one who believes that fastballs in Church are a NO-NO!

A Song of... Sigmund Freud?

Erik loves to sing, and there is nothing more beautiful to me – well, my wife – than hearing him quietly sing a song to himself as he moves through the house playing with a toy. It's not that he is perfect on every note, or that he even knows all the words – it's that his singing is an outward expression of his pure happiness. My heart fills-up when he exhibits this kind of pure joy and I always take the time to stop what I'm doing and just listen and smile. It recharges my batteries and makes the tough times so much easier.

But the other day, I was a little shocked by the words that I recognized as he was singing. Specifically, the words I was sure I heard were:

Underwear; Chocolate Coating; Sigmund Freud; Lunatic; Chimpanzee; Freak... and; Unemployed!!??

What the... What kind of song was this? Or was this a made-up song that he was creating out of words he'd heard? Words he'd heard!! Where was he hearing these types of words? And why was he putting them together in this catchy little tune? I was stumped – so I asked Erik – who promptly turned down my request by saying, “Don't say that, Dad.”

I spent days trying to link together what the heck had happened. Was this a breakthrough? Was he retaining only unusual words that “stuck” in his mind due to weirdness? Then I heard my answer.

As I walked by the playroom I faintly heard a few of the key words so I popped my head in to the room – as Erik proclaimed, “I'm watching Freakazoid! I love it.” Ohhhh. The tune he was singing was the theme

song to a silly cartoon. Imagine that? I sat down next to Erik – who smiled from ear-to-ear – and watched for a few minutes.

Closing Note: Freakazoid is good stuff. I can see why he is hooked – I am too.

Don't Hold the Mayo.

Ricky is a huge fan of a certain type of food. He will ask for it for breakfast, lunch or dinner – or... for brunch, a snack, linner – between lunch and dinner – or even a late night-snack. But it's not what you'd think. It's not candy, ice cream – my favorite – or fruit. Seriously, he asks for this at least 3 times a day, without EVER missing a day. What is his "meal of choice?"

A delicious turkey sandwich with mayonnaise. Really! Not just a turkey sandwich, but – and I quote – "a delicious turkey sandwich with mayonnaise." As you can imagine, we're happy to oblige.

Until recently, it was something we thought stayed "in-house." Not so – as I found out from his Sunday-School teacher, Ryan – who I play basketball with weekly – who took a few moments in between baskets to relate to me something unusual that happened in class last Sunday.

It seems Ryan was finishing up a great little story that had all the 8-year-old children listening and quiet – a rarity from Ryan's perspective – when Ricky's hand shot high in to the air.

Ryan: Yes Ricky.

Ricky: Did you know a man was climbing out of a gigantic jar of mayonnaise?

Ryan: I did not know that, but thanks for sharing.

Ricky: You're welcome.

I can only guess, but I have to imagine the story Ricky heard WAS NOT the story Ryan told.

Diversionsary Tactics? Really?

It appears Erik and Ricky have decided together that I can be fooled if they can divert my attention to something beyond themselves. But it also appears that they do not completely understand the way a diversion works.

Take this morning as a good example.

Time was passing very quickly for us to be ready to leave for church. Keep in mind, all they have to do is put on their clothes, but sometimes it seems as if they conspire against me to delay the inevitable “getting dressed.” No fewer than 4 or 5 times had I asked each of them to, “put on your church clothes so we can be ready for church” each time the request getting more forceful. Then...

I watched as they huddled together, started giggling, and hatched a plan for – what probably seemed to them – a fool-proof diversionsary tactic. As a last-ditch effort to “get away” the two of them stood side by side as they both pointed over my shoulder and together loudly proclaimed:

“LOOK DAD, A JAY-WALKER!”

No kidding... I ALMOST looked over my shoulder – back towards the kitchen cabinets – and gave them the opportunity to “Make A Break For It” just to reward them for their well thought out plan.

The Giggle Bug Strikes Again

Last night as I was putting the boys to bed, I was greeted by an unusual statement from Ricky. As I leaned over him to give him a kiss and a hug, he said, “I am MOOOOO RON.” Immediately, both the boys started giggling incessantly. You know the kind, right? The kind of giggling that leads to... that’s right... more giggling.

Knowing this was a pre-cursor to long night for me – because I was sure to have to make multiple visits back to their room to settle them down – I decided I would try to settle them down now by engaging them in some quick conversation.

Where did you hear that word, Ricky? Erik leaned down over us from the top bunk and said, “It’s Juranus, Dad!” Pronounced: [jew-rey-nuh s]

I tried to hold it in to no avail. Now, I started giggling incessantly – which led to, you got it – ALL of us giggling incessantly. This went on for a few minutes until we all gathered ourselves and – started giggling incessantly AGAIN. Before we were done, cheeks were hurting, we all got great ab workouts and tears were filling our eyes. I never found out what cartoon – I’m assuming – taught them those words – I HOPE it wasn’t their older brothers.

They slept well last night. I did too. And the best part of all is that the minute Erik sat down to eat his “before school bagel” – at 6:30am – he reminded me of the events from the previous night. Although he could barely say it because he was giggling and flashing a smile from ear-to-ear he said, “Dad, remember Juranus??!?”

My response was probably what you’d expect. It consisted of a few more minutes of shared incessant giggling, sore cheeks, another ab workout – in less than 24 hours, that’s more ab workouts than I’ve done all year – and tears filling both our eyes.

How can I have ANTHING but a great day after that?

All He Wants For Christmas Is...

Every year at Christmas time we have a quick family meeting where we ask each kid what they’d like for Christmas. From the older two – ages 16 and 14 – we get the standard high-dollar requests. You know – cars, flat-screen televisions, computers, iPods, guitars – you get the idea. But with Erik and Ricky, you never really know what it is that has caught their interest most recently.

When we asked Erik what he wanted for Christmas – without looking up from drawing on his whiteboard – and without hesitation, he said as clearly as a Harvard graduate, “Spiderman Pinnacle Chip!”

His quick, clear and VERY specific answer made all of us laugh. He knew EXACTLY what he wanted for Christmas and as we all started to laugh – without looking at us still – a sly smirk spread across his face. It kind of resembled the smile that spread across the face of “The Grinch” when he realized he could steal Christmas from all the Who’s in Who-ville. You remember that grin, right?

Then there was Ricky. As my wife called Ricky over the same smirk that Erik had flashed grew across his face and with the same quick, clear and VERY specific answers, the following conversation flowed forth.

Mom: What do you want for Christmas, Ricky?

Ricky – through giggles: An EYEBALL!

Mom – through giggles: What does it look like?

Ricky – through bigger giggles: It has boogers on it.

Mom – through more giggles: REALLY?

Ricky – as we all cracked up: Eye boogers... and tears. Yeah, boogers and tears.

We’re not sure where to acquire his exact request, but you can be sure there will be something SPECIAL in his stocking this year.

Centrifugal OOMPH!

When Ricky was around 3 years old, he accidentally learned something scientific. He learned the effects of centrifugal force. You know what I’m talking about, right? When you’re driving in your car and you make a turn – it’s the effects of centrifugal force that push you to the outside of the curve. To be more technical: Centrifugal force is the outward radial expansion that arises in connection with absolute rotation.

Huh?

But here's how Ricky learned it. He found the leftover string and ball from a paddle ball set, grabbed the end of the string without the ball and commenced to swinging it in circles. He was hooked. Especially when he realized it was a great weapon. After a bit of training – mostly teaching himself NOT to hit himself he became “close to lethal.”

He'd get that ball whipping through the air – sneak up behind you... and WHA-BAM! You'd end up with a rubber ball – going what seemed to be a hundred miles an hour – to the head, or shoulder, or back, or between the legs; you get the idea. A rubber ball to the nether regions – which is where he seemed to aim – is quite a shock when you don't see it coming. But to Ricky, the sound you made when SMACKED was high comedy.

So, we had to do what we had to do. We took it away. Ricky went ballistic. I'm sure in his little mind he was thinking, “How could loving parents take from me a source of so much joy?” Whilst I was thinking, “OUCH, CRAP, DAD-GUMMIT that hurt – give me that you little sucker – AND STOP LAUGHING!”

But that was not the end of it. He found a piece of string and fastened a hot-wheel to it. “OUCH, CRAP, DAD-GUMMIT that hurt – give me that you little sucker – AND STOP LAUGHING!” Then he found a pull toy – although so heavy it was almost too much for him to swing – he made it work.

“DANG!, OUCH, CRAP, DAD-GUMMIT that hurt – give me that you little sucker – AND STOP LAUGHING!” Realizing this would be never ending, we scanned the house for any and all possible centrifugal force projectiles. For a while our pain and suffering – and his GUT BUSTING LAUGHTER stopped. We had slayed the dragon.

Then we had a visitor.

As Kevin entered the front door Ricky approached and reached up to Kevin's waist. Kevin, being the nice guy he is came to the conclusion that Ricky wanted his belt. Kevin unknowingly decided it would be okay and started to pull it off to give to Ricky. “I wouldn't do that” I warned. But Kevin decided it would be

fine and slid his belt from the loops and handed it to Ricky. “It’s fine – it’s not like my pants are going to fall down.”

Just as he finished his sentence – and before I could get close enough to intervene – Ricky ramped up the RPM’s... and WHA-BAM! OOOOMPH! Kevin doubled over in pain – Ricky and I doubled over in laughter. (I’m sorry, I couldn’t help it!)

Kevin had no more children after that event. Not sure if he was done by choice – he may not have had a choice, because Ricky had just performed his first – and hopefully last – Ricectomy.

Moopie Twap

Last night as I was putting Ricky and Erik to bed, I discovered they had learned something new – I believe from watching the Scoobie-Doo cartoon earlier that evening. Luckily for them I hadn’t watched it with them or I would have been more prepared – and they may have missed out on the “Crack Up at Dad” session they got to experience.

I had already laid them down and they SEEMED as if they were on the way to a good-nights sleep when about 10 minutes later I heard – and then saw – the two of them come sneaking down the stairs and peer at me from around the corner.

“Do you guys need something?” Usually when I ask this, they want a drink of water or a hug-n-kiss or something simple like that, but this time they said they wanted something I had never heard of. They said, “Come see a moopie-twap.”

A what? “A moopie-twap.” A what? “A MOOPIE-TWAP, DAD!” I should have known something was up when I hopped up – with a question mark in my head – to follow them up the stairs and they “took off” giggling and zipped back up the stairs. As I came around the corner and could see in to their room, I discovered them both in their beds with the covers up to their necks, laying there as stiff as a board watching me.

“A WHAT?” I said once more as I stepped in to their room. Before they could answer me, my foot caught on a piece of string stretched across the doorway, I fell forward and landed in a sea of carefully placed bionicles. At first, I was pretty mad – because bionicles are sharp – but soon realized I had been “had.” It’s hard to be too mad when your kids are giggling uncontrollably.

NOW... I understood. Ohhhhh – a moopie-twap. Or, in plain english, “A BOOBIE-TRAP!”

Prayer Fight

The Thanksgiving holidays usually mean we get together with family we haven’t seen in awhile. Which can lead – in our family – to Erik and Ricky finding new people to “impress” with all their zaniness. This Thanksgiving, we were fortunate to have my wives parents come in to town – from warm, sunny Dallas, Texas – to spend and entire week with us. Let the zaniness begin.

First of all, we are having a cold snap – high temperature since Monday has been 27 degrees – so we’re all stuck inside the house. Second, Erik has it in his mind that when Gramma and Grandpa come it’s... CHRISTMAS.

Since they arrived, Erik has been asking us for presents – to which we say – not yet – to which he says, “AWWWW MAN!” and stomps off angry. We expect this to continue until Christmas day. Sounds like fun, huh?

Third, we have set up a whiteboard on the refrigerator, so we can jot down all the funny stuff we’ll see during the holidays because introducing a new element in to our home for a week is a goldmine of opportunity. It started the morning after they arrived as we all woke up and made a big family breakfast. I called all the kids in to the kitchen to pray over the food and asked Erik if he’d like to say the prayer. I had no idea the turmoil that would ensue.

Erik: O.K. I’ll say the prayer.

Ricky: I want to say it.

Erik: No! Me!

Ricky: ME!

Erik: ME!

Ricky: ME!

I stepped in between them, spread my arms and held each of them far enough apart that they could not touch... grab... smack... each other. So, what do you do when your kids are fighting over who gets to pray? HMMMM. That may be the first time – in history – that last sentence has ever been written. Think about that: What do you do when your kids are fighting over who gets to pray? – that’s the second... if your counting.

Here’s what we did. They both prayed.

I leaned down in between them and they both moved in close as I simultaneously whispered in both of their ears what to say. It was a DUET of prayer. To me, the wildest thing was that they would try – as they were listening – they would try to think about what I would say next and get to the words before each other. Or they would say it louder than the other to try and drown out the others prayers.

This was a REALLY competitive prayer. As they hit the final dual amen – their heads popped up and again, I had to spread my arms and hold each of them far enough apart that they could not “get at” each other.

I can imagine this was one of the more unique prayers that God has heard – EVER. A COMPETITIVE, DUAL prayer – that started and ended with a fight.

The Heart of Thanksgiving

My wife makes a MEAN turkey for Thanksgiving. I’m not sure what it is she does, but it always tastes great. It’s moist, tasty and beautiful. This year however, Ricky learned a little more about HOW she makes the turkey than I even knew.

As we were sitting around watching the afternoon football game with our fat and full tummies, I heard Ricky start to call my name louder and louder until I responded. What is it Ricky? “Dad, you gotta see this.” He grabbed my hand and walked me in to the kitchen.

He then aimed his little finger at the fully carved turkey, pointed very accurately to one spot and said, “That is the TURKEY HEART!” As I looked in a little closer, I realized he was pointing at what was – most likely – one of the secrets to her moist and tasty turkey. It was a whole peeled grapefruit. But you know what... as you can probably imagine... it DID look a little bit like a heart.

I explained that it was not the turkey heart – but it was a grapefruit. To which he said, “A what fruit?” “A grapefruit.” “Nope... I’m sure that’s the turkey heart.”

I’m just thankful his focus was not on the turkey rump.

Potty Humor

With the grandparents in town for the week, it seems we are seeing some unusual occurrences. First; it appears Erik and Ricky find it necessary to “show off” a little and second; we go through more supplies than normal. But – until today – they have not had an opportunity to combine both unusual occurrences in to one event. UNTIL... Ricky made a trip to the downstairs bathroom.

After a few minutes I heard a yell coming from the bathroom and simultaneously saw Ricky’s grandmother make a face of disgust. “What did he say,” I asked her. Her answer was that I needed to find out for myself because he could not have said what she thought he had said. “He’s just too sweet to be saying what I think I heard.”

Then the yell came again. This time my wife heard what he said and she made a face of disgust. “You’d better not be teaching him that.” “Teaching him what?” I asked. Then he yelled again and this time I heard him. “We ran out of POOP PAPER!”

“Where did you learn that?” I asked through the door. “You did it. You said to wipe my booty after I poo-poo.” Then I realized he was answering – NOT the question; where did he learn the phrase POOP PAPER

– but the question; where did he learn he had to wipe his booty. I started to laugh as I rephrased the question. “Where did you learn it was called poop paper?”

Ricky stated his case. “I made it – it’s paper used for poop – it’s poop paper. That’s funny, huh?” It’s hard to argue with his literal logic. Plus – in a weird way – I kinda liked seeing him take initiative and stretch his comedic muscles – even if it is only potty humor.

Bathroom Light Saber

No... it’s not what you think. You see, we have 3-year-old twins that are always getting in to stuff. They split up, go separate ways, and create diversions in one area of the house while the other gets in to “off limits” stuff somewhere else. If I didn’t know all 3-year-olds spent most of their time doing this I would suspect they were possessed by a “conspire and get in to crap demon.”

Because of their ability to divide and conquer, we have come up with some very simple ways to keep them out of certain areas of the house. Initially it was baby gates in front of the stairs – BTW, twins learn early how to boost each other OVER those gates; then it was baby proof door handles – FYI, those can be pried off by “conspire and get in to crap demon” twins with toys that you would never believe would work; then we had to move to just locking doors – specifically doors that lead to bathrooms. (We’ve actually caught them swimming in small blue pools.)

There are two doors upstairs that are ALWAYS locked. OUR bedroom – where my wife stores craft paint – please ignore the half blue carpet in there, and the bathroom – blue water. Locking these two doors has started the exorcism of at least a little of the “conspire and get in to crap demons” – if only because they can no longer get in to those areas. The problem for Erik and Ricky though is that they cannot reach the bathroom door key sitting on top of the door frame.

Now, when they need to use the bathroom, either myself my wife or one of my two older sons have to walk up the stairs and unlock the door, so they can use it. And man... it sure seems like they use it a lot.

Until recently it seemed as if I made that dad-gum bathroom walk 20 times a day. Then suddenly last Saturday, the requests stopped. Were they backed up, were they using a window or a corner? With my kids, you never know – so I did some investigation. I spent about two hours playing with them upstairs paying special attention to when either of them left to “do their business.” Then it happened:

Ricky started doing the bathroom dance, crossed his legs and hopped around for a few minutes and then made a mad dash out – stopping on his way to grab a light saber that was leaning against the wall. I was a little confused – and maybe a bit concerned that he would grab the saber, so I peeked around the corner and watched as he started to wave the light saber violently at the bathroom door.

Was he using the force to get in? Had he discovered an unknown power that released locks with the wave of a saber? Was the door so frightened it released its hold? NOPE! He simply waved that saber until he knocked the key off the top of the door frame. When I saw this I smiled and said, “Did you just use that light saber to get in the bathroom?” to which he answered, “CAN’T TALK – GOTTA GO NOW!”

I guess when nature calls, you gotta answer – even if you have to use “The Force.”

Where You From, Dad?

A few days ago, Ricky approached me and started asking me some questions. “Dad, are you from South America?” Nope. “Are you from Africa?” Nope. “Are you from Arctic... a... Arctica?” Nope. He then turned, said, “Oh... O.K.” Then he walked away seemingly satisfied.

A few minutes later he was back. “Dad, are you from TEXAS?” “Yes”, I said – to which he smirked and started to turn to walk away. I called to him and said, “Ricky, why did you ask me that?”

He said – as if I were a little slow because I had not already caught on – “BECAUSE Arctica snows and South America something else!”

Huh!?!?

December 2010

In Your... What?

The snow came down hard and heavy yesterday. So hard and heavy in fact, that we decided there MUST be a family snowball fight after dinner. Let me explain what that means. A family snowball fight starts with random snowballs being thrown at each other and USUALLY ends with the ENTIRE family throwing snowballs at Dad – and then someone ending up crying and it all just fades to black – and blue – from there.

But during the event – there are some funny things that occur. Specifically, there are unwritten rules that are NOT understood by Erik and Ricky. You know what I'm talking about, right? If you've ever seen Dumb and Dumber – the movie that starred Jim Carey – you can probably recall the snowball fight scene between Harry and Mary. That's along the lines were talking here.

You should also probably know that – although you may think that Erik and Ricky would NOT care to be pounded with snowballs, whitewashed and generally have cold wetness running down in to their clothes – they LOVE every minute of every snowball to the face. They seem to be immune to the freezing side effects of an out-of-control snow war.

So, with NO FEAR and random rules being broken frequently by Erik and Ricky I shouldn't have been surprised when I got POUNDED by two snowballs at once from close range – one in the face, one under my arm – as I raised my arm to try and “jack” my 14 year-old son in the head. As I spit snow out of my mouth and wiped it from my eyes I turned to see Erik and Ricky running away laughing and heard Erik yell, “I HIT DAD IN THE FACE – IN YOUR FACE, DAD!” to which Ricky – not to be outdone – yelled, “I HIT DAD IN THE ARMPIT – IN YOUR FACE, ARMPIT!”

Huh?

C'mon, It Won't Hurt, Dad!

This Saturday, Shelly is over at a craft show selling her "wares" which gives me the whole day to bond with the kids. This is special for me and especially today because I can take advantage of the opportunity... to watch... "Championship Saturday." You know, when all the major college football conferences have the games that "really" decide who will play in which bowl games – and the National Championship game.

After I set up the video babysitter – which consists of 3 different videos, on 3 different video players – one for Erik and Ricky; one for Jack; and one for Chloe (the only girl) – I park my butt on the couch and start flipping between three different games when Ricky comes down the stairs and flops into the cushion next to me.

He then looked at my left arm, took his hand, rubbed it across my forearm and said, "Nice arm hair, Dad." When I didn't respond immediately, he followed up with this question. "Can I Pull It Out?" I said NO as I moved my arm away from him.

'Why not?' said Ricky as he grabbed my arm and pulled it back in to rubbing range. "Because it will hurt" I said.

Then Ricky said something I didn't know he knew. As he plucked a hair – OUCH – from my arm and hopped up all in one motion he left me with this observation.

"DAD'S A SISSY!"

Don't Miss This Party

In church this morning it was announced there would be a Christmas party. Erik and Ricky's ears perked up. Erik said, "Christmas presents?" To which I explained that they said there was a Christmas PARTY coming up soon. Then Ricky said, "A Christmas Party? Good. I can show my skills." "What skills?" I said.

Ricky: Running.

Dad: Oh yeah?

Ricky: Yeah! And jumping. And... rocket.

Dad: Anything else?

Ricky: Yeah, riding my jet pack, flying an airplane and swimming. That's it. Oh, and Kung Fu!

Dad: You're going to show all those skills at the Christmas party?

Ricky: Yep!

So, there you have it. This may be a Christmas party you won't want to miss.

Separated at Church

This morning in church, Erik and Ricky could not seem to get along. It all started after the opening song when at its conclusion, Ricky leaned over toward Erik and said, "Play Ball."

Usually this type of thing would bring a smile to Erik's face but not this morning. From then on, for every few minutes they were happy with each other, they spent at least 3 times as much time UNHAPPY with each other. I finally lifted Erik up, slid my rump over in between them and kept them apart for – what I thought – would be the rest of the meeting.

This usually does not sit well with either of them. Even when they are unhappy with each other, they do not like to be separated. They are the BEST of friends and generally make each others lives a joy. The idea that they would lose opportunities to goof off was not appealing. But I had had enough.

So... Erik decided that I was to now be his new goof off partner. It all started with him whispering some of his favorite – throw back – cartoon lines in my ear. I.e.: "I needs me spinach – and ka, ka, ka, ka." – Popeye the sailor; and "George make Ursula swing on vine." – George of the Jungle. This I could handle. It was the next thing he did that left my eyes watering and me sliding him back over towards Ricky.

Out of nowhere, I was blind-sided – literally – after he made his fingers into the shape of a “V” grabbed one of my cheeks and turned my face towards his and made a loud “BOINK” sound as he poked me in both eyes.

When I get home the first thing I’m going to do is search out the “Three Stooges” DVD they MUST have found – and watched – and trash it. IF... I have regained my sight.

A NEW Unusual Holiday Tradition

It has come to my attention that our family – specifically my boys – without my previous knowledge – have started a new Thanksgiving/Christmas New Year’s tradition. They have decided that all the men/boys – 6 of us in all – Dad (age withheld), Alek (16), Zak (14), Erik (11), Ricky (8), and Jack (3 in February) will perform an ACT to celebrate each of the holidays.

What is the new tradition we will be performing every year? Apparently – again, specifically my boys – without my previous knowledge – have decided that we will ALL be – get this...

We Will ALL Each Take a Turn... Slapping A Fresh Uncooked Turkey to Establish Dominance.

I’m not sure where this idea came from, but it appears they are so excited – especially Erik and Ricky – about the next opportunity to slap that they are requesting a turkey for Christmas Dinner and our New Year’s Day feast. It seems that WHAT we eat is not as important as the opportunity to SLAP and laugh hysterically at the sound and jiggle that erupts from WHAT we eat.

BTW: My wife is NOT TOO HAPPY that this has been approved – do I have a choice – for any and all future turkey events. BTW2: Approval will ONLY be given after ALL hands are washed.

But I must be honest here: I can’t wait to see Alek, Zak, Erik, Ricky and Jack taking their turns SLAPPING a turkey. Especially Erik and Ricky – they will LOVE it! I am smiling just thinking about how funny it’s going to look. Should I video record the event? You bet I will – and I’ll post it for ALL to see. I may even take my kids over to the grocery store for some SLAP practice. But only because SLAP practice makes perfect.

I do have two questions though.

Question #1: Has anyone EVER been expelled from a grocery store for family turkey SLAPPING?

Question #2: Is there a chance I will be ostracized by PETA? I hear they are pretty tough on turkey slappers.

I guess I'll just have to take my chances. And for those of you who are Facebook friends – look for the TURKEY SLAP video to be posted as soon as it's ready. And for you PETA people, you may not want to view the video, because there will be turkeys harmed during the filming.

Clearing The BK Play Land

Recently my wife had another of her “girls nights in” where she invites her very best friends over for a night of food, fun and silly conversation. My job, when this happens, is to make all the kids disappear for at least 2 hours – and I'm happy to help out in any way I can. I love my wife.

Usually, I take all 6 kids out for the evening and we have much fun, but this time my two oldest boys had prior plans that they were excited about and I decided to go it alone with the 4 youngest. BTW – this is what happens when your oldest 2 become responsible, great looking, and in demand by schools, friends and yeah, O.K. GIRLS.

I knew – in advance – that taking Erik (11) and Ricky (8), my 2 sons affected by functional autism, and my almost 3 year-old twins, Jack and Chloe, out for the evening – all by myself – would be a bit difficult – so I decided that the local Burger King play land might offer a safe location where they could have fun. But more importantly to me, it seemed it would be a location where I could keep them somewhat corralled – as ALL of them... are runners.

I could not have imagined the reception I would experience when we all walked in to the PACKED Burger King play land.

As we got our food and squeezed in to a corner booth – the only one available – the kids flew off in to the playground and seemed to be doing great – UNTIL – a loud screeching WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO pierced the air. The sound was deafening. I popped up out of the booth as all my kids made their way towards me with their hands covering each of their little ears. I was a bit confused until Erik said, “IT WASN’T ME!” which usually is an indication that he is guilty of something. And he WAS guilty – as I learned as I heard other kids telling their parents, “That kid did it” as they pointed at Erik. Apparently, he had pressed the bar on an external door and triggered the alarm.

Needless to say, the other parents in the room glared in my direction in an attempt to silently voice their displeasure with my parenting skills. I was unaffected by their glares and had a talk with Erik explaining what had happened and that he should not do it again. When he responded with, “IT WASN’T ME!” I knew he did not understand. I kept a closer eye on him from then on.

I was, however, a little MORE affected by their glares after the alarm was triggered again.

WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO! This time it took a few more seconds for the staff to reset the door. Erik was nowhere NEAR the door but I immediately knew what had happened when, this time, Ricky came running my way claiming, “IT WASN’T ME!” I now had the talk with Ricky with the same result.

Interestingly enough, I wasn’t mad at Erik or Ricky, but a little ticked at the judgmental way we were now being viewed by all the parents. But I also noticed there were fewer people now in the play land to judge us as a loud screeching alarm – WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO – seemed to be a room clearer. I could feel one of my alter ego’s – SPITEMAN to be specific – starting to gain strength. Remember the old HULK show when Bruce Banner would start to get angrier, then his eyes would turn green and he’d rip his shirt to shreds as his muscles “blew up?” Yep? Now you’re getting a feel for SPITEMAN’S power.

But instead of strength – although I have it in me – SPITEMAN starts to hatch passive-aggressive plans. AND... starts to smile an evil smile. Can you guess what happened?

That’s right – with my back now turned and an evil smile on my face... it happened again...

WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO! I turned and smiled like the Grinch when he realized he could steal Christmas from the WHO'S in Whoville. But as Erik approached and assured me with "IT WASN'T ME" instead of telling Erik he should not do it again I whispered "I Love You" in his ear and told him to go have fun. After which I glared threateningly back at those that glared my way. Then again... WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO! This time, Ricky heard, "I Love You" in his ear and I sent him back in to the fray.

Then again... WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO! Then again... WEEEE-OOOO, WEEEE-OOOO! Each time followed by an "I Love You" in the ears of the offenders. And a menacing glare towards all who would oppose the power of SPITEMAN.

After the sixth alarm had sounded – much to the dismay of the Burger King staff – ALL of the people in BK play land were gone... EXCEPT one family with two boys remained – and the Dad looked mad. As he approached, I expected to be chastised for my behavior – and my parenting skills – but was shocked when his angry countenance turned to a big smile.

He said, "Your two boys have special needs don't they?" After I said yes, he said, "I LOVED THE WAY YOU HANDLED THOSE OTHER PARENTS!" He then went on to explain that he'd seen parents with special needs kids cower, get embarrassed and even leave because of the way others had looked at them. "You stood your ground and scared some other parents. That was awesome!" We talked a few more minutes as our kids played. All in all – it turned out to be a great evening.

On the way home, I wondered. "Should SPITEMAN have offered a sidekick position?"

That's SNOW Way to Eat.

When we first moved to the great Northwest from Texas, Erik and Ricky were new to the idea of snow – well – maybe not snow – but surely new to a lot of snow. So, as we entered our first real winter, my brother and his family invited us to enjoy the beauty and fun of lots of snow and go snow sliding.

This was real exciting for Erik and Ricky because they had never even imagined you could hop on a big inner-tube, slide down a 900 foot groomed hill, and hook your inner-tube to a wire that would pull you back up to the top to do it all over again. They were hooked (pun).

For hours, over and over we'd all slide down the hill. Sometimes linking up – sometimes spinning the tubes – sometimes racing – until we looked at Erik and Ricky and realized they weren't smiling – their faces were frozen in a smile-like lock. These two boys REALLY needed a thaw.

When we tried to get them to a warmer spot, they revolted! They kicked and screamed and yelled bloody murder as we peeled them out of their tubes and drug them in to a small – more importantly – warm little concession stand. ONLY the promise of hot chocolate and popcorn was enough to get them to enter. But they were not very happy.

As Erik and Ricky warmed up, they began to mill around gauging their surroundings and getting more and more comfortable. About that time Ricky seemed to remember that he liked to eat snow and went in to search mode. "Don't eat that off the floor." My wife mentioned over and over.

Finally, Ricky watched as a rather large woman entered – with her – well – rather large rump COVERED in snow. It must have appeared to be a smorgasbord sent from heaven to Ricky, so he did what came naturally.

He made a beeline for the bum, opened his mouth REAL wide and took a big bite right off the ladies rear. Holy Crap! But that wasn't the funniest part.

It seems either the lady had a frostbitten fanny or way too many layers on because she didn't flinch an inch – SOOOO – Ricky went back for seconds. Now THAT'S Funny!

Serious Engineering

By now, you are probably aware that Ricky is exceptionally strong. When he was younger, he was able to run as fast on his feet AND hands as most children could normally. No kidding, he looked like a dog flying

across the front yard. People would stop dead in their tracks, marvel at the site, look away confused as if their eyes had forsaken them and then shake their heads as if they could not believe what they had just seen. Among other things, he could stand facing a wall, put his hands on the floor, throw his legs up onto the wall and do pushups – as many as you wanted. Try it yourself. It's almost impossible to even do one.

So, I was not surprised to walk in to the kitchen a few days ago and find Ricky doing something else a little goofy. He had put his feet up on to the island in our kitchen and somehow stretched his body across to the countertop. He had created what he called "THE RICKY BRIDGE." How do I know? Because the first thing he said when I walked in was, "Do you want to walk under THE RICKY BRIDGE, Dad?"

I told him I didn't and asked him how long he'd been stretched across the kitchen. "I DUNNO" was his reply. I then sat down and logged on to my laptop periodically glancing over at him from the kitchen table. I would look over at him every few minutes to find he was still perched across the kitchen playing with a piece of aluminum foil – folding and unfolding, balling up and then flattening out the foil – all as he laid stretched across the gap.

Then I looked up to realize he had been there for over 20 minutes and called over to him saying, "Aren't you tired?" He replied, "Nope. The RICKY BRIDGE is NOT TIRED." 10 more minutes later I hopped up and grabbed my cell-phone and snapped a picture. Got it.

I read one time that the reason Roman arches still stood today was because the engineers that designed the arches were required to stand UNDER the arches as they removed the scaffolding. Well, after watching for more than 30 minutes, I have to believe there's not a Roman engineer that wouldn't have been proud of the stability of THE RICKY BRIDGE.

Borrow My Pants?

This morning as a few of us were watching Saturday morning cartoons together, Ricky, who had been up in the play room, came running down the stairs two at a time and made an unusual request.

“Dad, Dad, Dad! Can I borrow your pants?” I smiled at the request, said no and told him to go back upstairs. “But I need them, Dad.” I like you – probably right now – started to wonder; Why would an 8-year-old want his Dad’s pants and what in the world might be a reason for him to feel he NEEDED them?

The answer came spewing out his mouth before I could ask.

“Dad, I need them so I can make them stinky!” I probably shouldn’t have asked but I couldn’t resist. “How are you planning on making them stinky?” His answer was unusual but did not surprise me. “Mega Power! Mega Power can make ANYTHING stinky.”

How could I object? As I stood up to remove my drawers, my wife said, “Oh no you don’t. Sit your rump back down – he’s NOT getting your pants. You KNOW it won’t stop there” and effectively ended the encounter.

I don’t know about you, but I was a bit disappointed. Who knows what elaborate mechanism – Mega Power – had been built, powered-up and was waiting to be applied upstairs? Could have been spectacular, huh? Plus... it’s been awhile since I’d taken the opportunity to strip down in the living room.

Thumb Horn

Every Thursday evening – at 9:00pm – I meet with a few good buddies and we go play pickup basketball for a few hours. It’s fairly competitive – some pretty good ex-high school ballplayers (some still in their 20’s) – but we all have families now and THE MOST IMPORTANT thing is that no one gets hurt.

Still, a few of us are a little older and seem to be the recipient of most of the “minor” injuries. This past week, I was a victim. As I was guarding my brother, I saw his teammate flash behind me from my left to right and poked my right hand in to the passing lane. SMACK! If you’ve NEVER heard the sound of a basketball smacking the very end of a thumb, it’s nasty. If you HAVE you know that even the SOUND makes your fingers hurt. And it did – it hurt like the dickens!

We all stopped immediately as I grabbed my right thumb with my left hand and squeezed. I wasn't sure how bad it was but became a little more concerned when my brother said, "You're dripping blood all over the floor." Well, it wasn't broken but my thumbnail had been bent back about midway across the nail – hence – all the blood. Truthfully, the thumb is fine but the thumbnail is JACKED – and throbs painfully quite often.

So, in an effort to provide a little relief – and hopefully save the nail I covered it with a little tape. I thought things were going to be fine and I would heal okay until Erik walked in and spotted the BOO-BOO.

"Are you okay?" He said. I assured him that I would be fine and then he started to take a closer look at the boo-boo by holding my hand in the air with his left hand and gently feeling around it reviewing the crusty, puffy taped-up thumb. Then he did something that got a reaction that made him giggle.

He grabbed my thumb and SQUEEZED! "OOOOOWWWWEEEE!" The smile that spread across his face was one that very few people get to see. The anguish that spread across my face was absorbed in to the glow of his smile. Before I could tell him that he was hurting me he did it again. "OOOOOWWWWEEEE!" Obviously as I found out later, he had made the connection.

Grabbing Dad's Thumb = A Loud, Funny Scream!

So far – he hasn't let me forget I have a bad thumb. Every time he walks by me – he grabs my thumb, hears a loud funny scream, giggles and walks away to wherever it is he is going.

I can't wait until this stupid thing heals.

Remembering the Alamo... and Puke!

Because we are native Texans, each time we travel back we always take our kids to see something unique that ONLY Texas can provide. This past trip we added an addition 1000 miles to our trip – Texas is BIG – to see great Grandparents in Beeville, TX and since we were close went down to Corpus Christi and then over to San Antonio to visit – the Alamo.

As we left our hotel room, Ricky seemed to be under the weather a bit – he may have swallowed some sea water from the beach (YUK) – so I guess to make sure he was prepared, he – borrowed – something from the hotel room to catch any and all... well, let's just say unfortunate events that may occur. Poor Ricky sat in the back of the car quietly – no accidents – until we rolled up to downtown San Antonio, parked the car, and all started making the 2 to 3 block walk to see the Alamo.

I must have been a little too focused on other things, because when I saw the photos from the Alamo weeks later, I was a bit surprised at what I saw. I asked my wife, "What is Ricky holding in his hand in all the pictures?" She smiled as she explained that it was what he called his "Throw-Up Bucket" and said that he carried it everywhere he went all day long... just in case.

I'm soooo proud. He did that all by himself. Except I wish I'd had a hand in naming the receptacle. Maybe... Barf Bucket, or Hurl Hatch, or Ralph Receiver, or Blown Chunks Bucket, or... well, that's enough.

Sorry, this kind of humor is a bit funny to me. SPEW SACHEL! Sorry again.

For YOU... For Christmas.

Ricky is not one you want deciding what YOU get for Christmas. Take what happened today as a great example. As my wife was discussing what she should get for her father, Bobby, Ricky came in and overheard the conversation. The question was asked to all. What should I get my dad for Christmas? But the typical answers – a gift card to Cabella's, an Elvis movie, etc. – were apparently not to Ricky's liking. His suggestions were WAY more creative and "outside the box."

Ricky's suggestion? – "How about our old T.V.?" You mean the T.V. that doesn't work anymore and is sitting in the garage waiting to be thrown away? "YEAH... that's the one." We suggested Bobby may not like it only to be responded to by Ricky with this: "O.K., then how about a new flying helicopter and for Gramma let's get a new motorcycle. Yeah, that's a good deal!"

As much as each would like what Ricky proposed, I can't imagine Gramma in chaps. OH! OH! That mental picture IS NOT a good deal!

Twas the Night Before Christmas

Twas the night before Christmas and everyone was either in bed – the 4 little ones – or in their room forbidden to come out – the 2 oldest, so that Mom and Dad – A.K.A. – Santa could deliver gifts. First order of business – clear the upstairs hall of all toys, clothes, blankets and anything else that could cause a trip and fall possibly resulting in Santa suffering a broken hip. (That's am "I am getting older" joke.)

As I walked up the stairs and flicked on the lights the first thing I saw was a big blanket at the top of the stairs. Since I wasn't really interested in cleaning at the moment my plan was to just clear a path by pushing all "floor items" to the side. So... I swung my right foot back and kicked. SMACK! As I Dad cussed – CRAP, FILTH-FLARN-FILTH, FRICKLE-FRACKLE – and hopped around in pain I realized there was a bunch of toys INSIDE the blanket I had just attempted to kick – and my toe was a hurtin!

"He found it" I heard from inside Erik and Ricky's room. I immediately thought they had planted another Moopie Twap so I limped in to their room to tell them, "You Got Me!" But before I could say anything Erik said, "Did you find your present?" "My present?" "Yep, your present." Then Ricky piped up. "Santa wrapped your present in a blanket at the stairs."

"Oh, THAT (ouch) present. Yep. I found it with (wince) my toe. I LOVE IT. Tell Santa Daddy loves his (owie) present." Big smiles spread across their faces and Ricky said, "You tell him – you talk to him all the time."

So, what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a busted big toe and grins of big cheer. And I heard them whisper as kind of a warning. "He liked it, he liked it – I can't wait till morning."

Oops, Was That Me?!

I was on the verge of KILLING my #2 son Christmas morning. Not only did he wake up at 7:00 am, but he also decided somehow that waking up Erik and Ricky shortly after was a good idea. We were sure we'd get at least until 8:00 before we were forced to get up. Nope! Still a little miffed if you can't tell. Erik and Ricky were beside themselves looking at all the presents – and because we sport 6 kids – there are always way too many. But they knew not to touch and were free to get into their stockings.

As they poured their stockings on to the floor they were met with the usual apples, candy, oranges, candy, little flashlights, more candy, a banana, MORE candy, other assorted items and then 2 things that were a little more LOUD. The first they knew what to do with – a whoopee cushion – kind of a family tradition because of the silly giggles that will ensue when Mom or Dad plopp down on to them. And the second Ricky took a few moments to sound out the name.

Ricky: FL-ARP – FLARP. NO-EYES POO-TI – NOISE PUTTY. Flarp Noise Putty! What's that?

Zak (#2 son): Let me show you.

Then Zak opened the small plastic canister, dove his finger down in to the slimy-solid like goo inside and produced what sounded like the most painful, long, drawn out, wet (sorry) loud flatulence you have ever heard. PFFFFFFFFTTTTFTTFFFTPTTFFTTTFFTT (whew – not finished yet) PPPFFFFTTTTFTTPTTFTTTTTTTTT!!!!

Ricky was thrilled and followed the sound with this question. "OOPS, WAS THAT ME?"

Roasting – Other People's – Hotdogs!

This year on Christmas Eve we thought it might be fun to take the kids sledding. We're really lucky because we live in Boise, Idaho where the chance to sled in deep, fluffy snow is less than an hour away – and it's at a park that is secluded enough that we don't have to worry – too much – about Erik and Ricky running off. Still, we take precautions.

First, we ensure each of them has a fluorescent orange hat on – for quick, easy, scan, visual identification; and second, we have family assignments to make sure every few minutes or so we ALL SCAN and spot ALL the orange hats. If any of them stray too far, we are able to “round-em-up” before they get in to too much trouble. But even with our precautions in place, mischief still occurs – we kind of expect it.

This year we were not alone – we had neighbors on the side of the mountain. Another group of families had decided they too would go sledding at the same spot and had dug out a hole in the snow and built a fire. About 6 adults and 15 or so kids were sharing the side of the mountain with us and all seemed to be going great. We were very conscious of Erik and Ricky getting in to their business and too close to the fire, so we were watching them closely – and they were doing pretty good. So good in fact, that I believe I may have gotten a little too comfortable and waited too long to SCAN for hats. As I did, I noticed 2 fluorescent orange dots WAY UP on the side of the mountain with NO Erik or Ricky heads inside. They had both dumped them.

I immediately yelled out, “Erik, Ricky, where are you?” and was immediately replied to by Ricky who said, “Over Here, Dad!” I was immediately relieved... then ALARMED. It seems Erik and Ricky had weaseled their way in to our neighbor’s campsite, each grabbed a skewer and a hotdog and were roasting wieners with the other group’s kids.

Although the other group’s parents and kids seemed confused, they were extremely polite and gracious as I apologized and redirected Erik and Ricky back to sledding. ONLY... to find them about an hour later back at the fire – this time – roasting marshmallows with the other group’s kids.

At this time of year, I’m grateful for a lot. Specifically, on THIS Christmas Eve, I’m grateful for the kindness of others. I’m sure they have no idea, but that patient, polite, and gracious group of families out there on the side of the mountain with us on Christmas Eve 2010 was a great example of what is right in this world. You can bet I – and Erik and Ricky – will forever remember them fondly.

Duck, Duck, Duck... Goose.

During the summers it's fairly common for us to take family walks through our neighborhood on Sunday evenings. This can be a lot of fun, or turn in to a battle of wills as Erik and Ricky sometimes like to go "That Way" even though it may not be on our normal route. As you can probably imagine, not going the way THEY WANT can turn ugly.

On this specific day however, the kids were doing well – mostly because they had recently watched Tommy Boy and were reenacting the scene where he smacks his head – on every mail box they saw – to the delight of the twins. Their giggles were really cute.

However, the silly turned to embarrassment as Ricky saw what appeared to be a man from India walking in the opposite direction and as he got closer Ricky felt the need to point out something by yelling the following repeatedly:

"Black, Black, Black, Black, Black, Black, Black, Black!" as he pointed at the fellow approaching us.

My wife was horrified as she tried to reset exactly what he may be pointing at by saying, "That's right Ricky, his shirt is black." Thank goodness he WAS wearing a black shirt and Shelly was quick thinking enough to point that out. Until... Ricky started yelling again – this time with a slight modification.

"Brown, Brown, Brown, Brown, Brown, Brown, Brown!"

Thanks A LOT, Boys!

Erik and Ricky have learned something new. Their older brothers, Alek (16) and Zak (14) recalled something they learned a few years back that made them laugh SO HARD that they almost peed their pants and could not – let me rephrase that – would not let the activity die out without passing it down to their little bro's.

The problem here is that – although I admit the laugh quotient is very high (for men- and YES I am one) – this activity WILL – there’s no question in my mind – WILL occur at an inopportune time and result in others embarrassment. Probably mine – more likely my wife – wherein Alek and Zak will receive a harsh – if not fatal – punishment at the hands of my sweet wife.

So, here’s the activity in a nutshell:

You take a straw, stick one end in to your shirt and press it under your armpit, and press your arm down to your side. THEN you take the other end and put it in to your mouth and blow. If you’ve done this before you KNOW what you get – if you haven’t – and you’re of the male gender – you’re in for a treat. If you’re of the female gender, I apologize.

I can’t help but picture a school teacher or a parent of another child approaching me and saying, “Are you aware of what Erik/Ricky did with their drinking straw?”

Yep! I sure am. I sure am. Thanks A LOT, Boys!

Fire in the Hole

Yesterday as I was in the kitchen, I heard a yell from upstairs. “Fire in the Hole!” A little concerned for the safety of all I stopped what I was doing and headed in that direction. As I came around the corner, I noticed all kinds of small toys all over the floor at the base of the stairs. There were bionicles, pieces of a Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head, lock blocks, legos and more than a few other items.

As I stepped on the bottom step of the stairs I was met with another “Fire in the Hole!” while simultaneously being “BOINKED” on my noggin with a Batman action figure. “CRAP!” As I looked up the stairs I saw Ricky standing at the top looking over the railing prepared to drop a “Green Lantern” action figure next – and I was in prime position to take another blow to the coconut.

“Ricky, don’t drop that!” I said as I looked up at him angrily. “You just hit me in the head with a toy – don’t be dropping toys down the stairs – you’re going to hurt someone.”

His response – in his mind – I think – gave him permission to keep dropping toys as long as he wanted:

“Dad, I SAID, Fire in the Hole!”

An AGGRESSIVE Plan For the Day.

This morning at 6:30am – as we were all still half asleep – Alek, Zak and I were shocked in to alertness as Erik yelped out, “SURRENDER EVIL DOODER!” What the...? As I tried to quiet Erik down, I realized he was not only awake – but wide awake – and was more than ready to take on the day with a vengeance.

He had all of his super hero action figures lined up on the table above his bagel and milk, so he could play as he ate his breakfast. Then he pulled my head down close and whispered, “Dad, we are ALL Super Heroes.” He then went on to mention that we were all members of the “Super Hero Squad” or – as he decided – we were all “Squadies.”

Erik: Dad, Dad. I... am Spiderman.

Dad: Oh, yeah?

Erik: Yeah, and YOU... are Dyno Dad!

Dad: Wow! I knew I felt different this morning, like I had super-powers or something.

Erik: Uh huh. Yeah, and THAT – as he pointed to Zak – is... Zak Attack.

Dad: Wow! Spiderman, Dyno Dad and Zak Attack, huh?

Erik: Yeah, and THAT – as he pointed to Alek – is.... Smart Alek.

We all grinned really big with Erik as he went back to his playing. Then as we were breaking up to go our separate ways for the day – Alek and Zak off to High School – Erik off to get on the bus – and me off to work – Erik proclaimed the goals for the day by saying...

Let's Go Kick Some BAD GUY Butt!

Blame It On the... Robot?!?

If you know Ricky, you are probably aware by now that he is a big fan of “the Robot.” He was one for Halloween, he tries as often as possible to walk like one, and he has even been known to interject his love for robots at church.

But until recently I was unaware that they had become members of the family.

Today when I got home from work, I was greeted by Ricky who alerted me to the fact that his 3 cousins were over for a visit. As I walked away to say hi to Josh or Jarred or Joe or Jake or Lyndsey or Chelsey – at least a combination of 3 – I was disappointed to find out none of them were in the house. “Where are you cousins” I asked Ricky. “In the kitchen” was his reply. But there was no one in the kitchen. There was, however, a Robot on the island in the kitchen.

Ricky: There he is – pointing to the Robot.

Dad: Where?

Ricky: C’mon Dad! He’s right there on the countertop.

Dad: The Robot? The Robot is your cousin?

Ricky: Yep – That’s RoBob.

Dad: That’s your cousin? RoBob?

Ricky: Yep! And the other two cousins, Jerry and Phil are upstairs in the playroom. Take a picture, Dad.

Ricky and I smiled together and I thought that was it. THEN... about 10 minutes later as I sat on the couch – truthfully I was dozing off a little bit – I was shocked back in to reality as I felt my nose get flicked. By the time I gathered my senses I looked over at Ricky who was about 5 feet away sitting next to RoBob. “C’mon Ricky, why did you flick my nose?”

He pointed at RoBob and said, “It wasn’t me... RoBob did it.”

You Can't Imagine WHAT They Were Wearing.

I'll be honest – sometimes if Erik and Ricky are upstairs quiet for an extended amount of time, I leave them alone and ENJOY the few moments of quiet. Even though I know there's a chance they may be too quiet to be up to any good, I guess I just take my chances that they're entranced in a movie, or quietly playing with bionicles or some-such.

I don't think about the fact that I may go up later to paper shredded all over the room – or pizza sauce spread all over the walls – sorry, no picture of that (I was too mad for photos). But today, even I was surprised when I walked upstairs to check on them after an extended period of quietness has passed.

As I walked in the door they both came at me with their feet and hands ablazing in some sort of pseudo-autistic ju-jitsu attack. They were serious as they were making all kinds of HEEE-YAAA sounds and as their hands and feet moved in rapid fire, pinpoint kicks and punches – of course combined with the appropriate FTT FTT FTT sounds in perfect unison with their movements – there was one thing that was completely different from what I had ever seen before.

They were both wearing NOTHING but their BIRTHDAY SUITS.

My guess is that earlier they had been watching a cartoon called "Fairly Odd Parents" wherein there is one short – and kind of funny – scene where Timmy Turner creates his own – sort of odd – character. This information was confirmed when after asking them what they were doing, Erik answered by saying, "Dad, we are NAKED LAD!"

Needless to say, Dad's delayed checks on extended upstairs quietness will STOP for quite some time.

No DANCING in Church

Erik and Ricky woke up happy this – Sunday – morning. Thank goodness for that because just yesterday, we woke up to an "escalation situation." They were in "full autism" mode by 7:30 am. Nothing can

match waking up to a child affected by autism that has been escalated to the point of the “blood curdling angry scream” followed by no less than an hour’s worth of de-escalation – only to be repeated 2 or three times BEFORE noon.

I’m exhausted right now just THINKING about it – you can imagine how exhausted I was yesterday WHILE it was happening. I even tried to send my wife AWAY for a while, so she wouldn’t be scarred by the memories they were creating.

But that was yesterday. Today – Sunday – they were really fun and full of smiles. These are the days that I recall when I think about Erik and Ricky. Man... they are a hoot. Two things happened today at church. One I got to share with Erik as a personal experience, the other Ricky shared with everyone in attendance.

As we were sitting in Church I faintly heard Erik – on my right – singing a sweet little song to himself. I leaned in to listen for maybe an “I Am a Child of God” or “Jesus Loves Me” only to be confused. This was no church song. As I leaned in closer, I could make out what I thought may be a Bee Gees song from the early 80’s.

He continued quietly singing what I was SURE was: Shobee-Doobie-Debba-Dep... Ahhhh – Shobee-Doobie-Debba-Dep... Ahhhh – You Should Be Dancing – Yeah – You Should Be Dancing – Yeah! I then quietly joined in as he sang a little more. Shobee-Doobie-Debba-Dep... Ahhhh – Shobee-Doobie-Debba-Dep... Ahhhh – You Should Be Dancing – Yeah – You Should Be Dancing – Yeah! Don’t get me wrong – we were being reverent – but we were sharing a very special moment.

Little did I know that behind me – on my left – Ricky had heard our whisperings – had stood UP – and was reenacting a dance scene from the movie “Despicable Me.” When I finally looked over my shoulder and caught him dancing, I quickly sat him down.

How do I know this was the dance scene he was performing? Here’s how. The family behind us also had kids and they had RECOGNIZED the dance. When I asked how long he had been dancing I was a little surprised to find out he had performed “the whole thing.”

My guess is THIS isn't what is meant by "Being MOVED By the Spirit."

Erik and Ricky say some wacky things.

BTW: Feel free to use these on other people – they are not copy write protected by Erik and Ricky – YET!

When you DO use them, pay special attention to the question marks that form above others heads and the looks of confusion on their faces. It is quite a site.

Here's a short list of recent quotes.

"For my birthday I want a robot. Oh, and an onion."

"Ouch, I hurt my scapula!" – I couldn't be sure what this was and on wiki found it to be the omo (Medical Latin), or shoulder blade – the bone that connects the humerus (upper arm bone) with the clavicle (collar bone). Where'd he learn that!?

"Dad, I'm barking like a chicken."

"Dad, do you have armpit hair?"

"Can I have a jetpack for Christmas?"

"Ever toot so hard you pull a muscle in your back?" Oh, wait, that was me that said that. Sorry.

"Three little monkey's jumping on the head."

In response to being bugged by an older brother – "Stop, or I'll kick you in the wing-nut!"

"Doodoo duh, doodoo duh! That's poop! HA!" Ricky's reaction to hearing the "The Polices'" 1981 hit for the first time: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jix7XcbVA4w&feature=related>

Funny Stuff – The Sequel

More of Erik and Ricky's wackiness. Some of these are a little PG-13 rated. Sorry, I just REPORT the zany – you can filter for yourself.

Ricky: "Do cats lay eggs." Dad: "No, they don't." Ricky: "I lay eggs."

After walking up behind a friend of the family on Christmas Eve – it was a man – thank goodness! Ricky: "Is your butt getting bigger?"

I'm not sure what the next one even means, but you can bet my older boys are to be talked with regarding THIS statement. Ricky: "Can a dog eat your 'NARDS'?"

Erik quoted from the movie "Surfs Up" in response to a school nurse asking him how he felt. School Nurse: "Are you feeling okay?" Erik: "I can feel it in my nuggets."

Red Fulla Bull!?

As I walked in to the house a few days ago after a long, hard day of work, I noticed as I looked in to the kitchen that Ricky was rooting around in the pantry. "Whatcha doin, Ricky?" I said as I entered the kitchen. First, he was startled and jumped, then he pulled his hands behind his back and grinned – then he SHOT out of the kitchen like a rocket and headed up the stairs as he yelled in a mumbled, mouth-full, voice, "NUTHIN."

Well, needless to say "NUTHIN" was definitely something, so I checked in the pantry to see if anything obvious was missing or way out of place. After looking and seeing "nuthin" in too bad of shape I let it be. A few minutes later Ricky shot across my path back to the kitchen and then after a few moments of quiet was quickly on his way back up the stairs with the same "I'm up to nuthin good" look on his face. The "whatcha got" question I posed this time as he ran by was met with an answer I didn't quite get. In a mumbled, mouth-full voice I heard, "Breh Bluu."

Well because we have 5 boys, "free-eating" is not allowed so I needed this to stop. I called up to Ricky – who had already made it back upstairs – to come back down and talk to me. After a few, calm "Ricky, come here" attempts failed to produce the desired results, I pulled out the big guns. "RICKY, YOU BETTER GET YOUR REAR DOWN HERE NOW!"

It goes without saying the success rate for THIS request is almost 100%. – C’mon, you know you’ve done it – don’t act shocked.

Anyway, as Ricky made it to the bottom of the stairs I asked again:

Dad: Whatcha eating, Ricky?

Ricky, through a mumbled, mouth-full voice: Red Bull.

Dad: What?

Ricky, still chewing: Red Bull.

Dad: Red Bull?

Ricky, still chewing: No. Red Bull.

Dad: RED BULL!

Ricky, after finally swallowing: No Dad, not Red Bull – BREAD BALL!

Dad: BREAD BALL?

Ricky: That’s what I saying – not Red Bull – BREAD BALL!

So, it seems Ricky has learned that if you take white bread and squeeze it together real tight in your hands, it can form in to a “ball of bread.” And this great, new, quick meal is a HIT with Ricky. Not yet able to supplant his favorite meal of all time- a delicious turkey sandwich with mayonnaise – but well on its way to being a daily staple.

Red Bull – Bread Ball. Try saying that 3 times fast.

We’re Having WHAT for Dinner?

As I got home from work and rolled in to the driveway to park a few days back, I was met by Erik and Ricky together doing the “Despicable Me” dance – again and blocking my path. I rolled down my window and said, “Hey guys, scoot over so I can park the car.” The answer from both simultaneously was – “WAIT! We’re not done.”

I waited patiently for what seemed like a few minutes and then finally said, “C’mon, don’t make me wait here all day” to which Ricky proclaimed, “Just wait or I’ll shoot you with my CHEESE RAY” as he made his hand in to a little gun and pointed it at me. “Don’t you mean FREEZE RAY?” I said – thinking I was smart. “Nope – Freeze Rays FREEZE! Cheese Rays CHEESE!” OOPS... my mistake.

I said “TIMES UP” as I started inching forward only to have Ricky – and now Erik – make all four of their hands in to a little guns, point them at me and start recoiling as their pretend shots were fired. (Based on the recoil I’m guessing these were powerful CHEESE RAYS.) As I rolled past them and into the garage Ricky ran up to my window and this conversation ensued:

Ricky: We’re eating pigeons for dinner

Dad: We don’t eat pigeons.

Ricky: We eat chicken.

Dad: That’s right.

Ricky: We eat turkey hearts:

Dad: Well, kinda.

Ricky: Then, we’re having pigeons for dinner.

Dad: I don’t think so

Ricky: Go tell Mom.

So, I did.

As I walked in the house towards my wife, Shelly, she started laughing. Before I could even ask she said, “Lemme guess. Ricky told you we were having pigeons for dinner, right?” She then went on to tell me they had just watched a PBS special on pigeons and Ricky’s eyes had been GLUED to the screen for the entire hour. Then after the program he decided – and no one was changing his mind – that we should have pigeons for dinner because we eat chicken and turkey – so why not pigeons?

Then she said, “Go look on the island in the kitchen – he drew a picture of himself EATING a pigeon.” You’ll also notice in the picture he drew he’s wearing his “getting real worn out” green hat STILL.

So there you have it – Roasted Pigeon is now on Ricky’s favorite meals list along with a few others UNTIL, we tell him that pigeon’s poop all over the place.

We’ll keep you pigeoned – um – posted.

He Grabbed My...

No, not THAT! Let me explain: Yesterday I was a little shocked when I looked outside and saw Erik and Ricky wrestling on the trampoline. That in itself is not so unusual. The unusual part was that – they had NO shirts on – and the thermometer read 31 degrees. They do some wacky stuff but typically they are not immune to freezing. Then I saw Ricky do something that made me realize they were in reenactment mode.

Erik was laying on his stomach as Ricky sat on his rump facing backward and was pulling each sock off by grabbing the toes and stretching – I mean strrrrrrettttttching the sock till it popped off: Then he grabbed Ricky’s foot, stuck out his tongue and licked the bottom of his foot.

EWWWWW! This was now CLEARLY a reenactment of the epic wrestling match between Spongebob Squarepants and Patrick Star at the end of the Fry Cook Games episode.

But what REALLY got my wife and I giggling was when Ricky came in huffing and puffing – and his skin in the FREEZING range – and started to give us the play-by-play of what had just happened.

“We were wrestling and – MY NAMES NOT RIIIIICK! – It’s Ricky. Then he grabbed my leg and pulled my arm and bended my foot and” – and this is what made us really laugh – “he twisted my RICKY’S MILK!”

We were unaware he even remembered ever saying “Ricky’s Milk” the first time. It’s been more than 3 years since he said it and he hasn’t said it since.

How is it that they seem to always remember the inappropriate and goofy?

What Makes You Say That?

Tonight, after watching a PBS special, Ricky made a claim that he would not back down from. I knew and he knew we had both watched the same special, and there was no mention of his claim – but “by golly” he was going to hold on to this one no matter what we said. After about 20 minutes of discussion, we decided the best way to proceed was to agree with him if for no other reason than to just “shut him up.”

His claim was simple: Ricky said, “Snakes Have Hairs. They Do!”

Did I miss something during the special? Is there a chance he’s right? I don’t think so, but his conviction makes me question myself. So, here’s the question. Is there a chance that he’s right and I just missed it? DO SNAKES HAVE HAIRS?

Duplicated Drawings and Sleeping/Playing Bags

Erik and Ricky KNOW how to have fun. They are experts – as most kids probably are – at taking the ordinary and maximizing the fun quotient. But that doesn’t mean there isn’t left behind some collateral damage. This past week there were two specific instances – one minor and one “not so” minor.

The first instance involved Erik’s love of drawing; and Erik’s LOVE of shredding. That’s right. I’m not sure what the connection is but sometimes I’ll catch him drawing 10 to 15 different characters on a piece of paper: only to find them ALL shredded in to thousands of tiny little pieces all over the floor.

BTW: It’s so common in our home to find thousands of little pieces of paper, I’ve even suggested to me wife we find – and buy – a rug rake. (Do they even make those?)

Anyway, until recently, I had never SEEN any of the shredding happening first hand. I just assumed it was him and didn’t ever question if maybe there were some mischievous gremlins sneaking in when we weren’t looking doing all the damage. Well, a few days ago I caught him – and after asking, I realized these drawings were a necessary part of his fun. These drawings were – sacrificial BAD GUYS:

Whew! That's a relief. – I was worried for a moment we had two children affected by functional autism AND paper shredding gremlins. That's a load off my mind.

The other instance forced the sacrifice of a kiddy sleeping bag. You see, it's been cold here for way too long – so long in fact that Erik and Ricky have devised ways to play outside – in the cold – without bundling up. You may remember the half-naked wrestling match

This time, they realized they could pull their old kiddy sleeping bags over the tops of their heads, stagger out to the trampoline and jump blind.

However, after finding this to be ineffective if they wanted to stay ON the trampoline – don't worry, they're just fine – they devised an effective way to see through the kiddy sleeping bags by cutting small eye holes out with their kid scissors.

NOTE: I don't know HOW they cut holes in their sleeping bags with those kiddy scissors – because I can't even cut PAPER with them – but I guess necessity is the mother of invention, huh?

Anyway, we were unaware of what they had done until we saw the white fluffy stuffing piles in the back yard. Initially we couldn't decide if it was small fluffs of snow, or albino dog poop but knew it was not normal.

But the bottom line remains: Erik and Ricky are experts at taking the ordinary and maximizing its fun quotient – even if it means the occasional sacrifice.

Dancing with Prince... and the Cult

We have a local TV station here in Boise called, COOL TV that plays music videos all day – and all night long. And it's not unusual to find Erik and Ricky flipping through the channels trying to find it so they can dance along. But tonight, I walked in on them watching – and dancing – to something I was “Not Too Proud” to see them viewing.

The song was called “Dirty Mind” and it was by an old favorite of mine – A musician by the name of PRINCE. That’s right, I know, we shouldn’t be proud that we were – are – fans of a guy who would write a song with THAT title – but we are who we are, huh?

The truth is, I was actually in the crowd on New Year’s Night 1985 at Reunion Arena in Dallas watching Price when he was on his Purple Rain tour. Thanks, Sydney.

Anyway, as I came in the song – “Dirty Mind” if you don’t remember – was just ending and they were in FULL dance mode. Erik and Ricky were jamming. Too late to catch them on video – probably for the better since the song was called... well, you know – I ran in the kitchen to grab the video camera as another song started.

Another classic came on – those of you my age will fondly remember – “She Sells Sanctuary.” Try to say that 3 times fast. Did you cuss? You know you did.

The classics – you’d have to be mental not to enjoy them, huh?

A Musical Savant?

I don’t have a musical bone in my body. I can hold a tune, but only if I’m forced to and only with a pair of tongs. But my two oldest sons, Alek (16) and Zak (14) have overcome their heredity and – thanks to youtube.com – have each taught themselves how to play musical instruments. Alek is pretty good on his keyboard, and Zak is quite accomplished now playing the guitar.

Erik and Ricky like the idea of music – mostly banging on the drums and some off-key singing but have never really shown much of a natural inclination in that direction – until a few days ago.

As we were all sitting in the living room I heard what appeared to be a song we recognized coming out of the office where we have the keyboard and guitars. I could have sworn it was “My Heart Will Go On.”

You know the song, right? It's basically the theme song to the movie, "Titanic." Then it stopped – so I just chalked it up to my imagination.

Then I heard it again. Now I knew it was for real. I asked Alek and Zak and Shelly (my beautiful wife) if they heard it too and they all agreed it must be Erik or Ricky. They agreed and seemed as astounded as I was to learn that one of them may be a musical savant. No lessons, never even used a keyboard and still able to play. No way! I hopped up and headed in to the office to exclaim my excitement to Erik or Ricky – whoever was playing the song – but was stopped short as I peered in to see... Erik and Ricky goofing around and the keyboard playing the song all by itself:

As I turned back to the family to tell them it was only "auto-play" I realized – because they were all doubled over in laughter – that they already knew what was happening. They knew about the "auto-play" feature and were astounded that I didn't know too. They set me up and got a real good laugh at my expense.

I'm glad I can be there for my family.

You Mean Bob, Right?

Ricky and Erik like to create new super-heroes and give them unique, one-of-a-kind names. At one point, they gave me the title "Super Fly-Clap" after I was able to show off some skills.

Erik also gave all of us super-hero names one morning before school.

But Sunday, I found a picture of what appears to be a VERY UNIQUE and INNAPROPRIATE "Super-Hero." Not because of this super-heroes powers, but more because of his super-hero name.

When I took the picture to Ricky and asked him what it was, he said it was a new super-hero that is very angry and mean and the meanest, most angriest, ugliest – with horns – and likes to trick people super-hero ever. Then I asked him, "How do you say his name?" He answered by using the pronunciation I was afraid of."

I guess the young lady must have remembered something that was important that maybe she had forgotten because out of nowhere she loudly blurted out a swear word – THEN – she did it again.
“SH*T... SH*T!”

I was not amused – and I was a little more than a little agitated. After she said the swear word a second time I put an end to it. I fired out, “HEY, HEY, I think that’s enough. We don’t want to hear that kind of talk – especially with my kids standing here. Show a little respect.”

The room quieted down and obviously it created a little tension. UNTIL – Ricky broke the tension with a Spongebob Squarepants quote from the episode titled, “Sailor Mouth.”

Ricky looked up right in to her eyes and with a smile said, “DO YOU KISS YOUR MOTHER WITH THAT MOUTH.”

To support Ricky – and direct any anger that may be welling back to me and away from him – I said, “Well, do you?” Whew, thank goodness all the younger couple did in response was leave in a huff. But the other customer’s reactions to this event surprised me. Ricky – to all the others in Lil Caesars – had gone from being an annoyance to being a hero.

They’ll all have a good story to tell at home, huh?

A New “WEIRD” Competition

Last night Ricky decided it was game night at the Jetsel house. Keep in mind that doesn’t mean anyone else is interested – it just means that Ricky is going to keep talking, keep asking, keep pestering, keep offering, keep asking, keep talking, keep talking, keep talking and keep asking until someone can’t take it anymore and relents to his request. He is Green Eggs and Ham personified – he is relentless – he knows that his persistence will eventually wear down someone’s resistance.

But last night, most of the other kids were busy and were able to resist his requests – SO – Ricky decided that DAD was to be his target for the rest of the night. After a few “NO’s” from me he got a big smile on his face and I could see his wheels start to turn as his requests became more and more outlandish.

His requests went from “Go-Fish” to “Dinosaur Monopoly” to “Pin the Tail on the Ricky” to –

Ricky: (smiling) How bout we “tear up paper” contest?

Dad: (trying not to grin) Yeah, I don’t think so.

Ricky: (smiling bigger) How bout a spittin contest?

Dad: (grinning) NO. You know we don’t spit.

Ricky: (smiling really big) How bout we roll up in toilet paper – like a mummy?

Dad: I like that one – but let’s do that Sunday.

Ricky: (smiling and giggling) How bout we have a thworl uup contest?

Dad: (confused because he was laughing and his words were garbled) Huh? What?

Ricky: I said – how bout a “THROW-UP” contest?

Dad: Whattha? How will that work?

After watching him “act out” and describe what a “THROW-UP” contest would look like – along with sounds and everything – I came to this realization. “I’m sorry I asked!”

Do It Like a Doofus

Every night at bedtime we have a series of things we do with Erik and Ricky. They like – and need – structure. It goes something like this: They hop in their bunk-beds – we pull a book out and read them a bedtime story – then we hold hands and say our prayers – then we give them both a kiss and a hug – then we turn off the lights and they stay in bed while we go downstairs and get them a drink (Erik gets chocolate milk and Ricky gets strawberry milk) then we take it back up to them and call it choco-lotto and straw-bookie milk – then they giggle – then we give them each another kiss and a hug – FINALLY – we close the door and they go to sleep.

Hopefully they go to sleep – because by now we’re exhausted.

Until a few months ago, sometimes this was a 20 minute – depending on the book – ordeal. Seriously, reading Green Eggs and Ham for the 172nd time IS a beat-down for the parent – I don't care how much you love your kids. You KNOW you've read it too many times when you have MEMORIZED the book.

Something HAD to be done. So I hatched a plan. I pulled out 4 books – all short, all quiet, all soothing – and had THEM decide that these were the ONLY ones we'd read at bedtime. I don't like to use the word manipulation, but let's just say it took a few airheads, some swedish fish and rickorish – that's Ricky licorice for the layman – to help them decide on just these 4 books.

Then I simply stayed with plan. Only one of the four pre-chosen books was EVER in sight. Interestingly enough, they both developed a LOVE for one book and it became the nightly go-to book. It's called "The Going to Bed Book." I know, I know, I'm a stinkin genius – oops, I mean stinking genius.

Then their UNUSUAL request began. "Do [read] it like Peewee Herman." "Do it like SpongeBob." "Do it like Patrick." "Do it like a girl." "Do it like old man." "Do it like Mom, Alek, Zak, a baby, a monkey." You get the idea, huh?

Then they decided I should choose. First I picked up a lizard puppet and read the story with HIS?? accent, then I went with a Spanish accent, then a French accent – each night switching to a new voice. They got a kick out of it – so did I. After each reading they'd guess who or what voice it was – and they were pretty accurate. For instance: After the Spanish accent they guessed – Puss N Boots – from the Shrek movies. Pretty good, huh?

Then I read it with a southern accent – you know, a heavy drawl, slowly dragging out words and adding twang. Instead of "the sun has set not long ago, now everybody goes below" I went with "tha suun has sa-ut not lo-ung agooo, ni-ow everyboody goes blow." They were mesmerized. I almost laughed a few times out loud as I watched the smiling, confused, stunned silence looks on their faces.

When I was done, I said, "Who was that?" After a few moments of silence Erik loudly said, "MORON" and Ricky yelled, "DOOFUS!" What the... These 2 little suckers were both BORN in Texas – how dare they say a southern accent sounds like a doofus.

Every night since, I haven't had to make up any new voices. They have one request and one request only. "Dad, dad, dad. Do it like Doofus." The Southern heritage lives on in our home. Yeeee Haaaa!

Can I Drive?

Ricky is a "shotgun" expert – NO, not THAT kind – although I can see how you would make that mistake since we are from Texas. This is the kind of "shotgun" expert: Every time we go anywhere, he is always first to call it.

But lately, he's decided that's not enough. Sunday as we were driving home from church, he turned to me – YES, he was riding shotgun with a 16-year-old, a 14-year-old, and an 11-year-old (Ricky is 9) riding in the back seat – and said, "Would you mind if I DRIVE?"

I smiled as I said, 'I don't think so' and was unprepared for his reply when he said, "Why Not?" After I explained that he was too little and the COPS would get us if I let him drive he was undeterred. "What if I give you something?" he said. Now my curiosity was peaked.

Dad: OK – what ya got?

Ricky: How bout some gum?

Dad: Nope. What else ya got?

Ricky: How bout 2 Rickybots?

Dad: (Unsure what Rickybots were – although I was enticed.) Nope. Anything else?

Ricky: Yep. How bout Chloe's (his little sister) Unicorns?

Dad: That sounds good, but I can't let you drive no matter what you give me.

Ricky: OK – then you can't have the CAT SKIN.

Dad: Huh?

MEGAMIND – At Church?

This past Sunday as we were sitting in church – back row for well-known reasons – Ricky looked up from playing with his model-magic clay, did a double take and turned to me with his eyes as big as silver-dollars. SOMETHING had really gotten his attention and he was itching to tell me.

“Dad, dad, dad. I just saw something soooo cool.” He was finished with me and grabbed Erik and physically turned Erik’s head and together they CRANED their necks so that Erik could see what had astounded Ricky.

I could tell immediately when Erik spotted the thing that had excited Ricky so much when he blurted out, “I see him, I see him. Dad, dad, dad, I see HIM too.” I was just a little confused as to what and now WHO they had seen that would create such a stir – especially in church. I asked, “What do you see?” Their answer shocked me.

“It’s MEGAMIND’S baby, dad. It really is.”

You know MEGAMIND, right? The new movie that’s out right now? They are HUGE fans. You don’t know how many times each of them has told me “I’m shaking in my baby seal-skin leather boots.”

But c’mon – a baby that looks like MEGAMIND at church? I’ve seen some baby’s that I wouldn’t call cute, but none that they could claim were that UN-CUTE. You know, MEGAMIND looking UN-CUTE. So I said, “Yeah – where?”

Ricky grabbed my head, twisted my neck, pointed it in a specific direction – and BAM – there he was – a little baby boy with a GIANT BLUE HEAD. Well, not really, but he WAS wearing a GIANT BLUE padded helmet – and let’s just say – IT WAS MEGAMIND BLUE. So I could see how they would come to their conclusion. Later on I was able to talk to the little boy’s dad and find out the helmet was to help shape his little boy’s head.

However, Erik and Ricky were not buying the explanation. They are sure a few years from now, they will have a NEMISIS. How do I know? They told me – AND they were very interested and kept their eyes wide-open for the rest of the meeting looking for - - - - - MINION!

Patrick's Day

Yesterday, the day before St. Patrick's Day, I came home to Erik and Ricky being pretty excited. They together exclaimed loudly, "Tomorrow is Patrick's Day, dad – we need to wear PINK."

Dad: Pink? What the... I think you mean green, right?

Ricky: No, it's Pink, dad. We don't have any pink.

Dad: I'm confused, why do you think it's PINK?

Erik jumped in to action digging in to the T.V. stand and pulling out this ☒

Dad: Oh, I see. Well guys, tomorrow is ST. Patrick's Day – not PARTRICK STAR Day.

With confused looks on their faces they asked, "So when is Patrick Star Day?"

Dying to Be Jealous

Ricky went for a ride with Zak and I to the Pawn shop on Saturday to look for Zak some new guitar stuff. As we turned off of Cloverdale and headed East on Fairview, we passed by a rather large cemetery. Ricky looked over – he had called shotgun again – and pointed towards the cemetery and said, "People are dying."

After looking over and seeing nothing of a funeral, I said, "What are you talking about, Ricky?"

He turned towards me with a look of disgust and replied, "DON'T BE JEALOUS, DAD!"

Where Do I Sign?

Last night while putting Erik and Ricky to bed, Ricky asked me, "Are you a spy?" Not to disappoint I said, "I'm a Super-Dad-Spy." His eyes got big and he said, "Cool, can I have your autograph?"

Mom is MY Girl

Ricky has been real sweet to my wife – his Mom – Shelly, recently. He is constantly telling her how pretty she is and telling her, “I love you, Mom.” But Saturday night he overstepped his little man bounds when he said, “Mom, will you marry me?” After she said she was already married to his Dad – ME – and he persisted, I piped up. This is the conversation that followed:

Dad: Mom is MY girl. She is married to ME, but she sure loves you.

Ricky – not sure what to say: Blue

Dad: Huh, okay, RED.

Ricky: Purple

Dad: Orange

Ricky: Green

Dad: Yellow

This went on until we went through almost all the colors either of us could think of including chartreuse, mauve, turquoise, and fuchsia. Then I remembered an additional color and the conversation continued like this:

Dad: Tan

Ricky: Nine

Dad: No, TAN!

Ricky: ELEVEN!

Dad: Okay, twelve

Ricky: Thirteen

Once I realized he could count forever, I said, “Okay, that’s enough.” His reply made me smile when he said, “That was fun, let’s do it again.”

The Beloved HAT is Lost – ALL is Lost!

I took a call at work recently that had the tone of “a catastrophe of heavenly proportions.” Turns out – Ricky’s hat – the hat he cares about – that he has almost devoted his life to – that is almost the answer to where he came from, why he is here, and where he is going – the hat that has the answer to the meaning of his life: Well, it was gone and nowhere to be found.

The search was on. Hours and hours of wailing and weeping and gnashing of teeth ensued. In Ricky’s little mind, unless that hat was found; he was to be vexed, he would gnash his teeth and waste away; his longings would come to nothing. For Ricky, this was pain and suffering on an eternal scale.


We looked in all the normal places: The freezer (the hat’s typical off-head resting spot) under, in and on top of the bunk beds (both sets) in the twins room (in case they had snatched it) out in the back yard, in the bathroom (yuk) in the dirty clothes hamper, under a bushel, buried next to his talents, everywhere. We were running out of options and Ricky was running on fumes. You could almost see his “light” – his will to go forward – starting to dim.

Then we heard a heavenly voice that came from above filling the whole room and saying, “I found the beloved hat – and Ricky will be well pleased.” Okay, okay. It was actually one of my annoyed son’s loud voices coming from upstairs and he was yelling in disgust, “I finally found the stupid hat. It was under the stinkin couch in the playroom. Geez Laweez I’m glad we finally found it.”

As the hat was placed back upon its rightful place, Ricky’s world returned to its rightful way. And I swear – okay not swear; but I’m sure – maybe not exactly sure; but I almost – well, not really; but I can imagine I heard – uh, maybe not so much imagine;

Wouldn’t it be funny if a voice was heard saying, “And the meek shall inherit the HAT.”

Ricky's Trampoline (Best Friend Ever)

Ricky LOVES the trampoline. It can be sunny, raining, hot, cold, freezing cold, snowing, overcast, night or day, alone or with Erik, or with Erik, Jack and Chloe, or with Erik, Jack, Chloe, Alek and Zak – that's right, all 6 kids at once – it does not matter when or whom he's with – he's there. He spends more time on that trampoline than you can imagine. He flips and flops and spins and bounces – and sometimes eats while he's doing it all. Here's a picture 

So I decided it was time to get at least a little bit of it on a video. Now, Ricky's not shy, so imagine my shock when each time I would come out to watch and hold up the recorder – he would stop. Even after I begged and pleaded and – okay, once I threatened – he would still not let me catch him in full flight. So I got creative.

First I tried peering through the back window – he spotted me and all was over. Then I tried going out the front door, circling around to the back, laying down and ONLY putting the lens around the corner – DAD-GUMMIT if that little sucker didn't spot that too. And THEN – he realized what I was trying to do and all my other attempts failed – I think to him it even became a game.

The reason I can tell it became a game is because when I finally caught him on video – after more than a week of NOT trying to catch him – he responded with a big smile and a – well – an unusually silly reaction:

YEP! – He aimed his fanny at me and started to SLAP IT! That'll teach me, huh?

That's One OLD Dude

At Church on Sunday Erik, Ricky and I were approached by an old friend – Mike – that we had not seen in a few years. As he was surprised how much Erik and Ricky had grown – and because he knows all about them he decided to have some fun with us. Can you say, "BACKFIRE?!"

He said, "You boys sure have grown. How old are you now?" Ricky said "nine" and Erik – without looking up from his model magic clay said, "Uhhh, nine?"

"Tell him how old you are, Erik" I said. "Uhhh, leven, yeah, leven!"

Ricky then piped up and as he looked at Mike he said, "How old are you?" Mike decided to try and mess with Ricky and said, "I'm one-hundred and four years old."

Ricky thought for a moment and said, "Yep. Hundred and four – that's what I thought."

Mike smiled and said, "That's what I get, huh?"

An Afternoon Drive – With a Scream!

Ricky is a fan of the ladies and has no fear of embarrassment, rejection, or consequences. On many occasions, he's gone out of his way to attract the attention of any and all girls he sees.

But recently, he embarrassed me a little with his antics. As we were driving over to the high school to pick up my oldest son, Ricky started to see what appeared to be Jr. High School kids walking down the road he rolled down his window and started to call out to each and every group of young girls he saw, "Hey, Ladies!" which just happens to be what he says to ALL groups of girls.

Because we were traveling at about 30 mph the young girls he was calling out to would hear him – look up – and since we had already gone by them they would see – that's right – they would see ME. I quickly decided that it was kind of weird for Jr. High age girls to think some "old dude" was calling out to them from his car so I rolled up Ricky's window – and LOCKED it. He was VERY unhappy.

"How my sposta say HEY to the ladies, Dad?" He quipped. After a few minutes of discussion, I thought – THOUGHT – he would stop fussing – and he did stop fussing – but he didn't give up on making sure they knew he was looking.

As we drove by the next group of girls, Ricky stretched his seatbelt forward a little bit and leaned over towards me – I thought he might be about to whisper a secret to me or something – and then at the perfect moment he quickly reached out and – PRESSED AND HELD the horn.

HOOOOOOOOOONNNNNNNNNKKKKKKKK!

Girls screamed, I was a bit concerned, a shocked Ricky started to laugh, Jack and Chloe and Erik who were riding along in the back went in to hysterics. All in all, it was a lesson. Not sure what the lesson was, but believe me – the windows stayed up – and he got nowhere NEAR my horn after that.

Ricky Wants WHAT Book??!

Over the weekend I was almost attacked by Ricky who had decided he wanted a book. Wanted a book – Ricky? I can't tell you how my heart started to swell as I headed towards my beautiful wife Shelly and said, "Did you know Ricky is requested a book?" After she said yes, she explained to me that they had been promoting a Book Fair at Ricky school and he was "fired up" – that's code for "he had been pestering her for way too long" – to go to the Book Fair and get a very specific book. But we couldn't imagine that there was a book titled what Ricky was claiming. He must be confused.

Needless to say – we had no choice but to go and get his requested book. If you have kids you are probably familiar with this series of books: AND, our suggestion that Ricky was confused about the title was confirmed when we saw the cover of the book he wanted: "Dairy of a Wimpy Kid." Ricky had just been mispronouncing it slightly. He was requesting we buy him the book called:

DIARRHEA OF A WIMPY KID.

You May Now _ _ _ _ the Bride.

Last night as my wife was watching the build-up for the “Royal Wedding” – is anyone else sick and tired of this? – Ricky walked by glanced at the TV screen and said, “You may now LICK the bride.”

Dad: Whoa, Ricky. I think what you mean is – you may now KISS the bride, right?

Ricky: (sarcastically – as if I was dumb) If the bride is a dog then you may LICK the bride, right?

Dad: What the...

Heavy Metal from Above

Erik and Ricky like the idea of Rock Bands. They always start to bang on stuff (the FIANO – fake piano – and the FUMS – fake drums) when they hear music playing. They especially enjoy doing it when their two older brothers, Alek and Zak, are actually playing music with REAL instruments.

But I was unaware how much they were enjoying Rock Band until I heard some LOUD singing coming from upstairs and was able to catch them playing “Bionicle Rock Band.” They had all their Bionicles lined up on the wide window seal and were absolutely jamming. There’s nothing quite like having your two “special” boys pumping out some classic... Ozzy Osbourne. Where are they hearing this stuff? Alek and Zak!??

His Finger “Popped-Off”

I had no idea it would cause such a hullabaloo with Erik and Ricky. As a matter of fact, I am still unsure why it took me so many years to finally show them – specifically because I am always trying to be a source of wonder for them – my “removing the finger” magic trick.

But geez-laweez, you should have seen their faces and the bouncing around that ensued after I showed them for the first time. They were so mesmerized – with BIG, GIANT, smiles on their faces that they requested I show them again and again no less than 30 times.

“WHOOOOOAAAA!! – Look!! – His Finger Popped-Off!!” Then the inevitable request, “Can I do it too, Dad?” as they both gave it their best effort to pop their fingers off.

No kidding, I’m surprised one of them didn’t dislocate a finger the way they were pulling so hard on their own – and each other’s little digits. After I finally said, “It’s a magic trick,” Ricky turned away from me and I heard him yell, “Zak, you can make my magic trick finger pop off?” He was on a mission as he called to Erik, “Let’s go – Zak magic trick finger pop off.”

They disappeared for almost an hour and then Ricky reappeared – with a BIG, HUGE, smile on his face – and...

Turns out his big brother Zak spent almost an hour teaching him the finer points of “finger pop off” magic. “Thanks, Zak.” Nothing makes a father prouder than seeing a busy, better-things-to-do, 15-year-old son spending time and patience with his little brothers.

No More Tom and Jerry – It’s Too Dangerous

All my kids love bananas and apples – mostly bananas. How is it that all my kids, as little babies, learn to say banana (or some form of banana – nana, bananananana, nananana, bah; you get the idea) prior to 99% of all the other words they’ll learn? And good luck if I want to eat a banana. If you buy a bundle of 6, and have 6 kids, they are usually gone about 5 minutes after they hit the countertop.

We may be supporting one whole island in Hawaii as many bananas as we eat.

Anyway, last night I walked in to the kitchen to find 4 bananas in the hands of 4 kids and rampant giggling. I wasn’t sure why until I tried to take a step forward and had Erik THROW the banana peel in front of my path – all the while smiling and giggling incessantly.

The next step resulted in Ricky tossing HIS banana peel in my path – THEN Jack – their 3-year-old little brother – did the same resulting in more laughter from all. The final blow was Chloe – Jack’s twin sister – tossing a banana – after only taking one bite – at my feet. “That’s IT!” I said as I chased them all out of the kitchen. The laughter and screaming for joy was deafening. “Where did you learn that?”

The answer was clear and concise. “Tom and Jerry cartoon – banana SLIP and fall down! Baahaahaa!”

