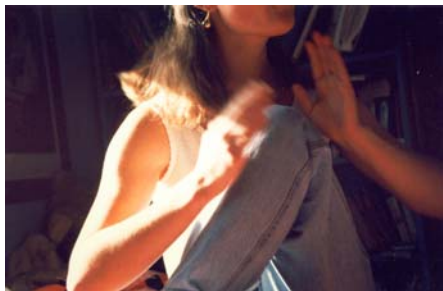


The first true snow storm descended on Lincoln last week like a cold, wet blanket. As I came stomping inside, batting my coat sleeves to keep the snow from sticking to me, I realized I must be due for another holiday letter.

I turned thirty this year. The morning of my birthday I rolled over to find Brent staring at me quizzically. "Is that a gray hair?" he asked, in earnest. Some questions do not require, nor do they warrant a response. Without encouragement he plucked a hair from my head, examined it and said "hmmmmmm". Given moments like this I would be lying to say that turning thirty was without note; likewise it would be an exaggeration to say it was earth-shaking. Most of my days are filled with the familiar awkwardness and uncertainty I knew as a teenager; so when it dawns on me that I have traveled at all (be that in miles or years) from a teenaged girl, it is a surprise.



This March, for instance, I looked up from my daughter's face – sticky with icing – on her birthday and caught sight of Brent from across the room. He shot me a quick glance and we giggled together at the delicious mess Naomi was making. Looking at him I realized that the teenaged girl I was, the same girl that met McKibbin so many years ago, could never have imagined our lives like this. I breathed a quiet thank you for the reality of this life together.

Naomi brought us an amazing bouquet of first experiences this year. As a family we went swimming, conquered the tornado slide at the playground, braved the baby-tent to ride bikes, and raked leaves from the oak tree. When Brent tossed Naomi into the autumn leaf pile, she disappeared into the dry leaves. This urgent toddler voice called "Help. Help. Help," from the leaf pile. Yes, Naomi started speaking her observations and preferences out loud this year. Listening to her babble is like playing a game of connect-the-dots. For example, she'll say "Granddad-Dave.... work... car.... vrooom" or "Uncle Matt...soccer.... ball....kick-kick-kick...YAY!!"



While listening to her speak has been the thrill of my year, if you ask Naomi the year's most memorable event she would say one word: "bowling". Her toddler world was rocked by the Landis family Thanksgiving tradition of bowling. Not only were there balls, pins, and the occasional loud crash involved but the bowling alley had turned up some dance music and broken out the disco lights. Naomi shares her mother's opinion that every occasion is made better by the strategic placement of disco lights. The experience was so exhilarating that, weeks later, Naomi wakes up each morning and wonders out loud if we'll go bowling again today. Our parental response is that "One can only hope."



At the close of this year, it is my hope this letter finds each of you in good spirits. Growing older has been an extraordinary experience, largely because I have been blessed with your company.

P.S. With the momentum of each year picking up speed, Brent and I have developed a family homepage. Please stop by our site at www.landisarts.com/our-house