

Daily Life

I thought this blog needed more of our daily life news—more like I'm calling you up to blab about what's new. So I took a few excerpts from emails to friends lately, and beefed 'em up a bit.

It's fall here and windy. Crazy windy, like I keep thinking a tree might fall over, and every time Zeke goes outside he yells "Too windy! Too windy!"

But fall is good. We had a kite we were going to give to the kids for their birthdays (June 2nd and 3rd) but we're thinking of pulling it out today because it's so perfect. Yesterday Phoebe had the idea to go for a walk and pick flowers, so I went and took Zeke in our backpack. There weren't many flowers, since it's late fall here, but after we got a slim handful Phoebe got distracted by a piece of trash--a potato chip bag--and started filling that with pecans and leaves. We live on a pecan farm, as you might remember, and this is harvest season. We're not supposed to pick too many, since obviously the landlord sells them for a good price, but we enjoy snacking on a few every time we go for walks!

We just discovered this spot on the property where the ground is all covered a few inches deep in sand. Everyone we know seems to have a sandbox, which inspires some jealousy in our kids, and I'd been thinking about building one until we discovered our own natural sandbox. It's beneath a row of pecan trees, which are all golden and dropping their leaves, and just up a hill from a river, so I sit there in ecstasy listening to the stream and the wind in the trees and counting my blessings. Just when you need a sandbox, God makes you one, 30 feet wide and more gorgeous than most national parks. We asked Phoebe what we should call the place, and she immediately said "Bacha Beach Sand Pit" (Bacha doesn't mean anything to us, either, in case you thought it was Zulu).

Phoebe's creativity, like most four year-olds, is boundless and wonderful. She made her first real book the other day. She had me write down for her a lengthy story about her "big brothers and sisters" (ie. imaginary friends) who had a pet bear that was stolen by a witch. Then she illustrated it in a 10 page book. My favorite page is the one that says "The witch was wearing a bear costume. That way the bear would say 'why you dressed like me' and she would catch him." I guess she's keeping up with her parents in this newfound publishing interest.

I just finished painting the trim of our house blue, which I think helps it quite a bit. It was just white, which made it look a lot like a barn since it's just a short little cinder-block converted sheep-barn anyway.

Tomorrow we'll take Pheobe and Zeke both to a nursery school for the morning for the first time. I checked it out with them last week, and both of them loved it. I wasn't thrilled by the teacher, who's only been running it for five months, or the fact that they have two Zulu women working there who are treated, as usual, a little like servants while the white woman and her mom run it. But I've decided our kids just need to play with

kids who speak English sometimes, and this is about the only option I can find, so we'll try it maybe once a week.

As far as what we'll do next fall when Phoebe's old enough to start the pre-kindergarten equivalent here, we're thinking we'll likely try a year of home schooling Phoebe, but it's still a tough decision. We found out the black school only starts for kids age 6 and up, and we hear the principal has been very closed to any whites trying to get involved before. Plus we agree it'd be too hard for Phoebe without knowing much Zulu anyway.

We like the idea of home-schooling at least until she's first-grade age, since it would give Zeke someone to interact with during the day, and we feel like we'd enjoy it and be good at it. But we're hoping for some definite ways for her to interact with kids her age, which might be tricky since people here seem to like to send their kids to school young. Anyway, so the debate continues, but we trust we'll be able to make the decisions when the time comes.

In just a week my mom, dad, and brother should arrive for a 10-day visit. We're thrilled. We hope to pack in a visit to a game park, an aquarium, and give them a good dose of our daily life here, too. Hopefully they'll return with many good memories and stories to convince a lot of other family and friends to come, too.

Yesterday we enjoyed our own personal movie theater! Adam borrowed a projector to show a movie at the school where he works, so we took full advantage of it by inviting over friends and watching Narnia. Pretty thrilling for our family, with no TV. I get excited just getting a new screensaver on our computer. We hadn't watched a full-length movie in months, and then only on our laptop.

We invited our friend Sofi, who has only solar panels for electricity. The solar panels power up her laptop computer only long enough to run for about an hour and a half stretches, so it's rare for her to see a whole movie in a sitting, too. Zeke enjoyed shouting "Beaver! Two beavers! Beaver there!" the entire time the beavers were on the screen, and running around the couch most of the rest of the night. Phoebe said in a happy daze "I'm going to dream about this movie tonight." Sofi's 5 year-old son, being typical boy, said "I liked the fights! Like when the rhino flipped right over!" Sofi's one year-old daughter mostly enjoyed sneaking away and eating the remains off everyone's dinner plates.

In two days Adam and I celebrate our 8th wedding anniversary. And I turned 30 last month. Dang, we're getting old.

Tonight, being Sunday, we're continuing a tradition of going out for all-you-can-eat pizza for 35 rand (about \$5) at a restaurant down the road. And they have life-sized cement animals for the kids to climb on. Hopefully some friends will join us. Mmm. Life is good.