



## Walking in a winter wonderland... Sort of...

So the winter of 2005/2006 is shaping up to be a very mild winter here in Richmond Hill. We have had very little in the way of freezing temperatures with the exception of a few -20C days at the beginning of December. Even the snow has not had a chance to hang around for very long, but for the time that it's been here, we have thoroughly enjoyed it as you will see later on.

Certainly a lot has happened in the last few months - as usual - and all the various activities have been hectic to say the least. The biggest change in our lives has been school. Not just for the boys, but for Mascha and Tom too. It's Mascha's first year as the new Grade-One teacher at the Toronto Waldorf School and since Emilio is also in Grade One at the same school, Mascha is Emilio's teacher!

It's going to make for some very



Emilio and Luca enjoying the little snow we have so far by tobogganing at Mill Pond.

interesting conversations when there has to be a parents and teacher chat. Luca has also started Nursery school and he's loving it; Monday through Wednesday he's at the same school as Emilio in their nursery program while Thursdays and Fridays are spent at full-day care where he plays most of the time.

Some of the other happenings so far

this winter were Petra's visit from Aruba, Emilio and Tom's birthdays, Tom becoming an uncle (although that happened in early September so it may not count as a winter event). It's been pretty great so far, and we're not even halfway through!

Work on the house continues albeit at a slower pace now that the weather makes it more difficult to work outside.

The latest item that is close to completion is our bedroom. Tom built new closet as storage space is at a premium and the painting and trim is now complete. All that's left for now are to get some doors on the closets but that will have to wait till spring too. The question that comes up more often than others is whether the kitchen is finished and, for now, we're still not sure how we're going to proceed. Time will tell.

## Emilio turns 7

Saturday, December 17, was Emilio's 7th birthday and we celebrated it with a lovely children's party at our house. The magic formula we have been using is to invite the same number of children as the birthday boy is turning, so Emilio invited 7 classmates. Since there was still a bit of snow on the ground, the plan was to have the group come over for cake then go to Mill Pond Park for some fun in the snow and some tobogganing followed by lunch back at the house.

The hill we usually go to is quite steep and there is a ramp at the bottom of the hill where you can get some pretty good air-time if you launch off of it just right. The picture at the top of the page was taken there too.

Most of the kids had a great time with some being more enthusiastic than others. Some of the older boys were just going at it at full speed and getting really great jumps off the little ramp.

Tom took his digital camera with and



Emilio's long-time friend Bernadette looks on just as he's about to blow out his candles.

all the kids went home with a CD-ROM with all the party pictures as well as some "action" shots from the park. Hopefully the parents are not too shocked at the sight of their children flying through the air. Emilio is really growing up fast

though. For his birthday he received a new bicycle as he has outgrown the one his Opa bought a few years ago. This one has gears and he's very proud of it.

He has also lost his two bottom teeth recently so he really looks like he's 7!

# Petra comes to visit the cold



Mascha relaxes in the hot tub at *Blue Mountain Village* while Emilio and Petra keep running in and out of the pool. Emilio even rolled in the snow a few times between dips in the pool.

Our good friend Petra came to visit us from Aruba over the Christmas break. She arrived on the 24th of December and left on January 2nd. One of Petra's requests was to go cross-country skiing and so we booked a 3-day stay at a ski resort a couple of hours north of our home.

We left the day after Christmas and halfway there, our car caught fire because a brake-line ruptured and the fluid spilled onto the exhaust. Luckily we were close to a service station so Tom grabbed a fire extinguisher from near the fuel pump and put out the fire and we managed to get the car to a repair shop. Unfortunately the repair was estimated to take about 2 days so after a few hours of calls and frantic pleading (it was, after all, Boxing Day and most things were closed) we managed to get a rental van and the trip proceeded albeit 3 hours later. *Blue Mountain* is a very organized attempt to bring an Austrian/Swiss



Back home in Richmond Hill, the boys enjoy some quality reading time with Petra.

type village atmosphere to what in essence amounts to a very small ski hill just off the shores of Lake Huron. It's done quite well though so you do have a very lovely holiday feeling. Besides, the boys mostly wanted to swim in the hot tub while the snow lay all about.

Mascha and Petra managed to get 2 days of cross-country skiing in while Luca and Emilio had a real lesson in downhill. Both boys did very well and Emilio also joined Mascha and Petra on their second day of cross country. Tom wanted to go snowboarding, but by this time the weather had started to warm and there was rain for most of the third day so no luck for him. Petra treated us to a lovely dinner on the last night there, but alas, Luca had come down with a cold and so he spent most of the dinner asleep on Tom's lap. All in all we had a great time!

The rest of Petra's visit was spent relaxing at home and visiting Toronto and the french bookstore.

Petra especially liked the Igloo that Tom and the boys had built before her arrival, but by the time she left the weather was so warm it had turned into a pile of snow.

So that we won't miss her too much, we have decided to visit her in Aruba in the March break!

**We'll be in Aruba from March 12 to March 26!** We really can't wait!

## Pictures from Petra's Visit



Petra and Emilio fooling around on skis



Blue Mountain Village at night



Luca and Emilio on the ski slope



The Igloo. We built it by packing snow in a plastic bucket and then tipping the "brick" out - kind of like building sand castles. It held up very well up until the weather warmed up and the whole thing slumped down into a pile of snow. One Friday night, all 4 of us got inside and told stories. It was very warm!