

Emily had told me she didn't want any "organized" games, but I ignored her and "organized" a video scavenger hunt. The three teams went around town video taping items from a list I had given them and getting strangers in stores and restaurants to wish--or sing "Happy Birthday" to Emily. The tapes turned out really funny and the kids had a good time making them. Greg and I had made our own tape prior to the party when Greg was home at Thanksgiving. He went into downtown Mountain View with a picture of Emily, and asked complete strangers to wish her a "Happy Birthday." The tape shows what a diverse population we have. I think he must have spoken to people from ten different nationalities. One Mexican woman didn't even understand what he was asking, until Greg, drawing upon his immense knowledge gained from five years of Spanish in school, finally remembered "feliz cumpleaños" and the woman broke into song. Then I took the tape up to Pinewood and interviewed teachers and the principal, and got some kids to sing to her. Emily loves the tapes. I took her down to the DMV on her birthday (Dec. 12) to get her drivers license. She passed with a high score and is out on the streets by herself now. (Watch out folks!) Emily is going to the Soviet Union in June, with a performing group called "Morningstar". They have been practicing (singing and dancing) since September. She is helping to earn her way by playing the piano for the younger performing groups on Saturday afternoons.

Erin, by turning 13 in October, is officially a teenager now with all it's rights and privileges. (We let her think she has rights and privileges.) She's nearly as tall as Emily and will probably pass her in height. Her eighth grade class is taking a trip to Washington D.C. in April. It's amazing how much kids travel these days. I'm making cinnamon rolls once in a while to sell for \$1 each at the school, to help raise funds. The first day I made about three dozen, and they were sold out in about one minute! Erin continues with her violin. She continues to hate violin--'course I don't believe her. Her mouth was freed from braces yesterday. Nice smile now!

John's soccer team won the District Cup championships and John's picture was in the local paper. Now, they're training to go to the State Championships. I think parents are a little bit too anxious for their kids to excel at a young age. These kids are only ten years old and they're travelling miles and miles to compete with other teams, and practicing four and five times a week! As they get older, the teams even go from state to state playing games. I dropped in on a practice game yesterday, and the parents were moaning and groaning that the kids had gotten out of shape during the holidays and saying that they looked sloppy in their play. I felt like screaming at them, "These are just little kids. Let them play just to play." Why do we have to push them so hard! Some of the kids are getting injuries that our doctor says will affect them their whole life. I would like to pull John out of this soccer league, but Marty and John disagree. One more year--maybe! Whatever happened to "kick-the-can" in the streets with the neighborhood kids? Basketball continues to be John's favorite sport, though. Marty is coaching his YMCA team this year. With the arrival of a new music and drama teacher at our school, we now have an elementary school band--so John has begun trombone lessons. They became a "marching" band by walking around the school at Christmas time playing "Jingle Bells"--at least we think it was "Jingle Bells!"

Did I get them all? The kids read my letters to make sure I give them each equal time. Good thing I don't have more kids!

Thank you all for your cards and gifts at Christmas. I hope everything is well with your families.

Love,

