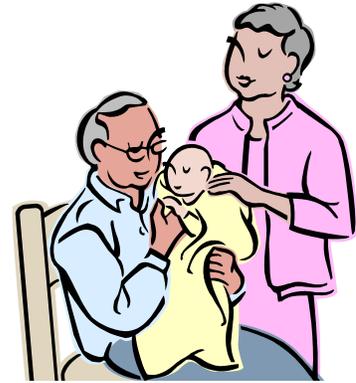


Life goes topsy-turvy when the grandkids visit long term (13, 10, 12)

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Sometimes, survival is enough, especially for a senior. Lest you worry unduly, what follows is not about a sudden illness or physical malady. We have enough of them already, and as we age, we will encounter more and more unless we watch our diet and exercise regimen. I'm conflicted about the latter as I suffer from an acute addiction to peanut butter, and if you really must know, grilled cheese sandwiches. But let's move on.



Here's the scenario. Our daughter needed someplace to live for a month while her husband helped supervise the renovations on their new old house in Vancouver. Don't ask me how they managed to afford a new old house in Vancouver, where million dollar price tags are de rigeur for home purchasers. Suffice to say that they will be in mortgage heaven for the rest of their lives, a sad state of affairs in that Miriam and I purchased our first home for \$35,000 and then a few years later, we went crazy and bought a bigger place for \$50,000. The night before our acceptance of the price, we struggled all evening with the fear that we were getting into too much debt. Nevertheless, thanks mainly to Miriam, we had the place paid for in short order. Miriam is our banker. If I was in charge, we would be living in an abandoned caboose on some derelict railroad line.

Back to my son-in-law who is perfect for the job at his end. For example, he has analyzed every toilet made, and he can tell you how much water each flushes, its energy output in calories and whether or not the seat is made for leisurely reading. Our daughter, more like Miriam, is the banker, and she gets to sweat the big bucks involved in Vancouver real estate.

She arrived at the airport with her two sons, William, aged 4, and Emmett aged 8 months. Only one of us could drive, because of all of the regulations now concerning car seats. When our two daughters were babes, we carted them around in shoe boxes. Anyway, the car fully loaded, we drove home, listening to a steady diet of what was to become our new audio reality – children's songs and stories.

The first night did not go well because of time change and change also in territory. We listened to baby Emmett make his presence felt throughout the night. William was up at 6 a.m. I have not been up that early since my all-nighters, cramming before exams, some time ago. William asked what I would like to play. I said, "Let's play reading the newspaper and drinking coffee." He would have none of that.

Each day, all day, we played football, soccer, baseball (I got to call strikes and balls), crazy-eights (which we often changed to two's or King's or whatever.) and an assortment of other games involving myriad skills such as remembering, which automatically provided William with a distinct advantage.

We also sang a lot! William quickly learned the Barry Manilow lyrics to "Copacabana," and demonstrated sheer pleasure in belting out the tune nonstop for most of the day. I think William might give Justin Bieber a run for his money.

Our house rapidly became transformed into an art gallery with beautiful items hanging here or there and taped to windows. It also became a depot for toys, but the best move we made was to purchase a small bicycle which William rode daily.



Emmett displayed great beaming smiles as he would scream in joy while watching all of us in action. Miriam and I worried that a neighbour might call the police.

One morning half way through the month, I decided to get up at 5 a.m. just to have an hour of private time on my computer. Soon after I was up and going through emails in my office on the main floor, I heard this small, plaintive voice, "Grandpa? Can I sit on your lap?" See, that's the problem, these two little guys are so compelling, you just love them to pieces no matter how disordered your life becomes! And now that they're gone, I really miss reading their nightly before-bed stories.