



Lily pleased with Bama win



Lily celebrates the victory of Morocco Bama

Absorbing her parents' enthusiasm about the November election, Lily became a die-hard fan of Morocco Bama as the leaves turned in 2008.

"I'd vote for Morocco Bama if I could, but I'm too young and I don't care who wins anyway because I'm just a kid," Lily said more than once, as debate parties raged in hers and her neighbors' homes. Lily, 5, admitted to a certain affinity for Sarah Palin, explaining, "She talks at my level."

When not politically engaged, Lily attends kindergarten at the Children's House of Stapleton, where her

Bronner's Santa breeds extreme expectations



sister Maya is in preschool. Lily remains intent on marrying Toby and has taken to writing such things as "BIGRESISPENUTBUDRCA PS"* on grocery lists.

Lily is borderline oversubscribed, doing dance, soccer and ice skating at various times during the week. She resumes ski lessons in January, pizza-ing and french-frying down various gentle slopes at Eldora Mountain Resort above Boulder.

She and her sister play increasingly well together, sometimes pretending to be the other's dog (Maya goes by the name "Arfcake" in such cases). Although they generally do get along, there are inevitable flareups, of late punctuated with the alarming sound of Lily head-butting Arfcake.

Lily's prowess in Connect Four led her father to teach her chess, which is like a hippo giving flying lessons. She corrects him when he confuses rooks for knights.

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CAROL DISORIENTINGLY BUSY

Carol, combining a full-time job with a heavy dose of parenting, is having a hard time distinguishing up from down.

"Newton's laws tell us that gravity should pull us toward a theoretical point at the center of the planet," Carol said. "But sometimes everything seems to just list at a 45-degree angle."

Carol rejoined the full-time workforce in March, working on converting building-materials giant Johns Manville to a new computer system. She has relished

the rediscovered collegiality, intellectual challenge and steady paychecks of full-time labor.

At-times extreme hours and a desire to spend time with her progeny have limited Carol's leisure activities. On evenings and weekends, you might find her pursuing her hobbies of laundry processing, rearranging the dishwasher to meet her cryptic specifications and straightening up the house after hours/days of Todd's questionable stewardship.



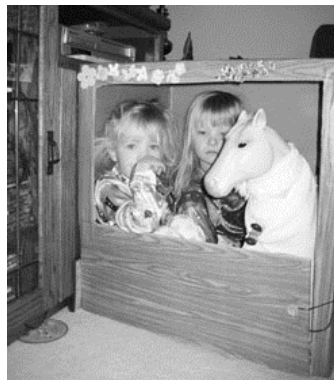
Carol, uncertain of which way is up.

Word "nub" abused

Lily, Maya and their Montessori classmates use the term "nub" as a noun, verb and adjective, often in the same

sentence. "We're nubbin' with the nubby nubbyheads," they will say, flouting nub's rightful status as a small lump.

Girls wait in vain for holiday horse miracle



Pwodo, right, declining to become a real, live horse

Pwodo, Maya's plastic horse of mysterious name, stood inert in his cardboard-box stable when Maya and Lily joined him in the hope that, in a Christmas miracle, he would become a living, breathing horse.

When asked of their intentions, Lily answered, "Daddy, could you please just go away?"

Pwodo, a cold, empty object manufactured in a Chinese factory, did not comment.

MAYA CARES FOR NEW PETS



Maya, top, with new Neff family pets, *Eisenia fetida*.

Given the choice of a dog or worms, Maya would choose worms as pets, a CNN-Gallup poll of zero registered voters and one small blond child has found.

Maya has spent hours fishing individual red worms (*Eisenia fetida*) from the vermicomposting system on the kitchen floor, filling her palm with wriggling clumps of the critters.

The worms are closely related to dogs, her father pointed out, both being members of the kindom *Animalia*.

Maya has taken up ice skating and soccer and has finally tired of having two to three accidents a day. She recently insisted: "I wiiwwy, wiiwwy want to wide my bike wifout twaining wheews."

With respect to the new pets, which now number in the thousands, Lily has been less accommodating.

"No, they are not pets. They're worms. Worms are worms and pets are pets," she said. "It's too bad you can't get us a dog."

Maya added: "But you know what? I like dogs. Did you know that, Dad?"

Beacon Media puts Beacon up "for sale"

Beacon Media, owner of the Holiday Beacon, announced in December it was seeking a buyer for its money-losing holiday newsletter property. Company officials cited continuing declines in circulation and advertising revenues as well as the cursed craigslist as factors in the action.

"This was absolutely unthinkable a short time ago,"

said Beacon Media spokeswoman Maya Neff.

Beacon Media will entertain "offers" until January 15, 2009, at which point it will "consider all options," Neff said, "such as putting it out of its misery."

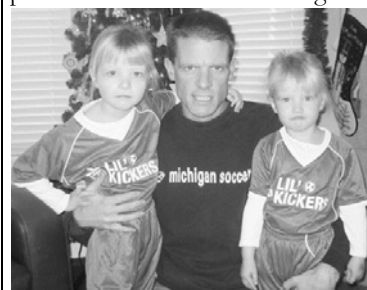
The company expects Amazon.com reviews and Facebook entries to safeguard democracy as we know it.

Todd re-unemployed again

In keeping with general economic trends, Todd decided this year to become structurally unemployed under the guise of "freelance writer."

His days begin before dawn, when he carefully crafts story pitches for the recycling bins of editors at some of the nation's top publications.

With Carol working full-time, he has taken over the role of primary caregiver of his daughters, doing Montessori drop-offs and pickups and spending time at local parks amid mothers discussing



Todd, girls in game faces

yoga and Target. He has taken to lifting weights to replenish the testosterone rapidly flushing from his system.

He has finished his book, *From Jars to the Stars*, and a Web site (www.toddnEFF.com), and is doing interesting work for regional magazines and the University of Colorado Hospital, where Maya was born.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST!

In Memoriam



Ryan Courtney Neff, Todd's cousin, died of cancer on September 8, 2008. He was 36.

TRAVEL REPORT

The Neff's travels this year included an all-girl trip to Carol's parents on South Padre Island, a visit to the Neff cousins in Park City, a trip to the Duggans' place in Steamboat Springs, and an epic ride in the Chrysler minivan to Traverse City, Mich. to spend a week with the Pflanzes of Paris.

Todd's godson Philéas Pflanz and family traveled from Europe in roughly a third the time of the epic drive; a magical week on the East Bay was well worth the effort of both parties.

Carol flew home to work and Grandma Jojo and Papa Don accompanied Todd and the girls on the 2 1/2-day drive, helping maintain sanity and proving unequivocally that he and his in-laws get along remarkably well.



Pflanzes, Neffs beached in TC

