

# Survivor: The Brain House

Truly, reality TV has nothing on our home life. There are even days when thoughts turn to voting someone off our "island". A few times, someone has volunteered, just for the peace and quiet! On the positive side, life is never boring in the Brain home. Thus, another action-packed "season" has just concluded. Here's the synopsis:

Our story opens with Jim being asked to take over as Cubmaster for Brent's Cub Scout Pack. Though honored, we assumed he'd tackle such a role when Belinda was a wee-bit older. We assumed wrongly. Jim's first duty included officiating the January Pack Pinewood Derby race. Brent took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in a self-designed, Grandpa Neil scroll-sawed entry, while Jim nabbed 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Open class with his Formula 1-inspired creation.

As the Winter turned to Spring, Brent wished for a Cookie. As parents, we'd put this off during the pregnancy and Belinda's birth, but the wish was granted this year. A perfectly plump black and white Cookie was presented to Brent, and he cherished it. Cookie, a 8-week old purebred Rat Terrier, chewed and nipped (and peed) her way into the Brain home, but her tenure was sadly cut short. Telling a boy that he is allergic to the puppy of his dreams is a challenge no matter how old the child. Still, Cookie found a new home, and Brent has visitation rights.



Brent found solace in schoolwork, notably the Medieval class he attended in the Spring. Bringing the period alive

in dashing milk-jug constructed armor and paper-towel tube swordfights, Brent devoured the class and the content. As we send this

letter, he's moved on to Greek mythology and the history of China. Brent also made use of his growing collection of LEGO™ Star Wars™ creations, fielding an entire 8 foot Star Wars themed table at the home school association hobby fair. His parents had NO idea Brent amassed such a complete collection of scenes and craft.



Julie took it easy this year, simply finishing her third year as Creative Director for a local Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) group, started a fourth year, attended BSF International bible study, shuttled Brent to his various activities, fed and nursed Belinda, helped Jim with Scout planning, gave Brent piano lessons, and continued homeschooling.

Remember our accident-prone Red Nissan Frontier Crew Cab? Believe it or not, that was a short term vehicle, expected to be owned from June 2000 just until the long-awaited Dodge Dakota 4-door trucks arrived in 2001. Obviously, something went awry, as we came into 2005 with said truck (though newly repaired).

as time



However, (and the arriving need to shuttle kids to

activities)

waits for no one, we finally laid the Frontier to rest. Although we're sure the minivan is a capable mode of transportation, the Brain household instead opted for a 4WD 8-passenger Honda Pilot. However, this means we're no longer an all truck family, and we've joined the SUV set. Forgive us.



As expected, Belinda experienced a number of firsts in 2005. She received her first black eye (while learning to walk), her first bike ride (via the baby carrier on Dad's multi-speed mountain bike. Yes, a

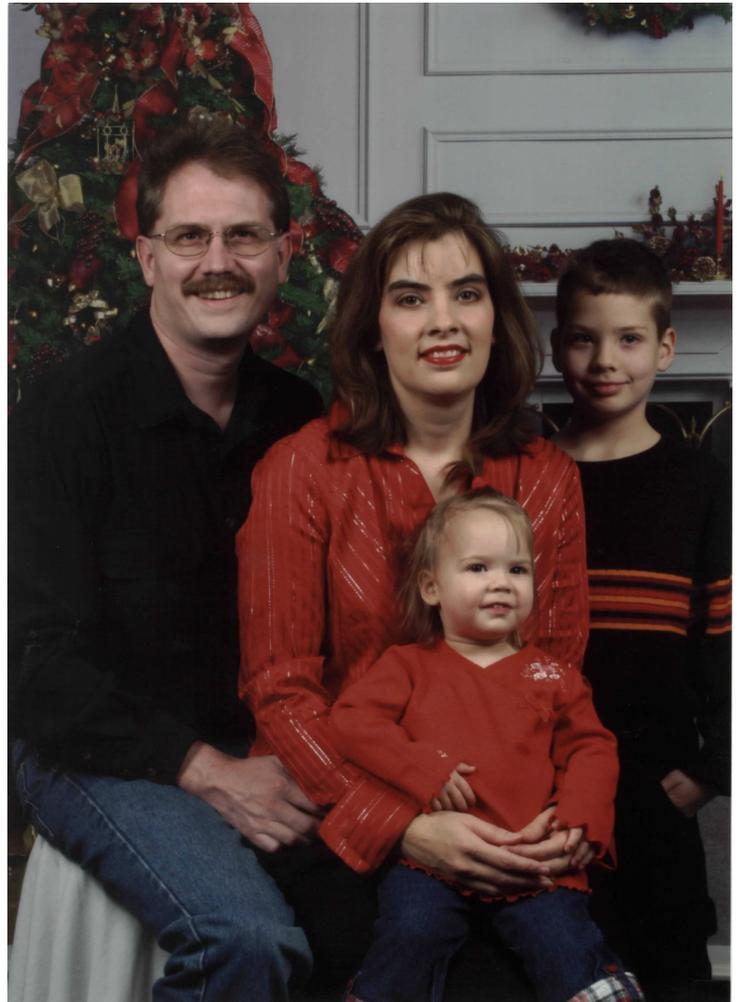
baby carrier on a mountain bike), her first birthday (celebrated in IL at Aunt Tricia's house), and her first broken bone. (See, there are advantages to Christmas letter-writing procrastination; late-breaking news...) This past Sunday night, Belinda (ignoring parental guidance) fell partially down the basement stairs and fractured her collarbone. As many know, there is little to do but take Tylenol and wait it out. We'll give some Tylenol to Belinda as well. The doctor says 2-4 weeks and all will be better.

For his part, Brent also experienced some firsts this year. Our 7 year old "big guy" took his first multi-night campout (sans parents), camped with Dad at the Cub Overnighter, got the hang of baseball (he can hit, field, and catch pretty well now), graduated to a 7-speed "change-speed" (his term, not ours) bicycle, learned piano basics, sewed his own sweater, mastered the art of making cupcakes, and organized a bake sale for tsunami/hurricane victims that netted over \$100.00.

It's a well-known fact that Jim does not sew, but Julie's new Bernina Sewing Center (don't

call them sewing machines anymore...) has been visited by the man of the house on multiple occasions. Jim's become quite proficient at embroidery, perhaps because it involves the computer and graphics. Even so, Jim's made custom polo shirts for events and for office wear.

As the years roll on, Brent steps up to more responsibility. This year, he took over Advent Calendar duties, reading each day's portion of the story to his sister. Words cannot describe the speed at which Belinda runs to the hearth and plops down in front of the calendar each night at the appointed time, though it's probably more due to the 3 M&Ms for her in each day's box than Brent's story-telling skills. Still, it's nice to see seeds being planted and others growing.



Well, it's time to live the sequel (Survivor: The Terrible Twos), so we'll close this episode guide for now. Merry CHRISTmas and Happy New Year from Jim, Julie, Brent, and Belinda.