

Greetings from the East Coast

“East Coast?!” you ask. Yes, East Coast, Cambridge, Massachusetts no less! This is what happens when after a six-year-long tenure climb, one finally gets it, and goes on a well-deserved vacation . . .oops, sabbatical that is! And that is what happened to us this year. After almost a year-long tenure evaluation, we finally were awarded the “ultimate prize” of a privilege to continue working 60-hour weeks for the University of Colorado, which comes with a nice perk of a sabbatical every 7th year. After some debate, we finally zeroed in on spending our sabbatical year at Harvard. In addition to its fine reputation (sporting the best Physics and Engineering departments in the west part of Cambridge!) that guided our decision, we of course could not resist to spend a whole year near our immediate family, all of whom are here on the East Coast. This year was also very special as we celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary, with this letter being the commemorative 10th edition.

A large part of the year, prior to the move to the East Coast, was filled with the usual family and work activities, what little of it was not taken up by making arrangements to rent our house in Boulder, find a Cambridge apartment, Matthew and Sarah’s day care, pediatricians, etc. here in Cambridge . . . , as well to arrange for their schooling upon our return to Boulder in a year. We stayed active outdoors, with our daily biking commute, regular swimming, soccer, hockey, and occasional hiking and ski trips. In the Spring, Sarah was introduced to Chinese on a more formal level by attending a local Chinese school 2 hours a week, which culminated in an on-stage chorus performance. The school did wonders and now she freely jabbars in Mandarin, reciting a number of classic poems and songs, recognizing 60+ characters, and taking every opportunity (together with Matthew) to make fun of Dad as he stutters in Chinese. Sarah’s Russian is also continuing to improve, and she is now quite fluent when she wants to be, especially when her Russian grandparents are around or when a lollipop or watching Mulan or Pocahontas is at stake. She is getting a serious boost in this department this year, being near her Russian-speaking-east-coast-living relatives. At four and a half, Sarah is starting to read simple English books (already correcting her Dad with the proper placement of articles) and proudly excelling and having fun with simple arithmetic. She continues to display natural athletic abilities, especially in gymnastics, climbing on everything, trees, monkey bars, and doorways (where she is able to climb up a doorway with bare hands and feet and hang from the top!), and loves to swim, bike, and steal the soccer ball from Dad during his team’s practice.

Matthew is also keeping up with his linguistics but is lagging behind Sarah, leaning towards English, given that this is the language of choice between him and his sister. He loves to be read to (same book over and over and over again), run, jump, swim (as long as the life preserver or Mom/Dad’s arms are nearby), scream, ride his bike, eat (meat, that is . . .like father like son), and play soccer. Visiting the local fire station is also his favorite Saturday morning activity here in Cambridge.

Matthew and Sarah have become best friends, although this does not guarantee the absence of occasional battles over a book, computer game, or toys. The kids could not be more different. Despite being kind of a Tom-boy and being raised without a Barbie until the age of four, Sarah became a little girl seemingly overnight, falling in love with anything that is pink and “beautiful”. So despite our efforts to avoid the standard stereotypes, we finally surrendered and bought her her first Barbie. Sarah loves to eat pasta and veggies, while Matthew will eat nothing but meat were it not for our efforts to insist that he occasionally nibble on some veggies. Sarah also loves cakes and pies, while Matthew prefers fresh fruit dessert. Sarah hates the cold, while Matthew enjoys it, constantly battling to take his coat and socks off. Sarah is assertive (i.e., bossy), obedient, diligent, careful, and very artistic, while Matthew is sensitive (easily offended when criticized), very coordinated, and is a handful, doing nothing that he does not like. Both are extremely affectionate.

As usual this year, we had a fair share of family and work-related travel. In the summer, we got our museum-fix plus, by visiting Lucy’s parents in Washington, DC . . . what a city! In February, Leo toured the network of infiltration tunnels dug by the North Koreans over the last 20 years and the demilitarization zone, as well as Seoul and its royal palaces, all boondoggles of lecturing at the Korean Institute for Advanced Study. Leo spent late July lecturing at the Trieste Summer School, swimming in the Adriatic and touring Venice. With nursing behind her, Lucy was finally “released from her leash” to take a few well-deserved breaks and join Leo (who finally invested in a pair of parabolic skis and now swears by them) on a couple of ski trips.

In the Spring, Lucy began experimenting with gardening. Looking for a challenge and also to use this as an educational opportunity for the kids, she chose the more difficult route of starting with seeds, rather than pre-potted flowers and veggies. Regretfully, just as the flowers began to bloom and the tomatoes ripened in August, we had to set out East Coast bound, leaving our tenants to harvest Lucy's hard work.

One of our longer trips was the drive across the country to Boston. We took a circuitous route, visiting friends, relatives, and various landmarks on the way. After stopping at an animal farm in Kansas (who says there is nothing in Kansas?!), having driven 500 miles, Sarah with a surprised face asked "Is this Boston?". Then, after seeing the animals, Matthew, tired but impressed with the live snakes and a creepy 6-legged bull, said: "Can we go home now?". We also stopped in St. Louis to visit with one of Sarah and Matthew's great grandmothers (in photo) and with some of their great aunts and uncles. Another memorable stop was at Niagara Falls, where we crossed to the Canadian side to get a worthwhile better look.

The kids love Cambridge, ecstatic about all the toys that our landlords (who are on sabbatical in Jerusalem) left us, as well as the Cambridge public library, swimming pool, and nice park right across the street from our apartment, and the Cambridge Fire Station, the Harvard Sackler Art Museum, and the Harvard Natural History Museum (with a spectacular glass flower collection) around the corner from us. Mom and Dad got a well-deserved "honeymoon", when Grandma and Grandpa Radzihovsky took care of the kids for the first two weeks that we were in Cambridge, while we unpacked, settled in, etc. . . . , and celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary.

We lucked out in being able to enroll Matthew and Sarah in one of the Harvard affiliated preschools, just over a mile from our apartment. Soon we got into the routine of walking to school (with Matthew and Sarah walking all the way!), as biking around Cambridge, especially with kids, is far from safe. Similarly to biking in Boulder this gives us a nice quiet time to spend 40 minutes together as a family each morning and evening. And thankfully the weather (which has been more like Boulder's) has been cooperating, treating us to unprecedented 65°F days in early December! We joined as affiliates (Senior Common Room members and Visiting Scholars are the Harvard pretentious names for it) of Cabot House, one of the undergraduate housing complexes where we were resident tutors when we lived in Cambridge 9 years ago. We occasionally eat at the House dining room, and Leo plays hockey, soccer, and squash for their intramural teams against other Harvard undergraduate houses. This affiliation offers us many opportunities for attending interesting events, such as special speaker dinners, fancy cocktail parties, plays, musicals, etc. and gives us a chance to meet many fascinating people.

Lucy recently began to relive our youth by starting to run the stadium stairs again (which involves running up and down all the seats and steps in the Harvard football stadium . . . luckily it is not as large as the Stanford stadium). She is hoping that, although being older and having had two kids, she will still be able to get her time down to what her stadium stair running time was 9 years ago.

Although we are "just" doing research this year (no teaching and other usual University of Colorado service responsibilities), we are busy as ever. We are very much enjoying entertaining and visiting with our East coast family and friends, as well as taking advantage of all the wonderful activities that this area has to offer. In addition to many fun places right around the corner from us, the Science Museum and the huge Boston Children's Museum are a must. Although still a lot of fun, we found that the Boston Franklin Zoo does not quite measure up to the one in Denver. We also frequent the Boston Commons, Swan Boats, and the Frog Pond, a wading pool in the summer and an ice skating rink in the winter. The Boston Aquarium and Museum of Fine Arts are still on our long to-visit list.

While we're having a lot fun, working here, being around family, and living the city life, we are also of course missing our life and friends in Boulder. We hope this holiday season finds you well. If you are in the Boston area before the end of next June, please let us know (617-864-6817, pao@colorado.edu, or radzihov@colorado.edu) so we can arrange to get together.

Lots of Love,
Lucy, Leo, Sarah, & Matthew