

My daughter's birthday

Wednesday, 05 May 2004

My daughter was born 11 years ago yesterday. Every year on her (and equally so on my son's) birthday I am, again, surprised at how quickly time passes. According to my heart, they truly were born just yesterday. I remember all of it. The wait for their respective arrivals. The birth days at the hospital. The awe that these tightly-wrapped-in-hospital-blanket bundles inspired. The space in this thing called life they were "now" claiming as theirs. The amazing surprise of having my body given back to me. Yes. Completely awesome. And surprising. All of it. And just as the birthing process was an exquisitely painful "separating for delivery", so begins adolescence.

I am a great fan of my children (as I hope everyone is and/but, at least, wish everyone were). And we are now fullswing on our collective voyage through hormone alley. And I don't understand why there isn't a name for the analagous to the birth canal for teenagehood.

This separating that we are going through, this delivery into the world of adulthood is just as physical, just as exquisitely painful as was their birth. Only we don't have a bunch of professionals around us making sure that parent and child remain safe and healthy. We don't -- well I don't -- have anything physically obvious about me that makes people say "Oh, how lovely. You're carrying a teenager." or "When is your adult child due?"

Well I am having two. And I am reminded of it daily. And sometimes it is more obvious than on others.

Last year when my daughter turned 10, her desired present was that I adopt a polar bear in her name. Seriously. She struggled deciding between a polar bear and a tiger. She understand that the cleaner waters and environment of the polar bear would benefit our continent. She wondered if we would get our money back if no tiger poachers were caught. She ended up chosing the polar bear and later, with her collected birthday money adopted a tiger herself. She proudly presented pictures of these animals, the certificates that noted her contribution to their/our hopefully better-being to her class. She, while wearing her organically grown cotton t-shirt, explained the importance of this. She handed out the web address of the site (yes on the smallest-necessary bits of recycled paper) where others could follow suit. Some did.

This year she asked for an electronic agenda, a phone connection for her room and a basketball.

And her soon-to-turn-14-year old brother presented her with a book in a series that he usually teases her about liking. He (who never has any money, who often lets it be felt that having a younger sister is a pain) thought, bought and paid for it himself.

And I find myself surprised (imagining that I often wear the same expression as my wonderful companion "mom" in the picture on the right) at having bits of my life handed back to me. And these bits are just as stretched, just as freshly "empty" as my belly was 11 years ago. And "Oh. That's how it works." resonates all through me.

Yes.

