

# Some Christmas photo fun

By Esther Baird

Wed Dec 12, 2007, 06:08 PM EST

BEVERLY, MASS. - Our Christmas decorations went up the day after Thanksgiving. We wrapped our house in garland and lights and put our tree in the front window where it shimmers and twinkles. Our small nativity set is under a poinsettia, and while one of the three kings has gone missing and we never did have any shepherds, baby Jesus is still intact reminding us of the true reason that our family celebrates this holiday.

But even without the decorations we'd know it was Christmas because the cards have started pouring in. Already. I mean I'm typing this on Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> – who is that organized? Our friends in Texas, that's who.

I've maintained a strict non-compliance policy on the photo-Christmas-card for most of our married lives. I'm happy to look at your cute children stuffed into matching outfits that are probably itchy and hot. I'm equally pleased to read a *brief* note about your lives. Happy and pleased and absolutely not interested in reciprocating. I'm full of good Christmas cheer. I'll sing Handel's Messiah all night if you'd like. I'll put a red bow around every object in my house with great joy. But I also have clear boundaries.

So when my husband said he really wanted to send out a photo-Christmas-card this year featuring our girls, I felt some of my good Christmas cheer waver. Fa la la la . . .What? Really!?

Thankfully my mother had purchased the girls matching Christmas outfits. Whew. I will say the portion of the Christmas outfit that was against their skin was a nice breathable cotton. And that cotton was probably our saving grace in what was otherwise — and I mean this is the nicest possible way — a fiasco.

“I think to do this properly, we need better lighting,” my husband said at the outset as he emerged from the basement with two floodlights.

He clamped them to the crown molding above our living room reproducing the brightness factor of say — the surface of the sun. For my part I cranked up some Christmas rock. Nothing says peace on earth like a little electric guitar holiday music.

I'm not sure if it was due to the ill-conceived illumination scheme or to the vibrations of the guitar riff getting into full swing, but suddenly the flood light came careening off of the crown molding, swung in an arc past our television and stereo, and whizzed past our 8-month-old daughter, missing her head by a mere nanometer — if that. We hadn't taken a single picture and we had nearly rendered our baby girl unconscious. Boundaries people, boundaries!

We decided to pose them next to our Christmas tree. You realize I use “pose” in the broadest sense of the word. What really happened was that my husband shot pictures and I delivered the following monologue.

“Sit still. Pull your skirt down. Stop strangling the baby. No, sweetie no crawling away. Stop yanking your barrettes out. OK over here, smile! Stop fussing. No, we cannot have a snack. Stop whining. No crawling away. Stop scowling! OK smile girls over here la la la la!! Stop flinging your legs in the air. Stop making grumpy faces. No, we cannot have a snack right now. Please sit still. Stop touching the tree. Stop pulling your sister by her neck. Stop whining. I said no snacks right now. I need you to smile. *If you ask me for a snack one more time I will throw every snack in our house into the garbage. Now smile!*”

It got a little tense.

Finally our baby girl, who was being held in a near strangle hold by her sister in an attempt to keep her on her lap, took a look at us dancing and shouting instructions in the glaring lights, and drew upon her only recourse. She threw up. In an instant the sparkly red Christmas sweater with velvet bows up and down the sleeves no longer matched her sister’s in either the visual or olfactory sense. Can you blame her? I can’t. She intuitively knows at a mere eight months that she needs boundaries.

Our friends will get a card from us this year and the girls are both bodily in the frame, which is all we really could hope for. Thankfully, what our family really celebrates at this time of year can be found under our poinsettia plant — and no matter how tense the holidays may make us, the message of real Peace is there for all of us.

*Note: Esther Baird is a Beverly writer. Her column appears regularly in the Citizen. Please contact Esther with suggestions or comments about The Baird Facts at: [esther@estherbaird.com](mailto:esther@estherbaird.com), or visit her Web site at: [www.estherbaird.com](http://www.estherbaird.com).*