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Summary:

Alex gave birth to Dean [Eratosthenes](#) Maurer on March 24th. Caleb is adjusting to preschool and being a big brother. Inga and Styopa (Leon and Genya’s kids) are taller and stronger and changed to a different Russian daycare. Rose (college friend) and I spent a week in Paris frequenting museums and devouring patisserie. Kendal wrings its hands at the state of the nation, debates strategy, and protests.

Life at Kendal

I’m grateful to continue creaking along: workouts with my trainer, week-long stints as resident website editor, sending out a newsletter for the Dem precinct chair, reading Hebrew scripture (Perry my study partner and I are almost through I Kings).

Kendal has about 400 residents -- 90% Dem. Since the inauguration, we formed many committees meeting weekly trying to respond to national events. There are endless discussions over how partisan our messages can be.

We did foodless food drives (i.e. collecting \$\$ instead of cans – easier on our aged backs). We collected \$12,313 in May (after cuts to programs supporting food banks) and \$26,100 in November after the Big Beautiful Bill reduced SNAP eligibility and after delays in SNAP from the shutdown.

We protest – the more hardy souls protest in DC, Philadelphia and West Chester. The less hardy souls (including me) bring their rollators etc. to protest in front of the Old Kennett Meeting House next to Kendal.

I’m not sure we strike fear in the hearts of the opposition.

At Research Group meeting, we had been asked to research social media (i.e. Facebook, [Substack](#), Reddit, Bluesky). Our group leader asked how did we find out about Bluesky? The response was you go and set up an account. She asked, how would I do that? Members suggested ask your grandchild. She looked so utterly bewildered.

Zinnia (my cat)

She’s a comforting presence, jumping up onto my desk, curling up on my laptop, lying on whatever text I’m trying to study. When I sit in my recliner, she jumps into my lap, curls up and purrs. She loves to drink from sink faucets. She discovered that if she knocked containers of her catnip treats off the table onto the floor, the top would come off & treats would spill out. (I switched to screw top containers.) She chews on my computer cables. I bought cable covers coated with a nontoxic substance that’s supposed to be distasteful, but she continues to chew.

Claude (Anthropic’s AI, named after [Claude Shannon](#))

In May,

There was an op-ed piece in the Washington Post that recommended getting used to using AI, and [a test panel](#) liked Claude best, so I subscribed. I had it find recent papers on gun violence in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and Jewish commentary on Kings I Ch 3. It's a lot of fun, and v fast.

Claude wrote a tuition reimbursement policy (and a form to apply for it) for my nonprofit (they were approved by our fiscal sponsor's HR). He looked up PA rural hospitals at risk of closing because of cuts to Medicaid, and what congressional districts they were in. He wrote flyers for Kendal's foodless food drive and designed posters for it (his graphic skills need work, though).

Chester Community Coalition (CCC)

Crozer Chester Medical Center (CCMC) was a 421-bed teaching hospital and Chester's largest employer. It was Delaware County's only trauma center (and burn center, and 24/7 crisis center for mental health emergencies). Since late 2020, patients entering CCMC's emergency department with a stab or gunshot wound could access case management, safety planning, and psychotherapy from CCC.

Prospect Medical Holdings, a private equity firm, which had borrowed \$1.12 billion to pay shareholders a \$457 million dividend, [declared bankruptcy early in 2025 and closed CCMC in April](#). The nearest trauma centers [are now 20 miles away](#) (and gunshot patients [that would have once been saved](#) have died during transport).

CCC coordinated with Philadelphia and DE trauma centers to help victims of violence access services once they return home.

CCC has been part of [Urban Affairs Coalition](#) since 2018 – our nonprofit status came from them. UAC handled our financial reporting, compliance work, insurance and HR. In September, we submitted the IRS forms to become a nonprofit on our own.

I became board chair in August. [Cuts to Federal funding for gun violence prevention programs](#) mean funding will be hard to find.

Paris

Rose and I left for Paris right after Rose's choral concert and returned just in time for [CeaseFire PA's](#) Advocacy Day in Harrisburg and Pesach. That meant I was on the plane to Paris when Dean was born.

Our hotel was on a quiet street in Saint-Germain-des-Pres. Every breakfast started with a basket of baguette sections, croissants, pain au chocolate with [beurre Bordier](#), café au lait. I was in heaven.

Reservations for Paris museums are complicated -- you buy a ticket for admission that covers all museums but then you make (timed) reservations on each museum's website (and each website had its own quirks). Per Rose, WTF stands for Welcome to France.

Rose was great at getting me admitted as a personne à mobilité réduite (PMR).

We sat in the [Sainte-Chapelle](#) gazing at the stained glass with binoculars. We wandered through the [Louvre](#), bewildered—the first day we didn't know to get maps at admission, and I couldn't figure out how to navigate from the Louvre app I'd downloaded. But there were wonderful things to see wherever we looked. The [Musee D'Orsay](#) was crowded because it was spring break, but it was amazing seeing Impressionist icons in real life.

We've already bought tickets to return next spring and explore Burgundy.

Dean and Caleb

I hurried down to VA as soon as I got back from Paris

...my main function was holding Dean when Alex wasn't feeding him... Caleb is very cute – says “please” and “thank you” and “good job!” to his parents. He's very particular – Carmen, his nanny, calls him her jefecito (little boss).

It was lovely to sit and stare at Dean's little face and little hands & little feet. I'd administer pacifiers and Shh's as best I could. So miraculous to see a person that small. Markets are tanking, civil society as we know it is being ripped apart (and I compulsively listen to NPR describing every detail), but I spent the weekend happily marveling at this tiny person's face and feet and hands.

5/16/2025: Dean smiled!

8/16/2025: Friday afternoon, Caleb was upset that Aaron was upstairs putting Dean down for a nap & he was left w/ only me. He kept saying, loudly, “Well, I really need my Dad”. He didn't cry, just kept saying it loudly, over & over. He didn't hang on the gate at the kitchen door (it had come loose), at my request. He just stood there, saying “Well, I really need my Dad”.

10/19/2025: Caleb has an ear & eye infection from day care that he's shared w/ Aaron & Alex. You can now pick what flavor you want for your amoxicillin – Caleb chose mango.

Caleb turned 3 in October, holding up 3 fingers to show how old he was. It took a lot of explaining for him to grasp that he wouldn't turn 4 until a whole year had passed.

He started a Montessori preschool in September and Carmen his nanny started taking care of Dean. The school sends home many pictures of Caleb working hard on his Montessori tasks. I love to look at them.

Inga and Styopa

Most of the family conversations are in Russian, I miss a lot of what goes on. (Leon works hard on his Russian – the kitchen whiteboard is full of vocabulary).

5/11/2025: (family Zoom) Styopa had found a squirt gun and sprayed people, saying “Pew!” “Pew!”. Styopa also prone to call people idiot, dumb, and stupid head in Russian.

5/17/2025: L & G took I & S to a Wisconsin building festival, where I & S built houses w/ gumdrops and toothpicks, floated foil boats, raced rubber ducks. L & G exhausted, I & S still full of energy.

6/2/2025: I and S painted a unicorn figure. Styopa painted some parts of his body, too. Leon had to learn how to warn the preschool teachers in Russian that Styopa’s scrotum is ok, never mind the black color.

7/23/2025 Inga had a meltdown Monday morning, over what Russian cartoon was played. She got to watch the one she wanted Monday night – I couldn’t follow, of course, but w/o the narrative, it was very weird. A monster turned off the water to a kingdom. The king promised his daughter to whoever restored the water, so the princess was given to the monster, who was then supplanted by another monster as her consort. Then a hero appeared and fought the monster, but he kept falling asleep at crucial points. The princess was married to (I think) a 3rd monster – a ½ man (split down the middle), but the hero appears (after many torments) with a golden apple & worm. The apple slips out of his hand but the princess (who finally has agency) catches the apple and stomps on the worm. And they live happily ever after.

9/27/2025: With the colder weather, mice have shown up in the house. Ushki, poor old thing, is not an effective mouser, what with her achy bones and missing teeth. One mouse took up residence behind Ushki’s litter box. L has been setting traps, baited with PB. One fearless mouse has been regularly eating the bait w/o being caught.

10/31/2025: We went to the Russian grocery store to get Halloween candy and Inga decided she wanted a foot long dried, salted perch. . She and Genia picked it apart and nibbled on the flesh

12/2/2025: Inga is now a red haired mermaid. Per Genya: “We have 2 red hairs (Inga and her mermaid doll), 2 red sinks and 1 red bath tab (Inga couldn’t decide where it’s better to wash her hair off).”

Inga and Styopa changed from one Russian day care to the other. The teachers at the new daycare were younger (a plus) but it was closed on Fridays (a minus). The new daycare sends a stream of pictures and menus on what the kids are eating.

Leon and Genya take Inga and Styopa on hikes and field trips on Fridays.

Closing:

I’ve been trying to write a closing for 45 minutes already. It’s hard to write. Wishing you health, wishing you peace. Wishing you hope and strength.