

smooth skin and beautiful makeup--much prettier than the pictures we'd had of her earlier. For the rest of the time she settled for a less attractive compromise: no make-up, hair pulled back in a knot, and clothes that were definitely everyday. But then she is six months pregnant, apparently not feeling well a lot of the time, and needs to be comfortable. She and Peter seem to really care for each other, which is the most important. She seems to be an authority on computers, organizational skills, cooking, and taking care of her children. She made a delicious Chicken-Apple-Cinnamon meal on Saturday night, a welcome relief since my Spinach Lasagna was a total failure on Friday.

She certainly thinks a lot of her children, keeps them dressed very well, and planned an extravagant Easter for them. They were surprised by buckets of goodies on Sunday morning when they arrived, which included the eggs Bob and I had dyed with them the night before. They danced across the lawn blowing bubbles and laughing with joy.

But Mykaila, and even Peter, are quite demanding and even harsh with the children at times. Meals were too often peppered with threats--about how they sat, eating the foods chosen by their mother for them, or corrections about their grammar and formally polite speech. The reward was Push-Ups for dessert--a sloppy sugary treat that probably was much worse for them than not eating all of their meat. Bob and I were edgy about all the verbal threats and hassles, with the children often in tears. Perhaps, as Bob said, Mykaila was anxious that the children behave well on their visit.

At other times the children, especially the girls, would be made to stay in another room from the adults, or outside for long periods, or warned vigorously about "tattling." True, they did fight together, especially the twins. But they could probably solve more of their own problems with a little casual guidance. "That's between you two girls. See if you can solve it." I'm reminded of a comment Peter made on the phone several months earlier, to the effect that Texans seemed to not regard children as people, but as property.

Mykaila was usually pleasant enough, and talked a lot when we got on a subject that was to her liking. But she seemed almost entirely self-absorbed. For example she never once complimented Bob or me on anything, asked about our interests, or thanked me for a meal or anything I did. I admit that it hurt my feelings. She did call when she got home and said that she had "a blast," but no word of thanks or inclusion of the feelings of others in the family escaped her lips....

The reason I feel most concerned is because of Peter, and his rather cautious behavior, wanting everything to go smoothly, and

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