



Learning to laugh at ourselves

Rose are red.

Violets are blue.

I sleep naked.

How 'bout you?

Last month, I promised I'd close this rather difficult year by sharing a few "Jamie gems" — humorous stories proving our middle son, who happens to have Down syndrome, is wiser than his 14 years on Earth — and much wiser than his Old Man.

I knew the limerick above would grab readers, and probably kick-start your 2010 weight-loss program. Don't worry: In this poetic instance, I'm the reporter — not the author.

In mid-November, my wife, Bridgid, asked me to help Jamie with his homework. I noticed "write a poem" was one of the tasks and immediately thought, "Yeah baby. Now we're talking. Writing's my area of expertise. I'm your Daddy."

Not really. I've come to find out poetry is *my* Daddy. Jamie's vacant stare after I struggled for half an hour to come up with two lame examples of self-made poems confirmed as much.

Little did I know when I sat down with our "special needs" child that night that it would take Jamie less than 60 seconds to one-up the Old Man. Jamie's poem wasn't one we could share with his class, but I can share it with you, and I think we all can agree it's much shorter and sweeter than my usual prose.

Here are three more Jamie gems intended simply

to give you a few fat-free bellyaches this holiday season:

▶ Ever since we bought his older brother, Mickey, a cell phone, Jamie's tried to make a case that he, too, needs one. When Jamie's *younger* sister, Meg, got a cell phone before he did, Jamie was off the hook. Bridgid tried in vain to reason with Jamie: "Meg knows my work number, Daddy's work number, our cell phone numbers, Grandma Bonnie's and Pop's home and cell numbers, and Grandma Pat's home phone number." "Mom, that's why they have speed dial on cell phones," quipped Jamie, who, in Dad's book, earned himself a cell phone with that response. (Too bad — or, some might say, thank God — I can't combat Bridgid's reasoning as quickly or effectively as Jamie.)

▶ A few Decembers ago, I lost Jamie in a JC Penney store attached to a mall. After a failed 10-minute search, I finally came clean with the store's security guard, who quickly boomed, "Code Adam! Code Adam!" into her walkie-talkie. As she and I rushed to the mall entrance to ensure Jamie didn't leave the store alone, or with anyone else, she asked me "standard questions" and jotted my answers down on a form on her clipboard. "What color shirt is he wearing?" "Blue, I think. Maybe black, gray or green." She shook her head, clearly disappointed in clueless Dad. Then I realized I was sitting on a gold mine of information: "Jamie has Down syndrome, glasses, red hair, and a stuffed fake snake around his neck he likes to shake," I proudly offered up. But this by-the-book security guard didn't write down, or share with her co-workers via walkie-talkie, even one of those nuggets. "Mmmhmm. What color pants?" she proceeded. No thanks to Dumb & Dumber, Jamie was found, safe and sound — before Bridgid found out!

▶ A few years ago, we spent the holidays skiing and snowboarding in Burlington, VT. While dining at a fine restaurant, Jamie became fascinated with a nutcracker his size. I shared how the wooden toy soldier works. "Show me, Dad," Jamie impishly urged. "I can't. There aren't any nuts," I answered. "You're a guy ... Put 'em in there, and I'll slam his arm down," Jamie roared, with his contagious crazy cackle.

See, 2009 could have been worse ...

With the notorious **nutcracker incident**, Jamie reminds me that **2009 could have been worse.**