

### Baby's first birthday party

I had anxiously prepared for my daughter's first birthday party for many weeks. I wanted it to be just perfect for my baby!

With a large group of family gathered around, Melise gazed upon her very first birthday cake. She didn't look impressed. As everyone sang, she seemed perplexed. I tried to show her how to blow out her own candle, but she only scowled at me.

When we served her up a large piece of cake, she hesitated as if she would get in trouble for touching it. Finally, she dug in and dismantled it with the seriousness of a someone disarming a bomb.

We finally sat down by the presents. With Melise on my lap, I placed a present in front of her. She looked at it and touched it gently, but nothing more. I put her little hand on one of the seams in the wrapping, but she only pulled her hand away again.

I invited Melise's twin 5-year-old cousins to teach her how to unwrap presents. The twins were all too happy to help! Their unwrapping skills were amazingly efficient (years of practice, you know). There was a moment when I felt like I had let loose two whirl-winds! It was all I could do to keep them from unwrapping everything in sight, but in the end it had worked—Melise had caught the unwrapping bug!

Melise took her time unwrapping each present, as if she was savoring each tear. We all held our breath waiting for the gift to be revealed and we applauded with vigor every time she exposed a bit more.

After unwrapping each gift, Melise never cared to move on to the next present. She wanted to fully appreciate the gift she had in her hand. She was so enthralled with a certain colorful push-toy that my husband had to distract her while I pulled the toy from her hand. I quickly put it

## The Laughing Mom: humorous tales of motherhood

Written by Susan Pfaltzgraff

---

behind my back. Melise didn't fall for it.

Without hesitation, she toddled around me to get it. I managed to pass it along to an adult beside me before she reached it. She started to toddle in that person's direction, but with quick reflexes each family member passed it off to the next until it was on the other side of the room! Melise gave a little huff and finally turned her attention to the next gift.

When, at last, we reached the end of the gifts, I gave a big sigh of relief! I couldn't believe how much work opening gifts had been. For the rest of the party, I relaxed as the other adults chatted and my baby girl ran around the room with that push-toy.

The next morning I was puzzling over my daughter's lack of enthusiasm for much of her birthday celebrations. But as she started exploring her gifts again, she found a new thrill in all of them. With smiles and squeals she explored them one by one! She even found new pleasure in her leftover birthday cake that she had scowled at the day before!

A quote came to my mind from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: "We, neither of us, perform to strangers." That seemed to fit us well. We love our family, every grandparent, aunt, uncle and cousin. But my daughter seems to also follow after myself in being easily overwhelmed by crowds. And so, sitting in the quiet of our house, just the two of us, I gave my baby a kiss on the head and we enjoyed our day in peaceful solitude.