Have you read the novel *Independence Day* by Richard Ford? It’s the story of a middle aged man who’s somewhat lost in his life, but doesn’t know it, and then realizes that he’s found himself again the day after a whirlwind 3rd of July. It’s a great novel.

We all want to feel that we are free, both on the individual and on the national level. Think of the power that the concept of freedom has on the workings of the world. The Iraq War would not exist if not for it. In fact, it seems plausible that all conflict has the idea of freedom at its core.

So it is no surprise that Independence Day is celebrated all over the world. In Finland, it is celebrated on the 6th of December. The date signifies Finland’s successful bid for independence from Russian rule during the Bolshevik Revolution early in the 20th century. I’ve thought more than once in the passed several days about how glad I am that this bid for freedom was successful. How different would Finland be if it had been behind the iron curtain for most of the 20th century?

Finland’s Independence Day celebration touched us in a number of ways this passed week. Alex had an Independence Day ball to attend. He went to Finlandia Hall – famous architectural landmark and the largest concert hall in Helsinki – for an afternoon of dancing, handshaking with local leaders, and a short rock concert by a well-known Finnish pop band named Technicolor. The kids were all expected to dress up. Alex’s dapper outfit can be seen in the picture below. He enjoyed it very much. And Ellie’s long loose front tooth finally gained independence from her gums – not coincidentally I’d like to think.
Independence Day was celebrated this passed Wednesday. Everyone had the day off from work and/or school. We were invited to a nice lunch with some families in the neighborhood that have a native English speaking parent. Interestingly, we were the only American family; there were four other families, all with a parent from England. Talk came around to the currently hot movie *Borat* – a docu-comedy in which America and her people are the joke – and you could see that they were holding back. I made the comment that “If you’re an American abroad and don’t have a sense of humor about your country you’re in trouble.” Incidentally, this is one of things that I’ve learned that I like best about Americans: we are good at laughing at ourselves.

As I mentioned in the previous entry, our camera is on the fritz, and so we have no digital pictures from our Independence Day lunch. My mother is coming in three days, however, and is bringing us a new camera, so hopefully there’ll be good pictures again in the near future. In the mean time, I’ve included these two shots of Ellie that I like very much.

INFO: This Friday, we leave for a 5-day Helsinki-Oslo-Stockholm-Helsinki loop with my mother. The next entry will be on our trip and will likely be late.