

Greetings from snowy Friendswood, TX.

That's right as we write this letter, it's currently snowing outside, with light accumulation! This is reflective of the year it's been, no truly big news to report, but plenty of interesting tidbits. (At least we hope they're interesting; otherwise we apologize in advance for boring you) We spent the first half of the years visiting local sights, and then the second half wandering around the country and chewing up vacation time and digital film like crazy.

Megan is obviously the center of our lives. Julie is being a full time stay-at-home mother, and loves continually bonding with her. Winston continues to work at Boeing on the Space Shuttle program churning out code and analysis as required.

Basil has a few stress related maladies that necessitated a few expensive trips to the vet. He doesn't seem to like it when we go on vacation, so that's one reason we'll be travelling less next year. On the upside, he's lost enough weight to be healthy again. Jules continues to be slightly overweight, but otherwise in fine health. Hunter's doing very well, he and Megan like to play together, both in the house and out in the yard.

Our garden did fairly well this year, and we harvested plenty of pole beans, tomatoes, okra, bell peppers, cucumbers and squash. Our attempt at carrots failed, as did our efforts with eggplant. We started our winter crops of broccoli and snow peas, and Brussels sprouts. We were able to harvest quite a few blueberries this year for the first time, but one of the four bushes did not make it. Also we're harvesting lemons from our lemon tree for the first time. Our pear tree is taller but not flowering.

Christmas last year was spent in Southern California. Winston had a business trip late in the year and we extended our stay by 5 days so that we could see friends and family in the area. While Winston was at work, Megan got to visit Seal Beach and play in the sand of the Pacific Ocean. We also spend two nights at Joshua Tree, and explored the National Park which contains not one but two deserts, and the weird Dr. Seuss looking Joshua Trees. We spent Christmas with Winston's Uncle Jeff, Aunt Stacy, Cousin James and Sharon. We also briefly visited with Winston's Second cousin Doris, and her parents and her brother James' family.

In January, Julie's father came down to visit for a week. Which was followed in February by Winston's parents, siblings and their significant others. We celebrated Christmas in February, since we hadn't gotten together over the traditional holiday season. We visited the Johnson Space Center, and Brazos Bend State Park, as well as partaking in a turkey dinner and gift exchange.

In March we visited the Houston Rodeo because they had a couple of petting zoos that we took Megan to. We also went to the Bayou Wildlife Park, in nearby Alvin, which features quite a few animals that you can feed and pet, including some endangered species. We also visited the Houston Zoo where Megan got to see lots of other wild animals.

In May we wandered to the north side of Houston to the Mercer Arboretum, which had a large variety of pretty plants and flowers and best of all is free! May was also Megan's first Birthday and we had a "Barnyard Babies" themed party. She received lots of cool, fun and educational toys that she continues to play with today. Julie baked a strawberry "animal face" cake, which Winston frosted to look like a pig.

In June, we embarked on the second Great Megan Tour, this time of the Northeast. We flew to Baltimore and visited Megan's great grand parents, and stayed with Winston's Aunt Sue-Lee, Uncle LP, and Cousin Elaine. We also visited Winston's college friends Jeff and Zoë and their daughter Irene. We then took a train to New York City and stayed with Julie's cousin René, her husband Jimmy, and their daughter Evangeline. We had dinner there with Julie's Aunt Ramonde and Uncle Robert, Cousin Christine, and Mike. We then spent a few nights relaxing in New Canaan with Winston's parents before driving up to see Winston's other college friend Brendan and Van and their daughter Tala. Shari and her husband Jim joined us all for lunch that day as well. We flew home from Boston, and took the month of July and most of August off.

At the tail end of August, Winston's brother Billie and his girlfriend April won in a silent charity auction a week long stay in a time share in Park City, Utah and invited us, Winston's parents and Sister to also come along. We spent days exploring Park City and the area around Salt Lake City. We visited Antelope Island State Park and saw Bison and Mule Deer. We wandered along the Mirror Lake Scenic Byway until we saw large amounts of snowfall where Megan got her fist experience walking around and playing in it. It was a lot of fun and we really enjoyed spending time with family.

Hurricane Ike dominated the month of September. On September 12-13: Hurricane Ike - A former Category 4 tropical cyclone the size of the Gulf of Mexico makes landfall at Galveston as a Category 2 at 2:10 am CDT on 9/13/08. And then the eye passed over our house. Megan slept through the night as heavy rain and high winds preceded the eye by 12 hours and lashed at our windows and walls. We lost power around 7:00 PM on the 12th, and did not have it restored for over a week. We were fortunate, we only lost 2 roof shingles and quite a bit of fence, our mailbox and our trees were listing, and there was minor wind driven rain the house. But it could have been a lot worse, and as it is, it's a lot less than some of our neighbors, and others who lost their homes. We had no broken windows and no exposed roof. In the weeks following the hurricane, we did suffer three flat tires due to the nails and bolts from the repair construction all around. Megan's sandbox got flooded and she loved playing in the wet sand as well as stomping around in the puddles in her rubber boots.

During the week following the Hurricane, Winston had a business trip to Newport News VA, to observe a Wind Tunnel Test at NASA Langley Research Center. Julie and Megan accompanied and took advantage of the available electricity. It was also an opportunity to see her Brother Joe, and Sister-in-law Kat's new home in Virginia Beach. Megan got to spend some time with her cousin's Jessica, Joshua, Erica, and Scotty. Julie and Megan also visited the fantastic Virginia Living Museum. Which unlike what it sounded to us (a variant of Colonial Williamsburg perhaps?) is a combination aquarium, science museum and wild life park.

In the middle of October, Winston once again had a business trip to southern California. This time however, due to the short notice, Julie and Megan stayed home. Winston got to see all the relatives he saw back in December again, as well as take a tour of the Boeing Satellite facility in El Segundo, CA.

One of Winston's friends from work Amanda got married to her fiancé Tyler in Kalamazoo, MI, on October 25th. We decided to attend and make it a Road Trip, and anointed it the 3rd Great Megan Tour – Midwest Leg. It took 16 days and 3700+ miles, Megan met the Baughers and Kunigs for the first time, and saw Winston's Brother and Sister along the way, as well as Winston's Ph.D. advisor Dr. Manas-Zloczower, and Winston's cousins Andrew and Connie who are attending college at Case Western Reserve. Megan also received a batch of wonderful second hand toys and books from our old landlord the Crotty's. Also in the trip were the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Mammoth Cave National Park, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Abraham Lincoln's Birthplace, and the Natchez Trace Trail Scenic Parkway. We also visited the Kalamazoo Valley Museum and the Cleveland Children's museum, both of which Megan enjoyed immensely. We stopped and picked a pumpkin from a pumpkin patch (Rittman Orchard), and a bushel of apples from the Granville Orchard.

Halloween occurred while we were in Glasgow, KY, and Megan dressed up as a frog, and went Trick-or-Treating in an historic neighborhood around the Hall Place B&B. A week earlier, Winston carved a new Megan-o-Lantern for this year and it came out pretty incredible.

Since the second week of November, we've stayed in Texas. We visited the Brazoria National Wildlife refuge, which has the biggest mosquitoes we've ever witnessed, but fortunately you're not required to exit your car on the auto tour and seeing a wild owl fly from tree to tree less than 15 feet from us more than made up for it. Thanksgiving dinner this year was at a friend from Winston's work, Samantha's house and we went and flew kites after the big meal.

We're not planning any major travel for Christmas this year, but Winston's brother Billie is graduating this month from Ohio State University with a Ph.D. in Material Science and Engineering. Winston will be attending the graduation ceremony in mid-December. Julie and Megan are all travelled out, and had just been to Columbus less than 2 months previous as part of the Great Megan Tour.

Peggy is all but dissertation at University of Chicago, and is casually planning her wedding reception.

And so passes another year here in Texas, and while our IRA's and 401K's have taken a beating in the last few months, we're viewing it as a buying opportunity and we're thankful for our health and happiness. We look forward to next year, and wish you and yours the very best.

With Love,

Winston, Julie & Megan

P.S. As always, we will try to post more photos at <http://basil2.homeip.net/~basil/Photo.html>



Megan: 1 and 1.5 years old:



Basil & Megan
Joules
Hunter
2008



Twilight, Nov. 1, 2008
Wang Family at
Swan View Overlook
Natchez Trace Trail

