

December 2012

Greetings from Friendswood, TX

So we've been in Texas now for almost 9 years at some point you have to face the fact that things aren't so new anymore and you've gone from visitor/trespasser to resident. Not quite sure Julie and I are ready to fully acknowledge being Texans, but Megan definitely is.

She's 5 and a half now, and is being home-schooled by Julie. She's beginning to read and write, and has fairly good arithmetic skills. In addition Winston's noticed that the complete set of things Megan knows is no longer completely a subset of things he knows, especially in the area of insects. Her current favorite series of books is call "The Secrets of Droon" by [Tony Abbott](#) about a normal kids exploring a fantasy world (ala Chronicles of Narnia/Harry Potter).

Julie and Megan are members of a local play group and they meet several times a week for educational and enrichment sessions. In this group, Julie and Megan have met and made very good friends. Julie continues to bake at least 2-3 times a week, aided by a new 6 qt Kitchenaid Stand Mixer and a Kenmore Gas Convection Range/Oven.

Since the Space Shuttle program ended year and a half ago, Winston has been a Technical Lead Engineer for Aerodynamics/Thermal/Purge & Vent/Computational Fluid Dynamics disciplines in the Houston Space Launch Systems (SLS) organization. This has involved a lot of business trips, mostly to Huntsville at least every other month. (He's now an elite level member of LaQuinta Rapid Rewards.) Late breaking news, SLS just passed Core Stage PDR, which was been Winston's primary focus for this past year. ([NASA Press release](#))

The pets currently are in good health, Basil and Joules continue to try to steal each other's food, and Hunter makes sure that our fence is in good repair, constantly is taking himself on walks. And we also have anoles, a fish, caterpillars/butterflies, mealworms and crickets.

Last year we started upgrading our raised beds from being cedar plank lined to retaining wall bricks. We were very successful at growing eggplants, Meyer lemons, butternut squash, sweet potatoes, garlic chives, basil and tomatoes. And in the yard, milkweed and sunflowers continue to make our backyard wildlife friendly.

Last December we embarked on a 2 week road trip to Western Texas and southern New Mexico we visited: [Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR](#), [Seminole Canyon SP](#), [Big Bend NP](#), [Guadalupe Mountains NP](#), [Carlsbad Caverns NP](#), [Living Desert SP](#), [White Sands NM](#), [McDonald Observatory](#), [Fort Davis NHS](#), [Enchanted Rock SP](#) and [Bastrop SP](#). We had so much fun and were so amazed by what we saw that for Thanksgiving this year we went back and did the part from Big Bend to McDonald Observatory again and invited along Winston's Parents.

In February, Julie's brother Jimmy came to visit and along with checking out many of the local Disc Golf Courses and visiting Galveston Island.

In March we volunteered at the annual "[Trash Bash](#)" at Armand Bayou to pick up garbage and to keep our local waterways clean.

In April we made our first road trip to Huntsville, AL as a family and we stopped in Tuscaloosa, AL where we visited with Winston's brother Billie, his family April, & Ming, his parents and aunt Xiao A Yi. Near Huntsville we visited [Wheeler NWR](#) and were treated to the sight of 7 juvenile Whooping Cranes who hadn't gotten around to migrating back north yet.

May was Megan's 5th Birthday and we celebrated with the Knoll's and the Lopez's. Megan got lots of cool presents and a Birthday cake made of muffins arranged like a butterfly. The highlight of the party was an Easter egg hunt in the back yard with small plastic insects in each egg.

June was the beginning of the great Butterfly experiment when Julie and Megan attempted multiple times to raise butterflies from the egg stage. It took several attempts, but they are now fairly proficient at raising them nearly at will. And on one of Winston's trips to Huntsville he took a detour through parts of [Natchez Trace PKWY](#).

Winston has continued his side projects this year of organizing a [fund raiser](#) for a collection of charities. This year \$4400 was raised for a variety of Scholarship, Social and Medical causes from the players of the online word creation poker game WordAce and Massively Multiplayer Social game of Fleck.

In July-August we made another road trip as a family to Huntsville, stopping at New Orleans and the [Audubon Insectarium](#) on the way there and the [Infinity Science Center](#) at Stennis Space Center. While Winston was busy at work attending meetings with his Huntsville counter parts, Megan and Julie explored the local Nature centers and museums including the US [Space and Rocket Center](#) and [Monte Sano SP](#). One of the highlights was the finding a clutch of geese eggs at the Bridge Street shopping complex. Since this trip was for 2 weeks, on the weekend we made an excursion to Chattanooga, TN and Atlanta, GA. We visited both the Tennessee and Georgia State Aquariums back to back. The [Tennessee Aquarium](#) was well organized and focused on fresh water. The [Georgia State Aquarium](#) was awe inspiring with Whale Sharks, Beluga Whales and Manta Rays, in addition we got to spend the day with the Kwan's. We also visited [Russell Cave NM](#) and [Chickamauga & Chattanooga NMP](#).

And because that wasn't enough travelling, in September we made back to back trips to Virginia & California (Winston had meetings at NASA Langley and Boeing Huntington Beach. In Charlottesville, VA we got to visit Billie, April & Ming and Winston's Parents and Grandmother and Er Gu as well as go apple picking at [Carter Mountain Orchard](#), we met up with the Brubakers at [Appomattox Court House NHP](#), and spent time with Julie's Brother Joseph and Jerry and their families (Kat, Erica, Scotty, Jessica, Joshua, and Dawn) and (Kelly, Gabrielle & Jacqueline). Megan got to go swimming in the Atlantic Ocean at Virginia Beach. And wander around the [Virginia Air and Space Center](#) with her cousin Jacqueline. We also visited [Historic Jamestowne HNP](#) and [Fort Monroe NM](#).

After a brief stop home, we flew to Long Beach, CA. Megan got to then swim in the Pacific Ocean at Seal Beach. (She's Bi-Coastal! within a week) While we were in California the Space Shuttle Endeavour on the back of the modified 747 Shuttle Carrier Aircraft flew into LAX, and we were fortunate enough to see the low altitude fly-bys. Winston from the Boeing Huntington Beach Campus, and Julie and Megan just out side the [Aquarium of the Pacific](#). We also had dinner with Winston's Cousin Doris and Paul and Da A Yi and Da Yi Fu.

For [Halloween](#) this year Megan was a Firefly, complete with flash yellow posterior, and Megan-O-Lantern VI was carved.

Other than the previously mentioned Thanksgiving return trip to west Texas and southern New Mexico things have been quiet the last couple of months, our plan is to maintain that through New Years. We did have a whole house backup generator installed so we shouldn't have to fear power outages anymore.

Winston's sister Peggy recently moved to Brunswick, Maine and is an [Assistant Professor of Art History and Asian Studies](#) at Bowdoin College

Winston's brother Billie finished his Post-Doc at University of Alabama and has started a new job in Charlottesville, VA.

And so passes another year here in Texas, where 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>



Photo 1 December 2011 - White Sands NM, NM



Photo 4 November 2012 - Big Bend NP, TX



Photo 2 : March 2012 - Trash Bash, Pasadena, TX



Photo 3 : September 2012 - Virginia Beach, VA



Photo 5 April 2012 - Tuscaloosa, AL



Photo 6 April 2012 - Whooping Crane, Wheeler NWR, AL



Photo 8: August 2012 - Huntsville, AL



Photo 7: September 2012, Huntington Beach, CA



Photo 9: June 2012 - Basil & Hunter, Friendswood, TX



Photo 10 : February 14th 2012 - 10th Anniversary



Photo 11: May 23rd 2012 - Megan's 5th Birthday



Photo 12 : September 2012 - Appomattox Court House NHS, VA



Photo 13: September 2012 - Virginia Beach, VA



Photo 14 : September 2012 - Virginia Beach, VA



Photo 15 : September 2012 - Megan and Jacqueline, Virginia Beach, VA



Photo 16: August 2012 - Cummins, GA



Photo 18: August 2012 - Dickinson, TX



Photo 17 : September 2012 - Artesia, CA



Photo 19 : September 2012 - Charlottesville, VA



Photo 20: September 2012 - Source Picture for Pumpkin Portrait, Virginia Beach, VA



Photo 21 : October 2012 - Halloween, Friendswood, TX



Photo 22 : October 2012 - Halloween, Friendswood, TX