

Greetings from Friendswood, TX

Hello again, has it been a year already? It must be cause the new year is less than 2 weeks away. Time sure seems to pass in fits and starts doesn't it? We've had some pretty exciting and happy experiences, which we'll try to adequately summarize in this letter. Most of the first half the year we hosted visitors, and the second half of the year was spent travelling. Megan managed to see all of her Uncles and Aunts this year! Using digital photos as a metric, we took more than 17000 photos this year (so far) versus 11000 last year, and 7000 in 2007.

Megan continues to grow and develop (and remains adorable), and while she's not speaking sentences her verbal vocabulary has increased to include aniso-poly-syllabic words. ("Happy" vs "Mama"). And her comprehension is leaps and bounds beyond that. She's taking to helping Julie around the house with the various chores. Julie is enjoying her tenure as a Stay at Home Mom and tutor. Winston continues to distinguish himself at work garnering awards and experiences that garnishes the inherent job satisfaction from working on the Space Shuttle program with the Boeing Company.

The pets have thankfully had a mostly quiet year. Basil, Joules and Hunter are in good health and continue to enjoy being the cats and dog they are, and as always we've included a [photo of the three of them](#). This year, due to Megan's and Julie's increased interest in amphibians and reptiles, we've taking to acquiring various toads, lizards and frogs from the yard and raising them indoors. (All are very common species in our area). To feed them, (and satisfy Megan's curiosity of insects) we're raising mealworms, crickets and sowbugs as well as the red worms we previously had. In case you're wondering, we have a ton of plastic bins in the secondary bathroom to house the new tenants.

Our garden experienced mixed success. Zucchini's, Cucumbers, Strawberries, Beans, and Carrots didn't fare too well. Radishes, Tomatoes, Bell Peppers, Broccoli, Okra, Sweet Potatoes, Lemons, Garlic Chives and Blueberries did wonderfully. Our pear tree is taller but not flowering. One interesting tidbit: since the tomatoes we grew were golden Romas, they ripened to a bright yellow, which did not attract birds to take a bite out of them, like they tend to do with our red varieties.

[Last Christmas](#) was a quiet affair at home and Megan enjoyed opening all of her presents. New Years Eve was spent acquiring and setting off fireworks at the Lopez place, Winston's co-worker's house.

In [February](#) and [March](#), Winston was very busy at work, piling up overtime to work on an urgent, and high visibility project. (It involved running CFD for the Flow Control Valve in the GH2 Line). The project also included a short business trip to Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Prior to the trip, Winston's best friend Roger and his wife Michele stopped by our house for a few days on their cross country drive, followed by Winston's brother Billie and his fiancée at the time April on their around the US road trip. We really enjoyed having them over, and wish Winston wasn't so busy at work. We did manage to take Roger and Michele to see Bay Area Park, and Billie and April to see the Houston Rodeo and Livestock show. April also introduced us to her relatives in Houston, and we had a great evening.

In addition to the Houston Rodeo with its petting zoos, we took Megan to the [Houston Zoo](#) several times, as well as Moody Gardens and Aquarium. Megan really enjoyed looking at and interacting with all the animals.

This year for our Anniversary we ate at Olive Garden. Julie received a photo album filled with photos of us together and featured 2 hearts emblazoned on the copper cover. Winston received a hand crafted Tavern Puzzle that challenged him for over two days.

For Mother's day we visited Julie's brother Joseph and his family (Kat, Erica, Scotty, Dawn, Jessica and Joshua) in [Virginia Beach](#) as an extended business trip for Winston to NASA Langley Research Center. We spent a day at Yorktown Battlefield, Colonial National Historic Park, where we were fascinated by the dearth of knowledge we had of the battle at Yorktown as well as by the story of the battle itself. And while Winston spent two days in meetings, Julie and Megan returned to the Virginia Living Museum and visited the Sandy Bottom Nature Park. Both are highly recommended.

[Megan celebrated her 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday](#) over Memorial Day weekend. Her paternal grandparents visited as well as some close friends and the theme was "Pond Life" with bugs and frogs and worms. The cake was baked by Julie and decorated with marzipan critters hand formed by Ah-Ma.

We went to pick our own Blueberries for the first time in [June](#), just west of Houston, and came home with 3 lbs of delicious sweet fruit. Winston's Cousin Elaine and aunt Da-Gu came to town and visited. July was

Megan's first trip to the Houston Museum of Natural Science, and she really enjoyed the Butterfly center there. In our own backyard we were frequently visited by [dragonflies](#) and butterflies, especially after we planted milkweed for the Monarchs.

Starting in [August](#), we began extensive travels, first up was [Peggy and Brady's Wedding](#) celebration in Grand Rapids, MI. The cozy ceremony took place on August 15<sup>th</sup>, at the beautiful Fredrik Meijer Sculpture Park and Gardens. We also visited the [John Ball Zoo](#) while we were in town. Five days later Winston had a business trip to [Ogden, Utah](#), just north of Salt Lake City. We had hoped to see the test firing of the DM-1 solid rocket booster, but the test was postponed 20 seconds before firing. While in Utah, we visited several sites including: Antelope Island State Park, Treehouse Children's museum, Pineview Reservoir, Golden Spike National Historic Site, and Malad City, ID. (The last stop made Idaho Megan's 23<sup>rd</sup> visited state.)

5 days after that trip, we all flew out to Oakland, CA for [Billie and April's Wedding](#) in Sonoma Valley. Their ceremony on Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> was tucked away in the Secret garden of Sonoma and had the wonderful feel of an intimate backyard wedding with elegant flourishes. While in Northern California we also visited Muir Woods National Monument, Benziger Family Winery, Jack London Historic State Park, Point Reyes National Seashore and Yosemite National Park. We also visited Winston's friends from college, Michael, Jessine and Eric. It had been many years since our last trip to NoCal and we really enjoyed the company, the picturesque settings and the wildlife sightings. We've included a [family picture on top of Sentinel Dome in Yosemite National Park](#).

Megan was once again a Frog for [Halloween](#), and Winston carved Megan-o-Lantern III and won first place at his company's Pumpkin carving contest for his building. (full disclosure: it was the only entrant) Still, when properly lit, it looked really cool. There's a [picture of Megan with the carved pumpkin](#) included.

Our big road trip this year, dubbed the [Gulf Coast Tour](#), was 19 days/4000 miles and basically all of Florida. All the work Winston had done back in February for the Flow Control Valve was recognized as Winston was named a STS-129 SFA Launch Honoree. This once in a lifetime award features an all expense paid trip to watch a Space Shuttle Launch! From the VIP viewing stand, which is right next to where the Astronauts families watch the launch. Unfortunately SFA rules allow only 1 guest, and they have to be over the age of 12. Julie and Megan therefore had to watch from the causeway and Winston's dad was able to participate as a guest for all the events, which included a banquet and a VIP tour of Kennedy Space Center. At the banquet, Winston and his Dad got to sit between Brewster Shaw (Boeing VP of Space Exploration), and Joy Bryant (Boeing VP of International Space Station). Megan and Julie meanwhile had dinner with Goofy and Pluto. [The Launch itself was beautiful, incredible and awe-inspiring. We also had the fortune to watch the Space Shuttle land back at KSC 11 days later, which was wonderful to experience together.](#)

In between the events and after the landing, we visited the rest of Florida: Biking in Everglades National Park, Canoeing in Biscayne National Park, swimming and snorkeling in the Dry Tortugas National Park, visiting the Sun & Sea Nature Center and the Crane Point Nature Center, shopping for souvenirs in Mallory Square in Key West at dusk, walking the boardwalks in Six Mile Slough Cypress Preserve in Ft. Meyers, Big Cypress National Preserve and De Soto National Memorial Park, walking along the beaches of Gulf Islands & Canaveral National Seashore, and watching dolphins and manatees in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Not to mention having a Birthday steak dinner with Julie's Brothers Jerry, Jimmy, and the rest of Jerry's family: Kelly, Gabrielle and Jacqueline. And the delicious Thanksgiving dinner at Kelly's Dad's place. And dropping in to see Julie's Uncle Vinny and Aunt Janelle and her cousin Lisa and her two kids.

We don't plan to leave the state in December, but Texas is a pretty big state, and we may take a road trip to see things, or we may take it easy, and just reminisce about our wonderful year.

This late breaking news: Billie is starting a 2 year post-doc position in Tuscaloosa, AL in January 2010, and we're very proud of him.

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>





Basil & Joules

2009

Hunter



Figure 1: Basil, Joules and Hunter - 2009





Wang Family  
September 2009  
Sentinel Dome  
Yosemite National Park

**Figure 2: Wang Family on top of Sentinel Dome, Yosemite National Park, September 2009**





**Figure 3:** Megan with her Megan-o-Lantern III, Halloween, 2009