

December 2010

Greetings from Friendswood, TX

It's that time of the year again, when we here in Texas, think about closing the windows at night. This past year has brought us both losses and travels. Winston's Grandfather and Aunt both passed away this summer, and they are sorely missed. Funerals are mixed blessings; they occur because of a loss, but they also bring family together and allow for reflections on life. We're thankful for the time and experiences we have shared.

Megan is now 3.5 years old, she's telling stories, expressing opinions, and getting bigger. She loves going on walks and hikes and catching bugs. Julie continues to devote all her time to Megan, and they spend all week going to all the different programs offered by the Armand Bayou Nature Center as well as the Clear Lake Library. They really enjoy walking the nature trails and checking out books. Winston was awarded "Mid-Career Boeing Engineer of the Year Award for the Houston Site." Winston was also the team representative for the Flow Control Valve CFD Team nominated for an RNASA award. And we continue to wait with bated breath as to the status of the Space Shuttle program, and when the last mission will be. (It's been 6 months out for about 36 months now.) Right now the program is authorized for 3 more launches and funded for 2.

The pets continue to live healthy lives, as Hunter makes sure that our fence is in good repair and the cats make sure we shut our doors securely. And we still have more than our fair share of toads, anoles, crickets, redworms, mealworms, beetles and pillbugs.

We added a third raised bed this year to our collection of vegetable gardens as well as a dwarf peach tree, and 2 blueberry bushes. We harvested radishes, sweet potatoes, okra, and tomatoes this year. The rest of the raised bed was taken over by giant sunflower plants. Not the kind with giant heads, just lots of branches containing many small sunflower blooms. We didn't bother collecting any seeds, but the neighborhood cardinals, jays, and sparrows loved the living bird feeder. This garden was also decorated quite well with Megan's star flowered vine, which climbed halfway up a telephone pole.

Last December we spend a quiet Christmas at home, and then took a road trip to Corpus Christi, TX. We spent a lot of time in the various parks, preserves and nature centers. We saw lots of different birds and enjoyed the peace and tranquility of a quiet beach and wetlands. A highlight was seeing a pair of endangered Whooping Cranes in the wild.

For Valentine's Day this year, our meal out was at Olive Garden, Julie gave Winston a set of Tavern Puzzles, and Julie received a personalized ceramic candy heart vase with 8 Bronze roses.

In March we spent the first day of spring driving around Galveston Bay from sunrise over the Gulf of Mexico to finish at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge where we watched a pair of Black necked stilts mate.

In April we spent 2 weeks in Buffalo, NY. Winston was there on business travel; Julie and Megan explored all the different Nature Center and Science Museums in the area. Together as a family we drove up and down both banks of the Niagara River, stopping for hikes and visits to state and provincial parks, as well as Niagara Falls. On the last day we visited the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site

Winston's parents came to visit in late April to celebrate the RNASA nomination.

Unfortunately Megan was ill on her Birthday and we had to postpone the celebration for a week. We had a small affair with the Knoll's, the Guillot's, and the Lopez's, which featured homemade dumplings and pasta sauce.

In June we flew to Baltimore to visit Winston's Grandparents, this would turn out to be the last time we'd see Winston's grandfather alive, and we were really grateful we made the trip. While in Baltimore we also visited Fort McHenry with Jeff, Zoe and Irene. And we visited the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center : Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Annex at Dulles International Airport and Great Falls Park in McLean VA.

We then took the Amtrak train to Virginia Beach, where we got to spend time with Joe, Kat, Jessica, Scotty, Erica, Josh, Dawn and met Dawn's Brother the infamous Dr. Bob for the first time. Our primary purpose for visiting was to attend Jessica's High School Graduation Ceremony, and we're very proud of her! We also squeezed in Josh's Elementary school graduation, as well as a trip to First Landings State Park, and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge.

Over the summer we took several trips to Brazos Bend state park, which is not unlike a mini-Everglades in terms of abundant Birds and Alligators.

In July, Winston's grandfather passed away, and we returned to Baltimore for the Funeral. This was the first funeral service we've attended in a really long while, and while we were sad at his passing, we celebrated Ah Gong's vitality, strength of spirit and his commitment to education. We also filled Ah Ma's house with family and thoroughly enjoyed the company of normally well-dispersed relatives. One of the many highlights was the ultimate Frisbee match in the back yard with cousins aged 6-36!

One of Winston's side projects this year was organizing a fund raiser for a collection of 6 charities (<http://waodds.servegame.org/Charity/>). Over \$800 was raised for a variety of Social and Medical causes from the players of the online word creation poker game WordAce.

In the fall, we've started taking Megan to the Children's Museum of Houston during their free Thursday evenings. Megan really enjoys playing in the outdoor Waterworks exhibit and watching chicken hatch in the nature area.

Megan's Er Sen Po (Winston's Aunt Lih) passed away after a bout with leukemia; we attended a memorial service locally to place the funeral urn. We remember Er Sen for the kindness she's always shown us.

Megan-O-Lantern IV was carved on Halloween and we're getting more efficient and creating the pumpkin carvings. Megan was a Spider this year and for the first time wondered what the point of trick-o-treating was. (answer: to collect candy to trade to Daddy for Pretzels.)

We hosted Thanksgiving dinner and made rotisserie turkey legs rather than a whole turkey, and that worked out really well.

For Winston's Birthday we took a weekend trip to Big Thicket National Preserve which is only 2 hours away from our home, we spent the night in Lumberton, TX, and rented a Canoe for the afternoon on the Village Creek. We were surprised by the wide variety of ecosystems in the Preserve, and plan to return sometime soon.

Winston's sister Peggy earned her Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Chicago and is now an Assistant Professor at Denison University in Granville, OH. We're so very proud of her.

Billie and April are expecting, and Megan looks forward to a new cousin next year!

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>



July 24, 2010 – Memorial Service for Chwan Hou Wang



October 3, 2010 – Memorial Service for Lih Wang



Canoeing the Village Creek in Big Thicket National Preserve, November 28, 2010



Joules and Basil – December 20, 2010



Sporting our "polar" fleece, Chicago, December 11, 2010