

December 2013

Greetings from Friendswood, TX

Hard to believe it's been another year. It's been a year of ups and downs, but we're still here making the best of it.

So covering the downs first, we lost both Basil and Joules this year. Basil in March due to renal failure and Joules in September due to cancer. They were both good cats and we're sad that they're gone, but we know they both had long and happy lives. Julie's father passed away this year, and we attended his memorial service and funeral in Arlington Virginia this December.

In brighter news Megan has a couple new cousins: Maggie and Trevor. Maggie was born to Winston's brother Billie and sister-in-law April, and Trevor to Winston's sister Peggy and brother-in-law Brady. Also we're currently fostering to adopt two new kittens, they're littermates and we got them from the [Friendswood Animal Shelter](#). The first one is a male bobtail we've named [Pakhet](#) after the Egyptian lioness goddess of war, and the female is black and white tabby we've named Pepper. The adoption process will be completed shortly after they're fixed in January.

Hunter having learned cat manners from Basil and Joules stays out of Pakhet and Pepper's way and continues to undermine our efforts to have a solid Shiba Inu enclosure in our back yard. And just for the record, we had a Shiba Inu before they were a [meme](#). (Shibas were always cool)

Megan is 6 and a half now, and continues to be home-schooled by Julie. She is almost always reading a book now, and her interests are currently in the area of cats and dinosaurs. Not to worry, she still really likes insects. Her current favorite book series is [Animal Ark](#) by Lucy Daniels (pseudonym), which is about a girl that rescues animals.

Julie spends much of her time helping organize Megan's homeschool group, preparing and hosting sessions at our home. And is forging new close friendships with the other moms in the group.

Winston continues to work on the [Space Launch System](#) program for the Boeing Company, helping design the next generation heavy-lift launch vehicle. He is often travelling to Huntsville Alabama in support of the program.

Our once new house is now 10 years old! How quickly time flies, just a couple more years before we own it outright. We continue to fill our house with [Ikea wall units](#) and Tupperware totes, and our decorating style is "early childhood educational".

We continue to upgrade our raised beds from being cedar plank lined to retaining wall bricks. We were very successful at growing Meyer lemons, butternut squash, sweet potatoes, garlic chives, basil, dill, radishes, Asian greens, and onions. And in the yard, milkweed and sunflowers continue to make our backyard wildlife friendly.

Last Christmas Megan received a bicycle from her grandparents, and she's been riding it all year.

In February for Julie's birthday we went canoeing on [Armand Bayou](#), where we witnessed an amazing variety of wildlife, (ospreys, roseate spoonbills, cormorants, egrets, herons, turtles etc...). Our 11th Anniversary Dinner was at Olive Garden.

In March visits were made to the [Houston Zoo](#), [Houston Rodeo and Livestock show](#), [Moody Gardens](#), the [NOAA open house](#) in Galveston, [Pine Gully Park](#). In addition we once again volunteered as part of the [Trash Bash](#), helping clean the local waterways

At the beginning of April we made our 1st of two road trips to Huntsville, AL. And we stopped at [Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge](#) (NWR) on the way up, and the [Cameron Prairie NWR](#) on the way back. At end of April we visited [San Jacinto State Park](#) for the re-

[enactment of the Battle of San Jacinto](#), where the Mexican General Santa Anna was captured by Sam Houston.

In May we flew to Southern California, Winston for business, Megan and Julie for pleasure. We started the trip by visiting [Channel Islands National Park](#) the ferry rides out to the islands afford views of Seal, Sea Lions, Dolphins and Whales. On the islands we saw Pelicans, Tern chicks, island foxes, and peregrine falcons. We then stayed at the [Hilton Waterfront](#) in Huntington Beach, where Julie and Megan got to play in the Pacific Ocean every day. In lieu of a trip to DisneyLand, Megan opted for a Whale watching trip instead. They also experienced tidal pools in Laguna Beach.

In June there were trips to the [Bayou Wildlife Park](#), and [SpaceCenter Houston](#), as well as the [Armand Bayou Nature Center](#).

4th of July Weekend was the 2013 Wang Family Reunion in Ellicott City, MD. Attended by 31 family members. Highlights included a trip to [Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park](#), Photo Sharing Session, and a Baby Shower for Peggy.

Also in July, Julie's good friend Mina gave birth to Artiman.

Winston has continued his side projects this year of organizing a [fund raiser](#) for a collection of charities. This year \$6250 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 August we went [indoor go-carting](#), the [Health Museum](#) and to the [Gulf Coast Bird Observatory](#) to watch them catch and band birds. We each got to release a bird after it had its leg band. We also visited the [Brazoria NWR](#) on our way home.

In September we headed back to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory for their Hummingbird Extravaganza. Where despite the rain, Megan enjoyed her time with Hummingbirds, Turtles and Snakes.

In October we attend the harvest festival at the [Froberg Farm](#), for the hay ride, corn maze and other fun games. Winston also travelled to Seattle/Everett for business and met up with some former Houston co-workers. For Halloween this year Megan was Tyrannosaurus Rex. And Winston used that as a model for Megan-o-Lantern 7.

In November we made our second road trip to Huntsville, AL. On the way up we stopped the [Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR](#). And on the way back we stopped at [Buzzard Roost Spring](#) on [Natchez Trace Parkway](#), and at the [Hot Springs National Park](#). In Huntsville, Megan and Julie visited [Wheeler NWR](#), [Monte Sano State Park](#), the [Botanical Garden](#) and [US Space and Rocket Center](#). For Thanksgiving, the Knoll's and Ashna's came over to feast.

In December we flew to Northern Virginia for Julie's father's funeral, and we also visited Billie, April, Ming and Maggie in Charlottesville. Since we were staying in Manassas we visited the [Manassas National Battlefield Park](#) and Megan got to experience snow and ice, as well as an auto tour of Washington D.C. with a stop at [Union Station](#) and the [National Postal Museum](#). So while the impetus for the trip was a sad one, we were very glad to see all the family.

Christmas and New Years were spent here at home relaxing, organizing photos, fixing our fence and writing this letter. (An additional not insignificant cause is that we'd drained our travel budget for the 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>



Photo 1: Megan on her new Bike, Julie on her new Stroller, Friendswood, TX



Photo 2: Julie's Birthday Breakfast, Clear Lake City, TX



Photo 3: Canoeing on Armand Bayou, TX



Photo 4: 10th Anniversary Portrait



Photo 5: Moody Gardens, Galveston, TX

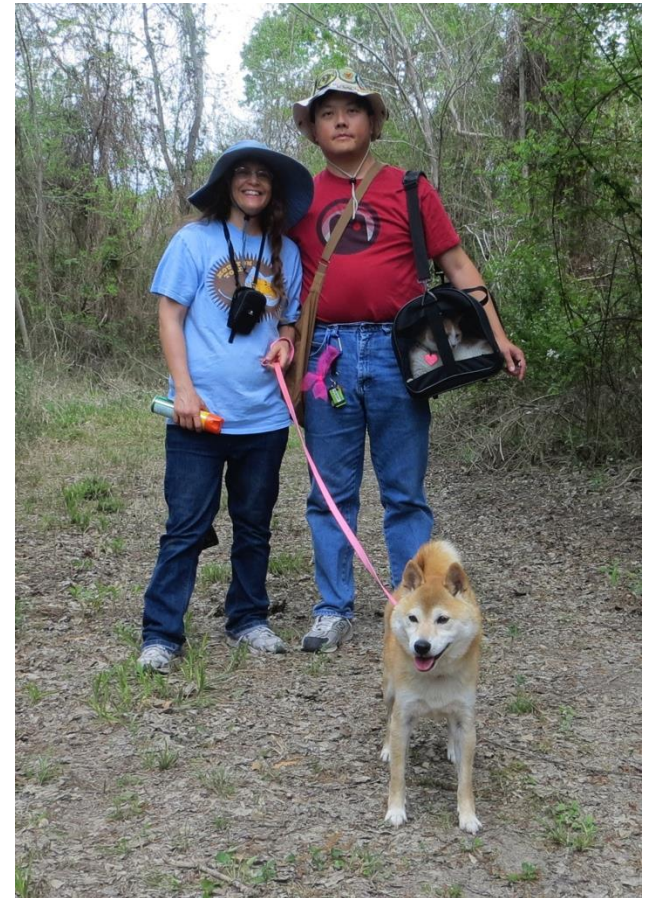


Photo 6 : Bogue Chitto NWR, MS



Photo 7 : San Jacinto State Park, TX



Photo 8 : Anacapa Island, Channel Islands, National Park



Photo 9 : Channel Islands National Park, CA



Photo 10: Placentia, CA

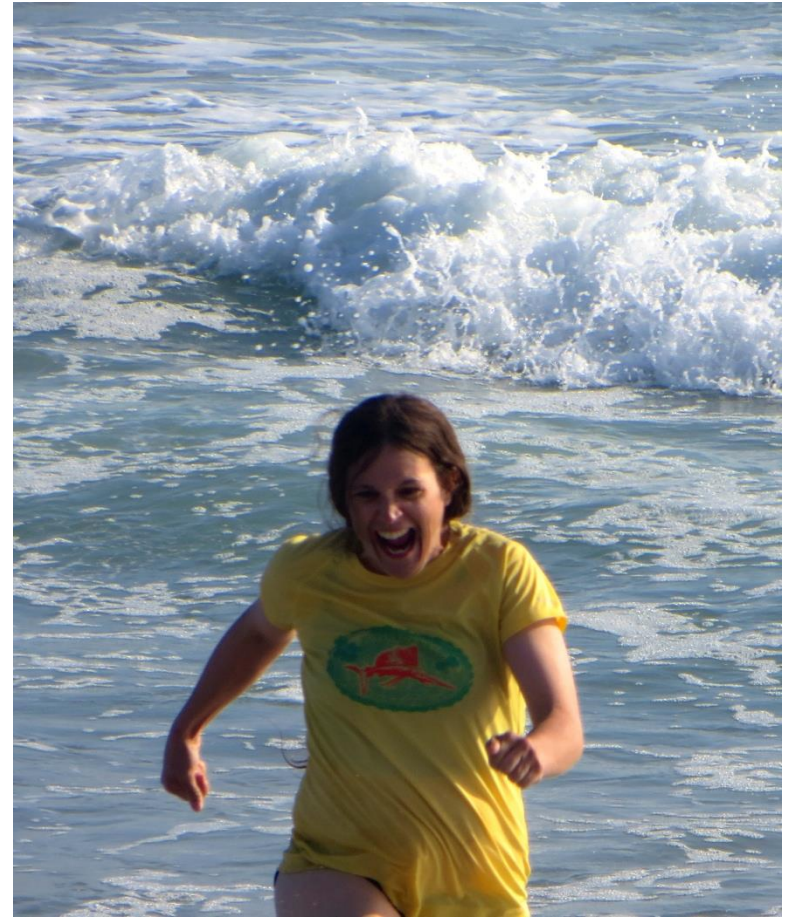


Photo 12: Huntington Beach, CA



Photo 11: Cerritos, CA



Photo 13: Irvine, CA



Photo 14 : Friendswood, TX



Photo 16: Clear Lake City, TX



Photo 15 : Friendswood, TX



Photo 17 : Health Museum, Houston, TX



Photo 18 : Friendswood, TX

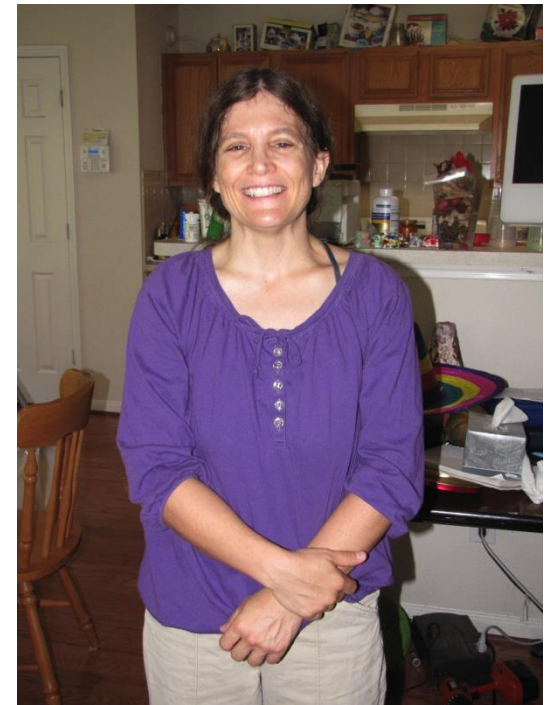


Photo 19: Friendswood, TX



Photo 20: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson, TX



Photo 22: Froberg's Farm, Alvin, TX



Photo 21: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson, TX



Photo 23 : Galveston, TX



Photo 24: Basil



Photo 25 : Joules



Photo 26 : Hunter, Galveston Island, TX



Photo 27 : Pepper



Photo 29 : Friendswood, TX



Photo 28: Pakhet



Photo 30 : Falls Church, VA



Photo 31 : Source Photo for Megan-o-Lantern 7



Photo 32 : All lit up



Photo 33 : Megan with her carved pumpkin



Photo 34 : Manassas National Battlefield Park



Photo 35 : Manassas National Battlefield Park



Photo 36 : Mount Baker National Forest, WA



Photo 37: Hot Springs National Park, AR



Photo 38 : Charlottesville, VA