

**Happy Holidays!!**

**Wow, what a year! I don't think we could have packed any more in if we tried. Next year, we won't try so hard. It's been a year of wonderful expectation, a time of achieving goals, and some times of sadness. I heard from someone that if you can't look back on a year and find something to cry with joy about and something to cry with sorrow about, then the year was wasted. This has definitely not been a wasted year.**

**If we start back in December of last year, Lee and I decided to have a Christmas party to celebrate the holidays. Here, 5 of us PhD candidates got together to hope that each of us would finish by the next new year; and all of us did! We really had a good time with lots of family and friends joining us.**



**Also in December, Lee received a call from a representative at Intel Corporation. They were interested in doing an interview with him and asked if he'd also be interested. He was and set up the interview in January. After hearing what they had to say, Lee decided to leave NCR and join Intel January 17th. He likes his new and challenging job and is now helping to validate chips before they reach your computers! I'm so proud of him.**

**Christmas Day and New Years Day were spent with family, enjoying visiting with everyone! It was a little tiring, but good to see all our family. We even got to shoot some fireworks to ring in the new Millennium.**

**Another exciting event occurred in January; January 31st, Lee and I found out that the Lord had blessed us with a baby. We decided to tell our parents February 6th and they were SO excited. Then, we started telling everyone else. It was to be a busy and fun 9 months - read on!**



**February 23rd marked another very special day - my PhD defense. I did my thesis on creating reaction diffusion patterns on furry animals - that is, making animals look more real on a computer that have various patterns (like zebra's, tigers, giraffe's, cheetah's, jaguars, chipmunks, etc.) All went well, and so after February 23rd, I officially became Dr. Paige Huggins Meeker. This was so exciting for me, after working so long and hard for it.**

**In April, Lee's aunt had a fun idea - we would surprise his grandmother for her 85th birthday by having her children and grandchildren meet at Myrtle Beach. We went down on Friday night and surprised her Saturday morning. She was so excited! Those of us who came were Lee's Uncle Ronald and his fiancée Debbie, his cousin Becky and her husband John, Lee's Aunt's, Jeanette and Rachel, Lee's parents Madi and Earl, and Lee and I! That was her entire family, with the exception of one grandchild, who had to work. We all went to Ripley's Aquarium where we saw lots of interesting fish; that night**



we went to the Dixie Stampede. That was a lot of fun. In fact, Lee's Uncle Ronald got picked out of the audience to participate in the show. None of us knew it, so it was a great surprise to see him down in the ring - and guess what... he WON!



May 5th was a very special day - my graduation. I'd waited such a long time and I was very excited. We had such a fun time! After graduation, USC provided a very nice reception for the graduates and their families. Kim Presser also finished up to graduate in May, so together, that evening, we threw a barbeque at the house. Our parents and advisors and family and friends came and celebrated this exciting time with us. I was also just

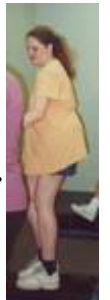


starting to wear maternity clothes and beginning to show a little.



At the 20 week checkup, we had an ultrasound done and discovered that God had blessed us with a girl. We were very excited and began thinking about possible names for our little angel. We also began to read a lot to begin our preparation for her, think about decorating the nursery, etc. We bought one of those "name" books, but the names in there were all either common or just plain odd. We began listening for names all around us and decided on "Piper Ashlee" for our little one.

Also, for Piper's good and my own, I began taking a prenatal aerobics class. It was a lot of fun and I got to meet other soon-to-be moms. The class met every Tuesday and Thursday for an hour and it was just great. I can't recommend exercising during a pregnancy enough. It really helped to keep me in shape and prepare my body for her arrival.



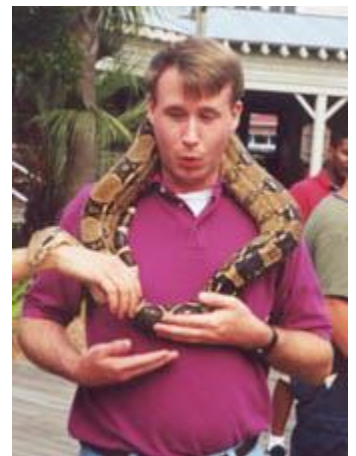
Sadly in May, tragedy struck our family. We found out that my Uncle Al had lung cancer. He was diagnosed May 3rd. He fought it with everything he had, but June 27th, he went to be with the Lord. It was a hard battle. He loved flowers, especially roses, and enjoyed walking on the beach early in the morning with a cup of coffee. We went on family vacations together and spent Christmas' together. He was looking forward to the baby's coming, and planned to be her godfather. He was well loved and will be sorely missed.



As a graduation gift to myself, Lee and I had planned a trip. For a long time, I've been missing an old family tradition. As a child, my family would rent a beach house and spend a week down at the coast. The beach is one of the most relaxing places I can imagine and so, back in March, we rented "Jim Bob" for a week. The only week they had available at that time was the first week of July, so we spent July 4th down at the coast. It was not oceanfront, but it did allow pets, so Morgan got to go. He was so excited to get to head down with us and he loved the morning walks we took there. He wasn't too crazy about the water, though. Our friends, Darrin and Michelle and their son Dylan came along for most of the week and we had a lot of fun together. It was Dylan's first real introduction to the ocean also, so it was fun to see his reactions. He, unlike Morgan, really liked the water, once he was introduced. He was also fascinated with the little crabs that we could find and put on his hand. He loved to make sand castles, too! My parents, Aunt Nell and Kim also came down for a couple of days. It was hard for them, as the beach was a place Uncle Al loved, but it was also full of happy memories for all of us.



While there, Lee and I visited Alligator Adventure - there, they have, in addition to alligators, other reptiles (turtles, snakes), amphibians, and tigers! In fact, they breed the rare "golden tabby tiger." Apparently tigers used to be much more than orange with black stripes or



white with black stripes; in fact they came in all the colors of the common house cat. However, very few of these are left. A golden tabby tiger has an orange stripe, much like the tabby cats we have in our homes. You can have your picture made

with one, but we left before that happened. Another resident there is the endangered Komodo dragon. These are very dangerous animals; the alligators are much more preferable to me than the dragon. We watched a feeding of the alligators where they showed them jumping out of the water after the food. They can come quite a way out of the water to catch food. All in all, I was very sad to see the week come to an end. I love the beach!



August and September brought baby shower's for Lee and I, the first given by my cousins, Dessie and Anna at Anna's home in Sumter. We had such a fun time! Many family members were able to attend and it was very nice. This was a couple's shower, so Lee got to come, too! Our second shower came in September and was given by my Aunt Nell and cousin Kim at their home. Again, many people were able to come and we had a wonderful time. Lee came before and after and took video clips, as we had just bought a camera so that we could take lots of baby pictures and footage! Our Sunday school gave our third shower to us; a diaper shower, and everything was so nice. Lots of food and fun!

We would like to thank everyone who attended these showers again for all their kind and thoughtful gifts. We are definitely using them now!

Also, in August and September, Lee and I took a prenatal class through the hospital. This is a class that teaches you about pregnancy, birth, different methods to deal with pain, hospital policy, etc. We met about 10 - 15 other couples who were soon to give birth and hope for a "class reunion" of sorts in January or February as that is about 6 weeks after the last baby was due!



Then, came the night we were all waiting for... September 23rd. What? I know she was due on Oct. 3rd, but little Miss Piper had other plans. One rainy Friday night/Saturday morning (about 1am) my water broke and 19 hours later, at 7:47pm, Piper Ashlee Meeker arrived in our world. And oh, what a special package to receive! A true gift from God, our little one is just perfect. She was 6 pounds, 11 ounces at birth and is



doing wonderfully. She came home from the hospital on the 25th, when she met Morgan, PC, Buttercup, and Samuel. She seems to like Buttercup's imitation of a car alarm (even though we are trying to steer him away from that) and Morgan has to check her at least once a day and lick her foot! In fact, he's very protective of her and watches all visitors very closely when they are around Miss Piper.



At the time of this letter, she is 8 weeks old and loves to imitate our facial movements (especially sticking out her tongue) and follows us with her eyes. She's eating and growing up a storm! She loves to be held (if possible at all times of the day) and is sleeping between 6 and 8 hours through the night (YEA!). She also loves to look at pretty black and white pictures of shapes and animals that we have for her; she likes to be sung to and loves her mobile. She gave us a giggle the other day when her Daddy tickled her tummy and she'll smile at us if we've been very good. Christmas will be so much fun this year!



In preparation for Miss Piper's arrival, we created for her a nursery full of woodland animals. I stenciled many animals on the wall with a border of wildflowers. Lee provided the stripes and we got the furniture from Baby Furniture Plus here in Columbia; I can't recommend them highly enough, as they were extremely professional and pleasant. The furniture arrived promptly and is just what we wanted. It's just beautiful.

Also, call it the nesting instinct or what, but I wanted to get some furniture for the Living and Dining room, so we did. When next you come to visit, you will find those rooms filled with tables, chairs, and a couch! (Where will we put those three Christmas trees this year? I'm sure we'll figure something out!)



We did make one purchase we didn't plan on. My wonderful 1987 Grand Am (Spirit to his friends) had done so well for me. I'd had the car since I was a junior in high school. Spirit and I saw Thomas Sumter, Furman, and USC together; however, about two weeks after Piper was born, Spirit (in essence) died. We sadly had to replace him. The exciting news is that we have a new car; a 2000 Grand Am GT, black, (Toronado to his friends). It's a great car and hopefully it, too, will give us at least 13 years.



**On October 23rd, Lee and I took Piper to her first Sunday at St. Andrew's Baptist. She was a little young (only 4 weeks old), but we wanted to present her to the congregation before the 29th. That was our minister's last Sunday with us. Dr. Marshall Edwards, who baptized Lee and married Lee and I, retired then. So, it was important to us for him to present Piper to the church. She was a wonderful**



**little baby, not crying once through the entire sermon and presentation. As people came up to look at her, she slept peacefully in my arms and was just a little angel. Dr. and Mrs. Edwards have meant so much to Lee and I (Mrs. Edwards taught our newly wed class and we learned so much) and we love them and wish them the best in their new home and fun filled retirement!**



**That night (October 23rd) Piper, Lee, and I attended (briefly) the annual Fall Festival at St. Andrews. She, of course, had to dress in her Halloween costume - she attended as a pepper! (Piper the pepper, we thought, would be cute for Halloween!) Again, she was the exemplary baby, never once complaining or crying while we were there. (She does cry at home and fuss a little, but that's ok!)**



**One last thing - put June 2nd on your calendars. If you remember last year's letter, Lee and I attended the Annual Quilling Convention in Kentucky. Well, next year, I'm hosting it! It will be in Camden on June 1st and 2nd, with an opening to the public on the 2nd from 1:30 to 4:30. If you can attend, please come, as it will be just wonderful and full of beautiful art from the attendee's. For more information, just give us a call (or an email!).**

**We still reside at 312 Goldstone Dr., Columbia, SC 29212, (803) 749-1647, lee.meeker@acm.org, and PaigeMeeker@sc.rr.com (NOTE: Paige's email has changed!)**

**(Oh, ok -- we'll share more pictures!)**



Well, I guess that's about it for our year. We wish you all the happiest of holidays and hope to see or talk to each of you soon!

Love,



Lee, Paige,



Piper,



Morgan,



PC,



Buttercup,



and Samuel