

Dear Friends,

Piper, Lee, and I wanted to thank you for all the wonderful letters, cards, calls, and gifts you have been so sweet to send. We wanted to give you an update on Piper and her condition. Here's the whole story, in case you missed some of the details.

The Wednesday before Easter, Lee took Piper for her 18-month shots. We were a little concerned about a slight limp she had, but not very concerned, as it didn't seem like anything to worry about. However, when the doctor (Dr. Cope) saw her walking and found a restriction in the movement of her left leg that had not been there before, he became very concerned and sent Lee directly to a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Gilpin. Lee called me and I left work to meet him at the doctor's office. I got there just as they were seeing Piper and Lee and went back with them. Dr. Gilpin took two X-rays, which clearly showed a problem.

Piper was diagnosed with "Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip," which is a very rare condition that caused her leg to dislocate during her growth. She was not in pain, but the doctor could not tell how long her leg had been out of the socket. If we were to do nothing, she could have been confined to a wheel chair later in life, or at the very least, always walked with a painful limp. The only solution for a child her age was surgery. We talked with a second doctor in the practice, Dr. Piehl, who concurred with the decision and told us what to expect.

Apparently, the dislocation can occur at any stage of growth and it is very difficult for the doctors to know just when it happened. At various ages, there are various techniques that can be attempted, but at 15-18 months and up, surgery is the only option. The surgery was to consist of two parts. The first part was to make an incision at her hip, cut and rotate the pelvic (hip) bone back into place, remove some ligaments that had been too stretched out, put the femur (thigh bone) back into place, and hold it with pins (to be removed later). The second part of the surgery was to make an incision into her thigh and cut about ¼ inch of bone, and insert pins. This was to relieve pressure on her growing muscles that putting the leg back into place would cause. Pins would also be inserted here and removed at a later time. The risks were minimal, but if they occurred, very scary. They included (as any surgery does) an infection that could make her very sick or take her to be with the Lord and the loss of her left leg.

Piper was to be in a body cast for about 3 months and then a brace for another 6-9 months. The cast is called a "spica cast" and would reach from her breastbone down to both her ankles, with an opening to change her diaper. She couldn't get the cast wet, so no more baths for a while. She had just gotten to the point of really liking her baths and Lee and I would tear up at all the things we'd think of that she loved that she would not be able to do over the next few months.



Lee and I were frightened and devastated. We were also just in shock, as Piper looks like a very happy and normal little girl, running, jumping, climbing, getting into things, etc. Lee and I went to watch her Easter egg hunt at St. Andrew's Baptist Preschool, and informed her teachers of the situation. They were also very concerned and supportive. As we watched Piper hunt her eggs, she seemed to stumble more than the other little ones her age. At home, just seeing her, it was difficult to notice such things. The surgery was planned for April 11<sup>th</sup> and we waited for that day with trepidation.

We did have fun on Easter, though, with another egg hunt at my parent's home. Piper loved to find the eggs and we had a couple of hunts. They had to be inside, as it started to rain. She also got to eat a favorite – deviled eggs! However, her tried and true favorite remained the same – pickles. She just loves them.

Candy Ward is a friend of ours from church. She has begun her own photography studio and takes pictures from her home. She took some of Piper before and I called to see if she could fit us in for a sitting in Piper's Easter dress, before the surgery. She does great work and her prices are wonderful, so please contact her for your next sitting. She and her daughter, Olivia, came by the hospital on Friday to bring us the pictures and visit with Piper. Piper was a little sad at the time, but I know she was happy to see them.



April 11<sup>th</sup>, we took Piper to Baptist Hospital at 6:00am. She happily played in the toddler room until she was called back, where she happily played in the surgical waiting room until a nurse brought her some "happy medicine." She didn't like the medicine, but when the surgical nurse came for her, she was not at all concerned that she was going away from Lee and I. The hardest thing we have ever had to do was hand our little girl, who was looking at us with such trust, to the nurse. I don't know what we would have done if we had had to go through it alone. However, we weren't alone. We really appreciated that some of you took the time to wait with us through the surgery. It was predicted to last between 4-6 hours. When we came out of the surgical area to wait in the outer waiting room, my parents, Martha and Boyce Huggins and my Aunt Nell (who had just broken her own foot that Monday) and Kim

(Piper's godmother) were there to hold us and comfort us. Soon after, Sharon Simpson from our church arrived, along with "Mrs. Mildred," one of Piper's preschool teachers. Then, Darrin Wilcox came and so did my parent's minister, Rev. Sweet. Mark Ridley, from our Sunday school class rounded out the group. Lee and I can't thank you all enough for being there for us. It really helped to have someone to talk to during this very difficult time. After the surgeons talked to us, only my parents and Darrin stayed of the original group. Soon after, Lee's parents arrived. We went to the Piper's room about 45 minutes later (when she returned from recovery) and saw her. Darrin and Lee's parents left after this and my parents helped us retrieve our bags from the car before leaving. Lee and I stayed with Piper until she was released.

Time passed quickly, as the surgery did not have to be as extensive as originally anticipated. We thank God for that and for how well Piper has been doing. The leg had apparently not been out of the socket for a very long time (thanks to the quick find by Dr. Cope) and easily slipped back into place. They had to do the first part (rotating the hip and putting in pins), but not the second (cutting her thigh bone). This meant that her recovery should be a lot faster. Her cast was from her breastbone to her ankle on her left leg, but only to the knee on her right.

That Thursday and Friday, Piper was on morphine for the pain. Morphine causes the body to feel as though it's falling from time to time, so she would jerk and cry, as she felt this sensation. It was so difficult to watch and we just held her and told her little rhymes. The two that worked best were from her favorite (and newly favorite) books – "Ribbit Ribbit" and "Five Little Monkey's Jumping on the Bed." These have counting rhythms that go something like this:

"Five little speckled frogs, sat on a speckled log, eating some most delicious bugs. One jumped into the pool, where it was nice and cool, now there are four speckled frogs..." (etc.)

and

"Five little monkeys jumped on the bed; one fell off and bumped his head; the Mama called the doctor and the doctor said, 'No more monkeys jumping on the bed!' So... four..." (etc.)

These seemed to soothe her, but the first night we were up with her every 20 minutes. Lee let me doze off about 4am, so I got about 3 hours of sleep while he stayed with her. She is his little heart, and he couldn't bring himself to leave her side. Friday, Piper dozed a little more, letting us catch up a little ourselves, but it was difficult to sleep. She didn't want anything to eat or drink and had an IV set up to provide fluids. She also had swollen a bit from all the fluids, which made the cast very tight on her. The nurses were concerned about this and called the doctor. Dr. Piehl was there and came in and cut the cast to relieve some of the pressure. She now had a "belly hole" cut about 3 inches in diameter around her belly button. But, this was not quite enough, so he returned later and cut the cast from the belly hole to the top and widened it about ½ an inch; then re-taped it. This seemed to make Piper feel much better (though she was afraid of the saw) and she handled it like a pro. (Better than I would have, probably!)

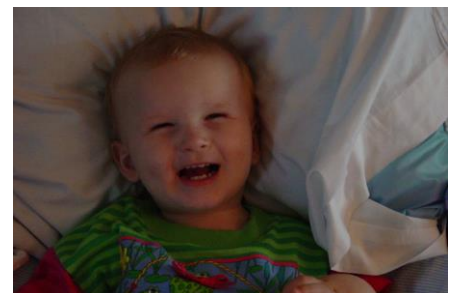
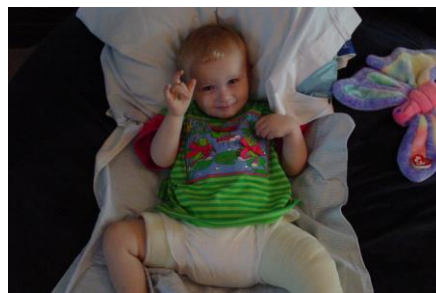
Saturday morning they removed her from the morphine and she was given codeine every four hours to help with the pain. This made her very sleepy, but her personality was coming back. She was beginning to want some food (she grabbed my candy bar while I was holding her, then went for some fruit loops and a little juice!) and smiled at us. She was still very sleepy throughout the day, but the nurses told us that sleep would help her heal. Sunday, she only had to have pain medicine twice, and Sunday at 3:00pm was the last time she has had to have anything. She wanted to be read to and enjoyed her many balloons and presents, as well as her visitors. She wanted to be held a lot and Lee and I learned how to do this. We also took her for a ride in the hospital-supplied wagon, which let her get out of the room a little bit. Dr. Gilpin called on Sunday and asked if we wanted to go home then or on Monday. Lee and I were a little nervous, so he said Monday was fine. Piper was doing so well, that instead of the anticipated 7 day stay; she got to go home early.

Monday, we came home and Piper was thrilled. She sometimes asks to get "down" which is hard, because she wants to go and play with her own things as she used to. But she loves to be read to and walk in the yard; drawing and blowing bubbles are other favorite pastimes. She's trying to call Morgan to her to lick her toes, and sometimes he obliges her! She's been home for over a week now and is doing wonderfully. She does love company, so please come by and see us when you get the chance!

Again, thanks to everyone who has visited, called, written, and sent presents. Your thoughts and prayers are much appreciated.

Love,

Lee, Paige, and Piper



Friends,

After the first "update" was typed up and printed, we took Piper back for her second doctor's follow-up. Dr. Gilpin says everything looks good and is very pleased with her progress. She will be getting a new cast on May 17th. This means she'll go back to the hospital, be put to sleep, then they will remove the cast, check her very good, get X-rays, give her a good bath, and then put her back into a cast. This should be a relatively short procedure. Her next doctor's appointment is May 29th, when they will decide how much longer she will need the cast. He predicts about 3 weeks after the replacement, so a total of 8 weeks in the cast for Piper. She will then be in a brace that is the same shape as the cast. She still won't be able to walk on it, but it can be removed for her baths and possibly for her travel (so we can get out a little bit!). She will begin with the brace as an all day/all night thing and then it will progress to her wearing it less and less.

Just wanted to give you the update! Again, thank you so much for your thoughts and prayers. They have been felt and appreciated.

Love,

Lee, Paige, and Piper



Hello,

Lee, Piper, and I wanted to give you an update; you have all been so kind to keep up with us, through mail, phone calls, or email. Piper is doing so well. June 17th was a wonderful day, as that was the day her cast was removed! She kept trying to tell the doctor that he was "all done" as the saw was very scary, but once the cast was off and she was back in a normal sized diaper and regular clothes, she could hardly believe it. Lee and I had a weight lifted from us, when the X-ray reported that all was well. Dr. Gilpin even surprised us by letting us know that she would only have to sleep in her brace; she was "free" the rest of the time. So, for about 6 more months, she will nap and sleep in her brace.

We watched Piper go through all the steps of learning to walk again, though they happened in a matter of days instead of weeks this time. She began with the army man crawl she was used to in the cast. Then, she graduated to a regular crawl, then to pulling up on furniture, and finally to walking. We are thrilled! We took Piper and Morgan down to Ocean Drive (the North end of Myrtle Beach) for the Forth of July and we had a wonderful time. She really began walking that week and loved the beach – sand and water were just so much fun! She's now keeping us very busy, as she has reached the climbing stage and so we're running around behind her as she attempts to climb various pieces of furniture! She's able to play on her slide again and we've had many trips to the zoo, pet store, and Furman.

We just want to thank you again for all of your thoughts, prayers, calls, cards, letters, and emails. Your concern has been greatly appreciated. August 23rd, Piper will go for her (hopefully) last surgery, to have the three pins that are currently in her hip removed. Dr. Gilpin has been very pleased with her progress and she has even rejoined her preschool friends a couple of times a week. Her "furry big brother" Morgan, unfortunately, will have to have surgery himself, on August 8th, to remove a benign mass that just keeps growing. It's been a year of surgeries for our family. Please continue to remember us in your thoughts and prayers. All is slated to go well for both Morgan and Piper. We'll keep you up on our progress. Please keep us informed about you as well.

Love,

Lee, Paige, Piper, Morgan, PC, Buttercup, and Samuel



## The Meeker's Annual Christmas Newsletter

Seasons Greetings!

I believe I've mentioned before that someone once said, If you can't look back on a year and shed tears of joy and tears of sadness, then you haven't lived that year. Well, this has definitely been a year for living. Thought we'd share our yearly update.

Last Christmas was a lot of fun! Piper really understood what it meant to open presents and it really didn't matter if the present was for her or not – she just liked to help whoever was unwrapping at the time. We spent the day in Camden and shared it with my parents, Lee's parents, my grandparents, Lee's grandmother, Aunt Nell, and Kim. Uncle George and Aunt Christine even got to come briefly!



January began Winter Term at Furman. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Furman's calendar, it is a trimester system, with a 12 week Fall Term, a 12 week Spring term and a 6.5 week Winter Term. The students are expected to learn everything in those 6.5 weeks that they do in the 12-week "wing" terms. I taught CS 11 last winter and this is a class that the kids really need to get through all the material, as it is the introduction to the major. Believe it or not, friends from Furman, being on the teaching side is ever so much more difficult than being on the student side. But, I had a great group of kids and we all had a really good term. I believe I had them prepared enough to head into CS 12 and many of the kids did continue on with the major. I feel I really accomplished something there. I will hopefully see them in classes in the future.

Also in January, Piper was walking well, so she "graduated" from Ms. Carol and Ms. Wanda's class to join Ms. Mildred and Ms. Michelle in the walking, talking, abc's and 123's one year old class! She still would visit her old teachers from time to time, but loved her new class and her playmates!



February came and with it, my birthday. Ann, our office assistant, works hard to make each birthday special, bringing a cake, a gift basket of each professor's favorite candy, and a card that everyone signs. Lee also made it special with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. He began asking Ann at the beginning of the year for a good florist in Greenville. Ann definitely gave him a great name (Allan Ivey)! I was lucky enough to receive several beautiful flower arrangements at milestones during last year – first day of teaching, our anniversary, birthday, etc.



Candy, our friend and photographer (Candy Ward Photography), took some pictures of Piper to remember the Winter – isn't she just a little fashion plate. And not a bit camera shy, imagine that!



For the Spring Term, I was to begin teaching CS 11 and CS 30 – the second class is an upper-level major class. This was the first time I was going to get to teach the majors and I was excited. I had a large group of kids, as this was the last time the class would be taught in C++ and so the room was packed. I had several really bright kids in there and began the semester with enthusiasm. Then, just before Easter, our happy (and exhausting) little world came to a crashing halt.

The Wednesday before Easter, Lee took Piper for her 18-month shots. As many of you know, we received some devastating news. Piper had a very slight limp, which some of her preschool teachers had expressed concern about. She also had a small extra fold of skin where her thigh met her body on the left side. We had noticed, but not thought it was anything serious – something she would outgrow. It had really just appeared, sometime around the time she was 15 months old. However, her pediatrician, Dr. Cope, was immediately concerned as he watched her walk. He sent Lee directly to a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Gilpin, who X-rayed her and diagnosed a condition called "Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip". This is a rare condition that causes a child's hip and leg to dislocate as they grow. It can happen at any time in development, but usually occurs at birth. At this point, we had no idea how long the leg had been dislocated, as Piper had never shown any signs of pain and was running, jumping, climbing, etc. We began doing research on-line and discovered that, if left untreated, this could confine her to a life of pain and wheelchairs. We scheduled surgery for April 11th, and Lee and I began to make plans. After the surgery, we were told she would be in a body cast for 3-6 months, then a brace for 6-9 months. We couldn't imagine our little girl having to go through such a thing.

After much thought, I decided to take a leave of absence from work. I must say, the Furman family certainly came through for me. Two other professors in my department took my classes and the Dean quickly processed the necessary paperwork. Everyone was so very kind, asking about our little one and before I left. The members of the department even created a "hospital care kit" that had crossword books, snacks, and toys for Piper. Intel was also very kind to Lee, as he took quite a bit of time off during that time and helped me greatly in the months ahead. Coworkers also brought toys for our little Piper and visited us while in the hospital.



The Friday before Easter was Piper's egg hunt at preschool, and Lee and I both went to participate. Then, we told her teachers and the coordinator, Jean White, what had happened. They were so very kind and were to show us how much they, too, cared about Piper in the coming months. Piper had her first Easter egg hunt, and she held her own well, finding eggs in the trees and under the bushes! Easter, we went to my parents home in Camden, where Piper had more egg hunts (inside, as it started to rain on us). Her godmother, Kim, helped hide the eggs and Piper enjoyed looking for them. The Easter bunny spoiled Piper, with lots of books, eggs, and toys in her Easter basket – I guess "he" knew what was coming up.



Candy took some more pictures for us, in her Easter regalia. The pictures were to come in while we were at the hospital after Piper's surgery, and Candy and Olivia, (her daughter and Piper's friend), brought them to us.



April 11th was the day of her surgery and one of the hardest we've ever had to endure. It was so difficult to hand Piper over to the surgical nurse and Lee and I are especially grateful to family and friends who were there for us. Piper came through the surgery better than expected and Dr. Gilpin felt that her leg had only been out of place three to four months, making it a very early diagnosis and speedy response on the part of Dr. Cope. Lee and I stayed with Piper in the hospital day and night and were very grateful to all the kind nurses who saw to our every need. Some were the same nurses I had when Piper was born (after delivery, the hospital was so full, I was moved to the pediatric floor). We were so thankful when we were allowed to leave a couple of days sooner than expected. Those first few days were especially difficult and we are so very thankful for those who came to see us through it. We would especially like to thank my parents, Boyce and Martha Huggins, for coming every day without fail, my Aunt Nell (who came with a broken foot and cast of her own) and Kim, the Wilcox's, Piper's preschool, Mrs. Collin's class from Capistrano (who didn't even know Piper), the Humphries, Furman, Intel, St. Andrews Baptist, and Lugoff First Baptist. These were the people who were there for us each and every time we needed something, even when we didn't ask. They were there for us every day and in touch after the surgery. In addition, we would like to express our appreciation to the rest of you, who came for a visit, called, sent cards, etc. All the cards, letters, stickers, pictures, and toys were very much enjoyed by Piper. There are just too many of you to mention by name, but please know that everything was so very much appreciated. You really helped Lee, Piper, and I get through the most difficult experience life has ever thrown at us and we couldn't have done it without you.



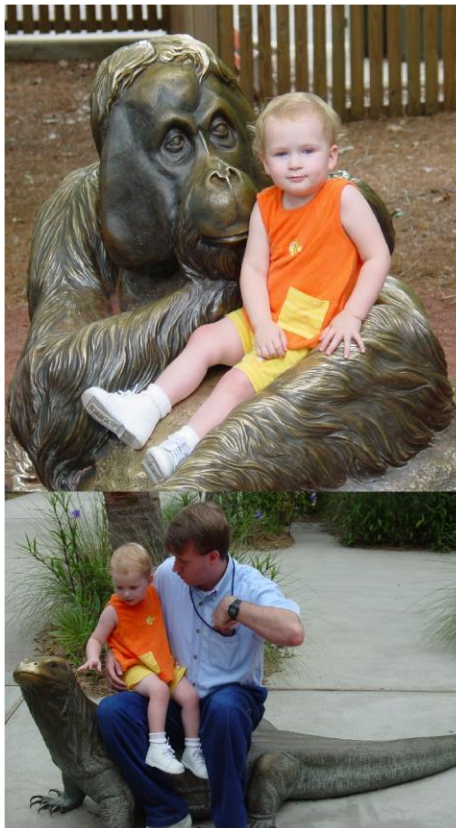
When we returned home from the hospital, Lee took a week off of work to help me get used to the new routine. I was so nervous when he went back to work, as changing her diaper at that point was almost a two person job. However, we all learned and grew with this experience. Morgan was a little unsure about the cast, and because of its size and bulk, Piper and I were stuck at the house. Her cast wouldn't fit within the confines of the car seat. We only went out for doctor's appointments and to enjoy Piper's preschool graduation, where she received a certificate of graduation from the one's to the two's! Our daily routine fell into place, and we passed the time reading, drawing, coloring, blowing bubbles, and watching "Steve" (the Crocodile Hunter) and "Blues Clues." We spent quite a bit of time outside (Piper's favorite thing to do) just sitting on the steps and watching the world go by. Piper's vocabulary expanded tremendously during this time. She loved the birds and I finally convinced P.C. to let me hold her so that Piper could pet her (Buttercup and Samuel wanted nothing to do with that!). P.C. also pecked me to let me know this shouldn't be something that happened too often, but she was a good sport with Piper. Morgan also helped pass the time by licking Piper's toes and letting her pet him. The resiliency of a child is wonderful, as

Piper soon learned to crawl, army man style, in her cast. She began to go everywhere this way, and enjoyed looking out of the open front door when it became too hot to sit outside for her usual time. After taking Piper to her preschool graduation, we set up a slide show of the pictures on our television and she would watch it over and over again, calling her teachers by name and just fill with excitement.



We had to have a new cast put on her about 6 weeks after the first one, as Piper had grown quite a bit. She had to go back under anesthesia, and in recovery melted the nurse's heart when she asked for some juice "peeese." She brought Piper several flavors to choose from and was very impressed that Piper would drink from a straw, which her godmother Kim taught our little prodigy at 6 months of age! The new cast was a little different in shape from the old one, so we had to learn how to hold her slightly differently from before. It was also a little tighter on her, as she had not had surgery and was not swelling (as before), so it fit her closer to her little body.

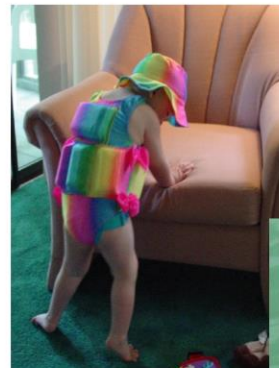




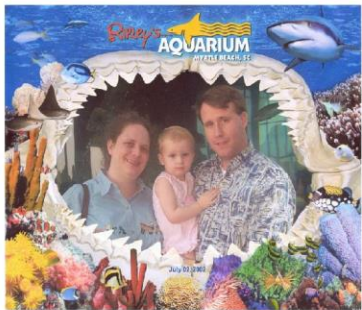
Toward the middle of June, I was pulling my hair out, as she was attempting to stand up and Dr. Gilpin's orders were clear on this – no walking in the cast. So, we were very happy to hear that she was going to get her cast off early, on June 17th, 9.5 weeks after it went on. We didn't have to go through anesthesia for this, but the saw really scared Piper. She kept telling the doctor that he was "all done" (her way of saying – STOP!) and seemed very disoriented when it first came off. She went back into her clothes (both tops and bottoms) for the first time, and had done so well that she only had to sleep in the brace. She didn't have to wear it during the day (except for naps). We went to the brace place and purchased it (gosh, they are expensive), and she got to ride in her car seat again. Piper and I were both thrilled with this new freedom, allowing us to go to the zoo, the pet store, and back to Furman, where Piper loves to see the swans, walk through the rose garden, and watch the fountains, which are an endless fascination to her. She excitedly points out every squirrel (so every couple of seconds she points and says "squirrel, squirrel!") and just loves animals. At the Riverbanks "farm" section, she fearlessly handed the cow some hay that had fallen through the fence, and the cow (about 10 times her size or more) gently took it from her little hand. She clapped as the penguins were fed their fish and watched the sea lions in fascination. On one trip, someone passing by called them seals, and she said "no, sea lions" – that's my girl! Also, all that watching "Steve" paid off. He had done a special from Madagascar on lemurs. These are cute little primates that live in the trees. Riverbanks has a new display of them right at the front gate. Piper saw them as we came in and she pointed and said excitedly "Lemur, Lemur!" I was greatly impressed.

When her cast came off, we called down to Retreat Myrtle Beach Realty to see if they had any pet-friendly places left for the forth of July... they had the same place where we stayed last year, but only for Tuesday through Saturday. So, Lee and I decided to bridge the week and stayed in a place in Pawley's Island called Pawley's Plantation for the first part of the week and then drove up to the Ocean Drive area for the latter part; Mama and Daddy drove up on Tuesday and brought Morgan, so our little family was back together. Morgan loves to go for long morning walks on the beach! He'd probably like afternoon/evening walks, if there weren't so many fireworks. They really scare him, though, and everyone knows that even though they are against the law at the beach, they are shot off every night. With the Forth of July approaching, they were out and about in force!

At Pawley's Plantation (a golf resort, but surprisingly less expensive than other places we found), there was a pool – so Piper got to go swimming in a pool for the first time. She was a little intimidated at first, but Dr. Gilpin said kicking in the water would help her leg. She was crawling and pulling up at this point, but not yet walking. This was normal, but watching her have to learn to walk again was difficult. Her determined little spirit wouldn't quit, however. We think Pawley's Plantation really helped her, as for some unknown reason (perhaps Divine intervention); all the furniture was her height! Perfect for pulling up on and walking between a step or two! The first time we went into the pool, I went in first, then Lee came in with Piper, who promptly tried to crawl on top of his head. There were other children in the pool, some playing ball, and this helped her quite a bit, especially when two little boys (about 11) lent Piper their ball to play with. She loves balls, so this was a tremendous help. I thought this was very thoughtful of the boys to do this, especially at their age. She also was very insistent that we find and remove every possible floating leaf from the pool (our little environmentalist). We had purchased one of those toddler-floating swimsuits, so that kept her head out of the water. She liked to kick and had a great time. We also went to some different restaurants down there, and there was a little row of shops that had a water area with ducks, geese, and swans. Piper loved this!



The only bad part about bridging the week is the move in the middle! We packed up everything and headed north. With traffic, the distance from Pawley's to Ocean Drive, though only about 30 miles or so, is about a two-hour drive in July. We got checked in to our new place and Mama and Daddy came that afternoon. Aunt Nell and Kim came the next day, so we had a full house. On the beach, Piper was thrilled with the ocean, not at all afraid, and she was fascinated by the "Sky ABC's" (or signs pulled by airplanes!). The night of the 4th, we went out onto the beach. The city had commissioned a fireworks display over the Cherry Grove Pier, which was within our sights. We thought it would be a perfect way to view the display without the crowds. We also weren't sure how Piper would take to fireworks. The ones we tried to have at New Year's didn't go over too well and she was afraid of them. However, this time she loved the "bubbles in the sky" pointing out orange bubbles and red bubbles and blue bubbles and green bubbles! The show was to start at 10:00, but there were tons of people out on the beach shooting off fireworks themselves. Then, a blue light appeared and for about a 1/10 of a mile radius around this poor policeman, everything went black. We were sitting on a public walkway above the beach on the sand dunes and a small voice from the condo beside us called down to the beach, "Run, Mama, run!" We all just burst out laughing. These people must have spent a lot of money, as their fireworks were every bit as beautiful as those of the Cherry Grove Pier. All in all, it was an enjoyable night.



While down at the beach, we took Piper through Ripley's Aquarium; she really loves watching the fish and gets so excited! She also started walking more and more on her own and insisted on walking down the beach between Lee and her "Boyce" (what she calls my dad - 'Granddaddy' seemed a little hard to get out). Of course, when she gets impatient, she'll also call Lee and I by our names! She made (destroyed) sand castles with her Kim and had a great time. While down there, we had Piper and Morgan pose for some pictures from a local photographer. Candy, who does her pictures at home, was expecting at the time and actually delivered that week - congratulations on little Forrest! Knowing she couldn't do beach pictures this year, we elected to try someone there. So, Friday night, Piper and Morgan went to Cherry Grove and posed with a few starfish. They had fun, even though Morgan was a bit perturbed with us when we wouldn't let him eat a starfish. (He did make a valiant effort, though!) They were taken by Angella Fellenz photography and I think she did a good job.





We had a pleasant surprise in July as well – our friends the Presser’s were making a trip down to Florida and stopped by for a day or two on the way back to their PA home. We got to meet Collin for the first time and it was so nice to get to spend time together again. We took the little ones to the zoo for some fun and really had a great time.



Piper and I went many places this summer, but our favorite spot was Riverbank’s zoo. We met friends there, like Deborah and Hampton, and we also just went by ourselves. Piper loved to watch the sea lion feeding and the penguin feeding – which was great, since the bird house is air conditioned! She spied one person feeding hay to the cow and just had to do that, too. The cow gently took it from her little hand and Piper was entranced. Each visit, we had to “feed the cow.” Lee would often meet us for lunch and we’d usually leave thereafter, as it would be getting close to nap time. The lazy summer days were nice, and it was even more rewarding to see Piper as she went from place to place. I saw other parents becoming impatient with their children, but thinking back to a few months before, when she couldn’t move and was confined to the cast, I (while sometimes tired) love to let Piper run and be free. She has so much fascination with the world that it’s really like seeing it again for the first time. Parent’s, enjoy your children’s discoveries; you’ll find they mean more than you could ever realize.

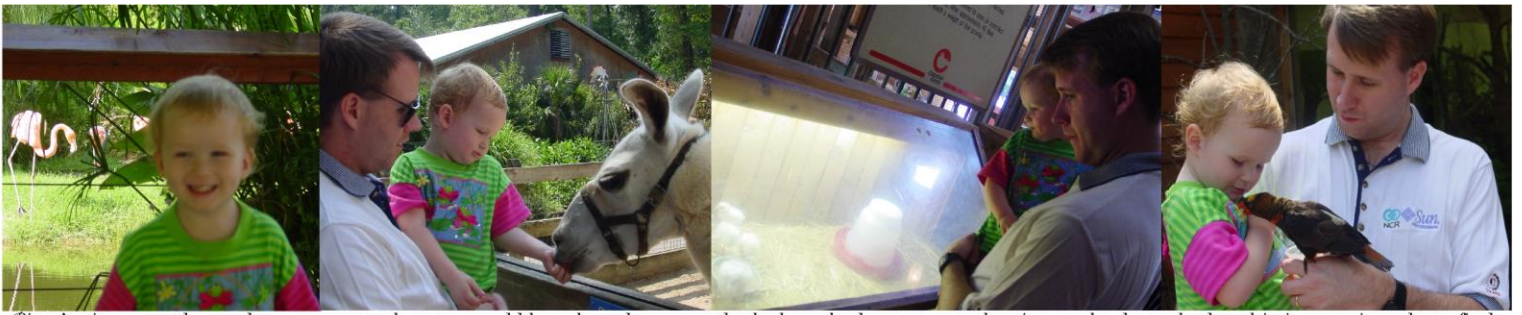


Also over the summer, I was overseeing a research student through a program at Furman called “Furman Advantage.” This program funds students over the summer to do research with a professor. My student and I set out to create butterfly wing patterns. We got some very interesting patterns by the end of the summer, and my student also learned how to program in Java. He did a great job. I would go in to see his work about once per week and we also communicated via email a fair amount.

We returned to the beach at the end of July, for a weekend, with Kim and Aunt Nell. This trip, Mama and Daddy as well as my Uncle George and Aunt Christine got to come, too! We stayed at the Red Roof Inn with Morgan (they allow pets) but the experience wasn’t that great. The management doesn’t seem to really care about concerns there. Anyway, we again had a lot of fun with family.

When we returned, we had two surgeries facing us; Piper was to have the pins removed from her leg on August 23rd, and Morgan was to have a lump removed from his hind leg on August 5th. I took Morgan then, but the vet did some preliminary blood work and diagnosed a hyperthyroid condition. This is most likely what has caused the lump; however, it made it dangerous for him to go under anesthesia without being on medication first. So, his surgery was delayed to August 29th. Before Piper’s surgery, we returned to the zoo often, as I wanted to spend as much time with her as I could. We had lots of fun together and Lee would often meet us there for lunch, as Riverbanks is not far from Intel.





Piper's pin removal was also not as smooth as we would have hoped; apparently the bone had grown over the pins, so the doctor had to chip it away in order to find them to remove them. So, we stayed in the hospital one more night, for observation. She did very well and enjoyed seeing her nurses again. We were even in the same room! She came home the next day and was good to go! Two weeks later, we went in for her to be checked and Dr. Gilpin even released her from her brace. She is now back to being a normal little girl, not having to even sleep in the brace. She will have to continue checkups to ensure the condition doesn't recur, but this is very rare and unexpected in Piper's case. The good Lord helped us through this difficult time, and we are so very grateful that Piper is back to normal – climbing to the tip-top of things and telling us “No” and getting into everything, just like she should be doing. We are thankful for every minute of it. Morgan also came through his surgery well, but will need to continue his thyroid medication for the rest of his life.

Piper's many zoo trips included a really fun encounter with the llama, as the zookeeper was out handing children celery and carrot sticks to feed it with. The llama is the cow's neighbor, so Piper was thrilled! She also had several encounters with the new lorikeets over the summer. She was fascinated. She's also still fascinated with the baby chicks, as one time we were lucky enough to be there when they hatched and she saw the baby coming out of the egg, just like I got to do as a little girl. I think Piper will have her mom's love for animals.

August 26th was Piper's preschool orientation. Piper joined Ms. Michelle and Ms. Shanda in class this year, in the 2 year olds. They are learning lots of exciting things and I'm sure we'll have lots to share as the year goes on. This year, Piper also started “Miss Kim's Gym.” Each Friday, she and Miss Kim (and some other children) travel down to the Fellowship Hall and learn gymnastics techniques. Piper is enjoying this and Dr. Gilpin says it's good for her. She's learning to do straddles, butterflies, balance beams, flips, and gets to jump on a trampoline. How exciting!

August also brought the beginning of my second year of teaching at Furman. I love being back at my alma mater. I think I have a unique perspective towards the kids and this fall I'm teaching the second course in the major. I have a great group of kids this fall, including two freshmen, which exempted out of CS 11 with AP credit. All of my students are very bright, which makes grading that much easier!



We were planning to attend Furman's first football game and stopped in Clinton to visit with our friends the Smith's. We hadn't really gotten to visit with Wayne, Susie, and Amy in quite awhile. After lunch, we went back to their home and Amy was thrilled to share her play room with Piper. This has given Piper many ideas of having a room filled with toys of her own! (She keeps



trying to remodel the den, but Lee and I continue to resist this.) It was really nice to catch up. We ended up missing the game, however, as a downpour delayed the game for over two hours, so we just went back home.





Kim, my cousin and Piper's godmother, was lucky enough to win a photography beach sitting with a Charleston studio, "Charles Tumbleston Photography." She graciously gave it to us. So, Piper got to visit Charleston's beaches for more pictures.



September 23rd rolled around and with it, Piper's 2nd birthday. Lee and I just can't believe how fast she's growing up. We had a party here at the house for family, and Piper was thrilled to have her Nana and Boyce, Grandma and Grandpa, Aunt Nell and Kim, and Great-Grandma with her to share this special day. She had lots of butterfly balloons and lots of presents. She also had some "Blues Clues" themed balloons. She's very happy to be running around again and to be the big girl that two years brings.



Saint Andrew's Preschool also tries to do something special for the children on their birthdays. We brought in some supplies and Piper had another birthday party. This one was themed with a new favorite, "Dora the Explorer." This cartoon is about a little Latino girl who goes on adventures and sometimes has to speak Spanish to friends. Piper has picked up several Spanish words - who says television isn't necessarily good?



September is a busy month, as Lee and I also celebrate our anniversary. This year marked our fifth together as a married couple and we decided to go to the beach for a weekend. Again, Retreat Myrtle Beach Realty came to the rescue, having "our" cottage on hand for rental. So, Piper and Morgan also got to celebrate our anniversary with us. We ate at our favorite restaurant, "The Sea Captains" and did some shopping as well as just had some fun out on the beach. Those evening walks were ok for Morgan at this time of the year. Piper did insist that she is now old enough to hold the leash by herself. One couple walking down the beach smiled at Piper and Morgan going along (and us with our camera) and noted that their child would have run straight for the ocean. We knew Piper would too, but not Morgan. He hates to get those furry feet wet! So, as long as Piper's with Morgan, we know she won't be in the water! We also visited the Butterfly Pavilion, where Piper got to hold a butterfly (after much work!).



In October, Paula Gabbert and I journeyed to Vancouver, British Columbia, to be a part of the "Grace Hopper, Celebration of Women in Computer Science" conference. This is a semi-annual conference, which allows women to get together, network, and learn of new research being done in the field. We had a great time and even had a little time to explore. Vancouver is beautiful and I'd love to return one day. We visited Stanley Park, where we saw native totem poles and the Vancouver Aquarium – they have beluga whales there! In fact, they'd just had a baby, so we got to see a little beluga swimming around (if you can EVER call a whale baby little!). They are gray when they are born, and turn white as the years pass. We also walked over to the Gastown section and enjoyed the little shops and the steam clock. We ended our day by riding up 135 stories to a tower with panoramic views of the city, where we could walk around and take pictures. It was a lot of fun, but hard to be away from Lee and Piper for those 5 days.



St. Andrew's had their annual Fall Festival and this year, Piper really got into the games. We first enjoyed the traditional sausage and pancake supper, but this year, in addition to regular pancakes, the deacons had chocolate chip pancakes. Piper has never found pancakes to be a favorite until she tasted these! And, you know she loved the sausage. She just loves spicy things. Then, we went over to the games and Piper had so much fun. She went from booth to booth, where she would play and then get candy. What fun!

This year, Furman's fall break happened to be at Halloween, so I got to go to Piper's preschool and see her Halloween parade. The children dress in costume and go through the church offices and then through the courtyard full of parents, gathering compliments and candy as they go. I also got to "participate" in her gymnastics class the next day. She just loves "Miss Kim's Gym!" She's really leaning a lot, too. The other day, she did a forward flip by herself for the first time. (Then, she did about 20,000 more all around the house!) She's definitely a tumbler. That day, I also got to participate a little in her preschool class. It's good to see how well she interacts with the other children.



This year was also Piper's first year for Trick or Treating. We took her to neighbors' homes and she really didn't want to stop. Our first stop was at the Humphrey's, and Piper just had to see their beagle, Shadow. The Kennedy's were the next stop. We still have candy – some left over that we purchased, and Pipers – she really cleaned up this year! She received candy from her Halloween parade at preschool, the family festival (from the games), trick-or-treating, and from family. Her favorite seems to be a tie between marshmallows and M&M's – especially the green ones!





Come October, Candy was back in the picture taking business, so we scheduled a date and wow – isn't she a little model in the making!



Piper's preschool decided to spice up November with a pajama party for the kids. So, one morning, they all dressed in their little PJs and went off to school. Lee's job that morning was to take the camera and get some pictures. I thought he'd get some with the kids running around, but he was able to actually get them all to stand still for one or two group shots! With two year olds, this is a great testament to Piper's Daddy's patience and her great teachers!



November 24th, Lee, Piper, Morgan, and I participated in South Carolina Sheltie Rescue's "Sheltie Fun Day." We had attended last year and really enjoyed it. This year, it was held at Harbison State Forest. This is the really big fund raiser for the organization and I hope they did well. This group rescue's Shetland Sheepdogs when owners are abusive, neglectful, or a dog is lost by the road. The group works to pay for vet bills, rehabilitation (if necessary), and fosters the dog until a suitable home can be found. It's hard to believe, but some people give up these delightful little balls of fur because they bark to much or nip at heels; breed traits. If only everyone would read a little about the dog instead of saying "isn't it cute," there would not be this trouble. Shelties are known for their "talkative" nature and as a herding breed, must be trained not to nip and to control their mouths. They are energetic little dogs and incredibly intelligent (sometimes, this is also a reason for giving up a Sheltie – the dog proves too smart for the owner). They are also great with kids and extremely loyal. If you're looking for a good pet (and don't mind barking), look at their website at <http://www.geocities.com/scsrescue/>



Thanksgiving was a fun and busy day. We spent the first part of the day with Lee's family in Sumter. There, we shared a lovely meal with Lee's parents, his Aunt Rachel, his Aunt Jeanette, and his Grandmother. There, Piper rediscovered her grandma's beanie baby collection and had many of them out on the floor to "inspect." From there, we traveled to Camden and had supper with my parents and then completed the triangle by returning to Columbia that evening. All in all a busy family filled day.



The day after Thanksgiving is the first day of the "Lights at Riverbanks Zoo," so we took Piper to enjoy them. We saw many beautiful lights and Piper got to pet her friend the cow. We also rode the carousel. After everything, we asked Piper what was her favorite part and she paused in thought and then said (in a very happy and excited voice) "The Merry-Go-Round!" I don't think we'll ever get to leave the zoo or Columbiana mall again without at least one ride!



*Well, that just about sums up our year. We hope the year has been a pleasant one for you; we have had a good one. Have a wonderful Christmas! In case you need it, our information is as follows:*

*Address: 312 Goldstone Dr., Columbia, SC 29212*

*Email: PaigeMeeker@sc.rr.com or LeeMeeker@sc.rr.com*

*Phone: (803) 749-1647*

*Have a very Merry Christmas!*

*Love,*

*Our Family:*



*Lee, Paige, Piper*



*Morgan*



*P.C. (Popcorn)*



*Samuel and Buttercup*