



# Merry Christmas All

From Lee, Paige, and Piper, Christmas 2003

Well, this has been one exciting year for us. We hope it has been for you, too. Please allow us to share our fun, and we'd love to hear from you as well.

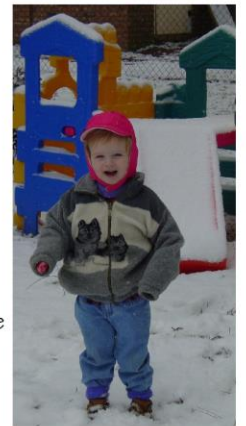
Christmas last year was a lot of fun. On Christmas Eve, Piper, Lee, and I took some trays of goodies to some friends and then came home to enjoy a nice quiet evening. We read the Christmas story, opened our presents to each other, and on Christmas morning, rushed to see what Santa had brought. All enjoyed their treats from Santa! Then, we got ready and went to Mama and Daddy's for the day. There, more beautiful decorations and presents awaited us. Piper enjoyed helping everyone unwrap their gifts.

We also enjoyed going to Lee's parents, where even more decorations and presents met Piper's little eyes! It was a lot of fun to open them all. After we finished, we rode over to Swan Lake in Sumter to look at the lighted decorations there. There were some beautiful lights. A favorite is Santa's sleigh, being pulled by flying swans!



Each year around New Year's, Jennifer Vaughan (my roommate from Furman senior year) comes to visit. It's become an annual tradition since she says we no longer visit her now that we have a child! (Not true this year – we visited twice! But before this year, I must admit she had a point...) Anyway, we always have a great time. Piper loves "Ms. Jennifer" and Jen and I always sneak in a movie while Lee watches Piper so we can have some "girl time."

January also brought a few days of snow. It was a lot of fun for Morgan, who loves the snow. Piper had seen snow before, but didn't remember it well, so this was a fun time for her, too. She went out to play in it, but unlike Morgan, Piper finds the snow cold and decided she'd rather look at it from the inside!



Lee and I were so swamped with work that we were having a hard time finding time for fun family things to do. So, we scheduled some! Riverbanks zoo has a program for preschoolers during the school year. Starting at age 2, children (and their parents) can take classes that teach the children about a type of animal. Each class has a theme and usually an animal visitor to look at or pet. Piper really loves these classes, and Ms. Margaret, her teacher. These classes run from August to May, so we started mid-stream, but it was a lot of fun.



Piper also continued her gymnastics with Miss Kim's Gym. She really loves this and will do "mountain rolls," "straddles," "tables," etc. when asked (usually!). There were 5 children in the class, ages 2-4. Miss Kim has them do things at their own level, taking each child through a series of "things to do." They put their hands on the floor and walk up the wall, jump on the trampoline, crawl through tunnels, walk a balance beam, jump inside hula-hoops, and generally have a lot of fun.



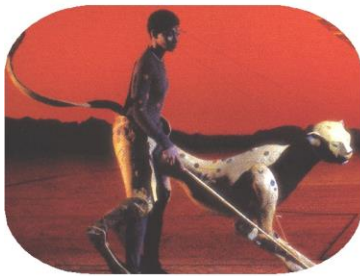
Once again, Candy (Candy Ward Photography) took some excellent pictures of Piper and our family. Candy does a wonderful job with Piper. Thanks so much!



Over my Spring break (in February) Piper had her first haircut. We went to a place called the "Yellow Balloon" here in Columbia. This place specializes in kids, with 7 inch TV's at each chair, some chairs shaped like cars, and fun movies that they can pop into a VCR if the kids don't like the TV show that's on. Piper sat very still and did very well. For her trouble, she got a cute new hair-do, a yellow balloon (of course), a lollypop, a sticker, a shiny hair clip in the shape of a butterfly, and a picture to commemorate the occasion (all fixed up in a little photo holder). Is it any wonder why now, every other week, she claims to need a haircut? What have we done!



For Christmas last year, Lee purchased tickets to see "The Lion King on Broadway" in Atlanta. The show was amazing, the costumes were awesome, and we couldn't have had a better time. You have to see it to believe it. Since you are not allowed to take pictures inside (nor should you be), the pictures here are from the program, but you should get an idea for the costuming. The stage would also change, adding a mountain when needed. It was really cool how they did it all.



In April, we had a sadness come into our home. PC, our parakeet, passed away at the age of 11. PC was born in the summer of 1992 in Dee's aviary (my granddaddy). He gave her to me that summer and she had accompanied me through graduate school at USC, through meeting Lee, and having Piper. When Piper had her cast last year and begged to pet one of the birds, PC was the only one of the three who would allow it. She was such a sweet soul and we miss her very much.



Lee's Mom is a member of the Sumter Crafters Guild and often participates in shows in and around Sumter. Piper decided to go and "help" Grandma at the show, then retire to Grandma and Grandpa's house for some fun time with Grandpa.

Easter, that special holiday, is always fun. This year, the preschool egg hunt at Piper's school was rained on, so the hunt took place in each child's classroom. I got there a little early, so I got to hide all the eggs while the children were taken on a trip around the church corridors. Daddy also came to enjoy the kids finding their eggs and Piper was delighted. Each egg was stuffed with candy or toys and the teachers made sure each child got to keep about the same number of eggs while making sure any "special eggs" (such as the big green one Piper found) remained with their original hunters. It was so much fun!





This year, when Paula Gabbert went on sabbatical, I became the temporary faculty sponsor for the local ACM-W group at Furman. We decided that it would be nice to have a series of "technology workshops" to take interested students who would learn about the hardware and how computers are put together. We also take these machines and "recycle" them as we can back into the community. Furman's Computer and Information Services had started doing this, but lacked the man power to make sure the machines were working and all personal information was removed. These students help out in that regard while learning about how computers are put together. Lee volunteered to come up and go through everything with them. We've had three meetings throughout this year and the kids seem to really enjoy them.

Easter day brought lots of fun. The Easter bunny came with goodies in a pretty basket for Piper - eggs filled with toys and candy! Then, we had two outdoor egg hunts - one at each grandparent's home!

Candy also took some great pictures of Piper in her Easter outfits. We took the rocky horse that Santa brought Piper last year to Candy's studio and took some great shots. We'd hoped to take some with a bunny rabbit that a friend of Candy's had, but it was raining and those pictures were to be outside. However, a couple of weeks later, the weather was perfect and on Memorial day, we took pictures of the bunny and some beautiful hydrangea bushes.



Any time she can, Piper loves to come to Furman with me. It's not only where Mama works, it's a magical place filled with ducks, geese, and swans on a beautiful lake; leaves to jump in in the Fall; and flowers to look at, smell, and touch in the Spring. This year, there was an added attraction. Ann, our administrative assistant, adopted a new friend. Her husband and daughter found a baby opossum on the side of the road and they just couldn't leave it. When it was small, Ann brought "Petie" into the office so that she could feed him every 2 to 3 hours (just like a human baby) and Piper loved to pet him. (Look later in the letter to see how much Petie grew over the summer!) This is Piper and Petie in May, just after Ann took him in.



Mother's Day came with some beautiful flowers sent to my office from Piper. Then, we went to visit our mothers and give a joint "Mother/Father" gift - a DVD player that plays picture CD's. Now the grandparents can enjoy digital pictures of the little one!



Through the year, Piper continued taking gymnastics with Miss Kim's Gym. She really loves it, and will show us all the things she's learning when she comes home. At the end of the school year, Miss Kim had a performance for the parents and grandparents to attend. What she didn't know was that about 4 preschool classes would also be in the audience. I wasn't sure Piper would like the public-ness of this performance, but she performed like a trooper. Ms. Kim had the kids work through things just as they do in class - beginning with stretching exercises and then going through a series of things. Piper can pull up a bit on the bar, walk up a wall with her hands on the floor, complete a

forward flip (or mountain roll), walk a balance beam (that's on the floor) and jump on the trampoline. At the end, Ms. Kim gave each child a gymnastics trophy and T-shirt. Piper was so proud of her trophy and it is still on our entertainment center in the den. Piper loves gymnastics so much that she has continued taking lessons through the summer and is taking lessons this year at preschool.



This past Spring, I introduced a new course into Furman's curriculum: "3D Modeling and Animation." The class goal was to teach students how to create computer generated movies. We used a free download for software, called "Anim8or" (found at [www.anim8or.com](http://www.anim8or.com)) and while it was limited, it was amazing what the kids did with it. A couple of students in the class had other software, Lightwave, which I allowed them to use. I had a wide range of students: freshmen to seniors, non-majors to senior level CS majors, so this class was a real challenge to teach. However, the class produced 9 animated shorts (20 students who divided into 9 teams of 1 to 3 each) and we had a public viewing at the end of the term. This was well attended and all in all, I think the students really enjoyed the class. I know I did. I'll be teaching it again this Winter, so if you don't hear from me from January to March, this is probably why!



Each year, Piper's preschool program has a little graduation ceremony as the children move from one class to the next. This year, instead of it being outside, the ceremony was inside the classroom, and each child had their picture taken with a little white gown and the traditional black mortar board hat. It was a lot of fun and very sweet. We thank her teachers, Ms. Michelle and Ms. Sandy, for a great year. (Also Ms. Shanda, who left in Feb. to have a baby of her own!)



It's back! We were so excited to learn that Riverbanks Zoo is once again hosting the "Taste of Columbia." This wonderful invention invites area restaurants to the zoo to set up booths and sell their food at low, low prices. Lee, Piper, Mama, Daddy, and I went and explored the many tastes that Columbia has to offer. If a place near you has an event like this, or you're near Columbia in the Spring, I highly encourage the visit. We got to enjoy lots of food and the zoo all at once. It was a lot of fun.



Candy suggested that two year olds look great at the governor's mansion, so we arranged a time in June to take Piper for some outdoor pictures. The weather was great and Piper loved the area. The governor's mansion of SC is just gorgeous and has beautiful gardens, fountains, and (Piper's favorite) - roly polies! (You may know them as "pill bugs." - you know, the kind that roll up into a ball when you pick them up.) Candy brought her two little girls, Becka and Olivia, and her son Forrest. Becka kept Piper supplied with roly polies and at the end of the session, Piper and Olivia got to splash in the fountain for a little bit.



This summer, we purchased a pool for Piper. It is one that you have to blow up with a pump, but it is really cute. There is a basketball goal on one side, a floating frog that spits water when attached to a hose, and a small slide to play on. Piper loved it. We invited her friend Olivia to come over and play in the pool and in Piper's ball pit (a birthday gift from last year). The two girls had such a fun time and I found that "Mama" can get much more done around the house when there are two children to entertain each other instead of one child who wants attention! They played really well together and had such a good time. Morgan "helped" me watch out for things, so everyone had a great day.





In July, we made our annual trip to N. Myrtle beach. We stayed at "Martin Manor," which is where we have stayed the past three years now. Morgan can come and we had such a good time. I just love the beach – I wish we could live there. Piper played in the water, but her true love seemed to be making (and destroying) sand castles. As soon as we'd get some portion of a wall, down it would come! Morgan loved the morning walks up and down the strand. The fireworks on the 4th were beautiful (we watched them over the pier), but Piper got a little nervous, so we came in early. While we were there, we had Angela Fellenz photography take pictures again this year, as we did last year. They did a good job, don't you think?



This year, Jen (the friend from the yearly New Year's visit) was shocked to find that Lee and I actually visited her! (She's been asking every year, but with Piper, it's been too difficult.) We went to her parent's lake house and had a blast. Piper stayed with her grandparents, so it was just Lee, myself, Jen, and her sister Becky. We went out on the lake, watched a movie, churned ice cream, and just generally had a good time.



The first weekend of August, we went back to the beach with Kim and Aunt Nell. They got their usual spot, but it doesn't allow pets. So, Lee and I stayed down the street with Morgan (I just can't leave him now – he loves the beach so much!) and Piper stayed with Aunt Nell, Kim, Nana (my mom) and Granddaddy Boyce (she's beginning to move from calling Daddy Boyce to Granddaddy). When Lee and I left for the evening, she didn't give us a backwards glance!



As mentioned earlier, this past Spring, Ann in our department was given a new love to care for... a baby opossum that found its way into her family and heart. "Petie" started out very small and fragile, but under her care, he has blossomed into a full grown little North American marsupial! Piper was thrilled to meet Petie when she came to Furman with me this summer, and you can see from the pictures how quickly Petie grew! Piper also introduced Petie to his now favorite food... "Cheetos"!

In August, we took a trip to PA to visit with Lee's family and some friends of ours from graduate school. We had such a fun time! On the way up, we stayed at one of my favorite bed and breakfasts – the Jordan Hollow Farm Inn. It's in Stanley, VA and their web site is: <http://www.jordanhollow.com>. This is where Lee and I spent our first anniversary and this was our third stay with them. The owners/managers are so nice, the breakfasts are unbelievable, and it's a working horse farm, filled with horses, cats, a dog or two, and even llamas! We stayed there with Piper, who was delighted to get to meet





the cats (especially "Mama Kitty" who we were told was very patient with small children, so we sought her out). She also enjoyed seeing the horses up close. She wasn't as thrilled with the llamas, but they were a bit far away in a field and she couldn't get a good look. After a wonderful breakfast, we took a little time to walk around the grounds; Piper loved all the beautiful flowers! She also liked the open fields. It is a beautiful place and I encourage everyone to check it out. Checkout was at noon, and so just before that, we traveled on.



We stopped over in Gettysburg to visit with some friends – Clif, Kim, and Collin Presser. There, we stayed at the Cashtown Inn, a haunted bed and breakfast, and had the fun of hearing creaks and smelling cigar smoke (as one of the ghosts is said to do on the porches at night)! The flowers were beautiful - as you can see, even on Lee's shoulders, Piper wasn't quite as tall as the sunflowers! After another wonderful breakfast, we had time to catch up with our friends. It was great to see Clif and Kim; Collin and Piper got along so well. Piper still looks at his picture from time to time, and I'm told Collin looks for Piper also. We went to the Boyd's Bear Factory, which is a 5 or 6 story store filled on every level with Boyd's Bears and all their other products. On the top floor, there was a play area, which is where Clif, Lee, Collin, and Piper hung out while the "moms" looked around. We also visited a miniature horse farm, but both Collin and Piper were a bit tired by that time.



From Gettysburg, we traveled on to Benton, PA, to see Lee's family. We had booked a room in a bed and breakfast called the Blue Heron; however, the owners allowed smoking (and smoked themselves) and had lots of cats, both of which I'm allergic to. So, we had to leave after the first night, but while there, Piper got to bathe in an old-timey claw footed tub. She looked so cute! We moved to a hotel the next day and spent most of it with Lee's family. We visited with his grandfather at his home and enjoyed a nice breakfast and visit to a lake with him. We also went to the Campground, where Lee's aunt's have a summer cottage and visited with them and Lee's grandmother. While there, Jeanette had arranged a family get-together so that we could see lots of people and Piper and her cousin Morgan (Becky and John's little girl) could finally meet. At the campground, there was a see-saw, slide and swings, and a building for gatherings. We had a cookout and it was a lot of fun.





After returning from our PA trip, Lee and I received some exciting news... Piper is going to be a big sister! We do not yet know if it's a boy or a girl (that news should come in mid-December, if baby cooperates). So far, everything is going well, with a normal, healthy baby. At 9 weeks, we took a peek through an ultrasound and at 11 weeks, we heard the baby's heartbeat. It was so sweet to hear! Piper is very excited. When asked to share her news, people got one of three phrases: "I'm going to be a big sister!" "I'm having a birthday party!" and "I'm going to be a clown for Halloween!"



This year at the Child Enrichment Center, they had an outside group come to take the school photographs. They did a good job and Piper was a real little ham! Everyone loved her ladybug outfit.

Wow, time really flies. This past September, Piper celebrated her 3rd birthday. It's hard to believe that three years have passed so quickly. Learned parents tell me time will continue to speed up as it passes. For the first time, Piper invited some friends her own age in addition to family to share in her birthday. Her two best buddies, Andrew and Peter, came to play, along with her Nana and Boyce, Aunt Nell and Kim, and Andrew's Mom and Peter's Mom. The kids played with Piper's toys and then took turns hitting a piñata as hard as possible (until Lee took out a knife and made a big cut on the bottom – and STILL they had a hard time opening the thing, and they didn't hold back on hitting it, either!). The looks on their faces to see all the little toys falling out! We had such a fun time.



Piper, being at preschool on her actual birthday, got to have two parties, because she had one at preschool, too. We also provided a piñata for preschool (they also ended up cutting it open), along with some cupcakes and other goodies.



Well, the zoo lessons started up again in the Fall, and Piper loved it. When we would visit the zoo in the summer, she'd ask to go to the classroom, but because the zoo instructors are busy with the "big kids" (camps and things) over the summer, the preschool program is only during the school year. Piper has learned about night creatures, spiders, and other fun things already this year. We're looking forward to many other zoo adventures!



Once again, I was asked to demonstrate my quilling at the SC State Fair. I have twice been so honored and I really enjoy doing it. I wasn't sure I'd be able to, as it was 6 hours in one spot (and I agreed before I knew I was expecting), but it went very well. People oohed and aahhed over Lee's chessboard and new 3D gamecock, loved the Noah's Ark, and asked lots of questions. It's always fun to share quilling with people and I was glad I had the opportunity.



After the demo, Lee, Piper, and I walked around the fair a little bit. We let Piper play two games and let me tell you, this child is much better at them than I ever was. In only two tries (with barely any help from Lee – really!) she won a big red elephant. Then, on her first round of playing "rubber ball bingo", Piper won all by herself – throwing balls until she hit 5 in a row before anyone else did! For this, she came away with a furry red puppy pillow. Both of these items were large (the elephant was almost Piper sized!) so she came away happy.

This year, Riverbanks zoo celebrated Halloween in a fun way – "Boo at the Zoo." This program invited kids 12 and under to come and play at the zoo after hours. Trees were lit up with orange lights and the merry-go-round played fun and spooky songs as is spun. There was a



story teller, crafts to complete (Piper made a bat), and carnival games to play. Piper went fishing for tootsie rolls, spider ring tossed for candy, and picked up ducks for a small toy. She also threw bananas into a cardboard gorilla's tummy for candy. We went through a spooky maze and then decided it was time to go home. What a lot of fun!

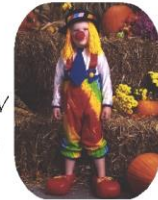


Each year, Piper's preschool offers a little fall festival, when the parents can go into the classrooms and talk to the teachers, see what their little ones have been up to, and then go enjoy pizza and games in the church fellowship hall. First, we talked to Piper's teachers, Ms. Wendy and Ms. Kathy, in Piper's room. Then, we went down to the games. Piper loved the fishing game, where a magnet was placed on the end of a pole and little foamy fish with paperclips attached floated in a pool for the catching. The face painting and balloons were also very fun.



In October, we had yet another sadness come into our home. Buttercup, one of our cockatiels, passed away. We are not sure how old Buttercup was, but he was somewhere between 11 and 14. Buttercup was one of Dee's birds, and Lee and I adopted he and Samuel when Dee passed away in 1998. While Dee loved all of his birds, Buttercup was the one who would come and sit on his shoulder, play with his cap and pull at his ears. He was also the first to learn to mimic a car alarm from our apartment complex. He had a lot of personality and we will miss him very much.

For Halloween this year, Piper was the cutest clown you ever did see. She had a little trouble walking in the big feet and got her Daddy to carry her up and down stairs, but she really enjoyed the trick-or-treating. She visited a few neighbors and then was content to come home and watch Halloween TV specials while Mama and Daddy gave out the candy. We also had Mitchell's Photography in Greenville take her Halloween picture - he did a great job!



This year, I submitted a paper to the Consortium of Computing in Small Colleges. It was accepted for their conference, which was in GA, and so I went to present the paper. It was a lot of fun and a great experience. Also that weekend, in Atlanta, Jen's sister Karen got married. So, Lee drove down to meet me and we went off to the wedding. It was so beautiful and the reception was great with dinner and dancing. Lee and I hadn't gotten to spend much time alone together, so it was a nice way to round out the weekend. Congratulations Karen and David!



Mitchell's Photography has a wonderful trick for parents with children who are afraid of Santa - they set up a house and have Santa peek through the window behind them! Afterwards, Santa comes out and tries to have them sit on his lap, but Piper would have none of that. She did graciously accept the gingerbread cookie, though!



Piper, while she likes the gifts from Santa, has always been hesitant to sit on his lap. To our surprise, Piper found a much desired item in the mall - so desired that it was worth sitting on Santa's lap to ask for it! She discovered that Santa is very nice and she really hopes he will remember her pink flower sponge that smells like ice cream. Please Santa, don't forget!



Before Thanksgiving, Candy was able to take some family Christmas pictures for us. Lee's parents joined us, too. If you need pictures, Candy Ward Photography is a great place to go!

Merry Christmas All !

Love,

Lee, Paige,  
Piper, Baby,  
Morgan,  
and Samuel

