

# Meeker Family 2007 Christmas Newsletter



# Meeker Christmas Newsletter, 2007

Greetings all!

We hope you had a wonderful year. Ours was certainly full of fun and adventure. It's really amazing how much things change in the span of a year - this is especially obvious in children and how they grow, and puppies and how they grow - more on that to come!

We'd like to take a minute before we begin and remember three wonderful uncles who are no longer with us. My Uncle Warren Arnold, who was with Aunt Rie for 78 years, passed away this year. He was a wonderful Christian and musician and we miss him very much. We also lost my Uncle CW Huggins this year. What a wonderful creative mind he had - it is a loss to everyone who knew him. Lee's Uncle Floyd Wolfe will also be missed - the girls loved to visit his home when we went to PA - there were usually bunnies to see in the yard and bears to see in the house. We know that you are all in a better place now.

Last year, Amber started taking gymnastics with Dance South in Clinton. Well, they had a float in the Clinton Christmas parade, so we headed to Clinton one Saturday December morning; once there, all dressed in our cute Christmas PJ's (the float's theme) with bows in our hair, Amber decides that this is not a good idea and that she has no intention of getting on that float thing with the loud music! (\*Sigh\* - what do you do with a 2 year old?) However, after some persuasion and the promise that Mama would ride with her, we got on and rode through town, waving to our friends and enjoying the fun. Nana and Granddaddy came to watch, as did big sister Piper and Daddy. (Next year, I'll dress to be IN the parade, just in case!) Once in the float, it was a lot of fun and a neat new way to begin the holiday season.



Piper and the other kindergartners in the Riverland Hills Children's choir serenaded us with some beautiful Christmas music, in December. Amber just loved seeing her big sister on stage. This was also Piper's weekend to have her Hammond class mascot, Curly (a teddy bear - their class was the "bear cubs"). Each class member would bring Curly home for two weekends in the year (one in the fall and one in the spring) and Curly would do everything with them. Then, they would write in his scrapbook and take pictures to include on Monday morning. So, Curly went with us to church and sat on the pew in a cute outfit (we had to dress for church, you know) to watch Piper sing. What a fun way to start the season!

Having attempted several times unsuccessfully to see the lights at the zoo, due to bad weather, we decided to drive through Saluda Shoals park and view their lights - it is definitely worth the trip! They had some beautiful light arrangements and a very interesting display of Christmas trees that would blink on and off in time to music on a certain radio station played in the park.



This year, on Christmas morning, Piper came into our room to wake us before checking out what Santa had left and what to her wondering eyes did she see? Morgan, with a sleigh shaped rawhide chew, happily gnawing away. We assume that Morgan caught Santa the night before and Santa, that jolly old elf, gave Morgan a bit of his Christmas stocking early to make sure he didn't bark and wake up the children!



We are lucky enough to get to enjoy Christmas celebrations with both sides of the family, and we always have a wonderful time. It was so much fun getting together for a wonderful meal, opening gifts, and watching the children play, giggle, and laugh. The holidays are for family.



Finally, after Christmas, the weather eased up as did our schedules, to allow us to visit Riverbanks Lights at the Zoo. It is a beautiful experience and we had so much fun! The children love to see all the animal shaped lights and the nocturnal animals are all on the move, letting you see them in action where you usually see them asleep. We went with the Schellings, and so the girls had David and little Kate to play with.

One day, after Christmas, Lee had set up a little arcade simulator on the TV and Amber was eager to play. While playing "Galaga," she exclaimed to me, "Mama, Mama I tried to get the butterflies, but the butterflies got me!" Now, who would have imagined those space aliens ever being called butterflies!



Well, it seemed like forever since we'd gotten to see Jennifer in Atlanta, and Piper's friend Elaina also lived there; so, one weekend in January, we drove down for a visit. On the way, we found a rest stop which had one of those little rides that had three horses that go round and round. It was just like the one in front of K-mart in Sumter when I was a little girl. Nostalgia hit and the girls got several 25¢ rides out of Lee and I before we left the rest stop and headed on into Atlanta.





There, we dropped Piper off with Elaina (they had a ball!) at their home - a small farm. Piper was so excited to see the cows and horses, cats and dogs. Amber didn't want to leave, but with the promise that Ms. Jennifer had cats too, she got back into the car and we traveled on to Jen's home. There, Amber played with Kadin and Kenji (Jen's two cats) and we had a lot of fun catching up with each other. We swore that we wouldn't let another year pass before we saw each other again. What a fun time!

As a fund raiser, Hammond has a festival in the Lower school where the kids all get to play games (each room is a different theme) and win prizes. The cake walk is the most popular room, but the magician, balloon man, and face painter are also always fun. Amber loves to go too, and it's a fun event for the whole family.

For a few months, Lee and I had been looking (discretely) for a puppy, preferably a Sheltie. Morgan has always been so sweet with the children and I just love the Sheltie's personality. After looking at several puppies online and locally, we found a hobby kennel in Columbia that was expecting a litter in January. The mom's name was "Piper." On 1/28, 6 little puppies were born: Minuet, Tango, Rondo, Flute, Melody, and Viola. Exciting things were to come...

Well, we woke up in February to one of those rare SC snow days. Piper and Amber were SO excited. I didn't know how to tell them that by the time they returned from school, it would probably be gone. So, quickly before getting into the car for the late-starting school day, Lee and I let the girls play in the backyard. Morgan was also like a little puppy - he loves cold weather, as long as he can come back in when he wants and get his feet dried off!



Each year, Hammond holds an auction to help raise funds for the school. Lee and I were unable to go last year, so we were looking forward to it this year. It was actually held on my birthday, so it was a fun and different celebration. The school's country of study was the Czeck republic, so we had Czechoslovakian food and decorations with a bounty of items to bid on. We bid on 3 or 4, but quickly lost out to others. All in all, it was a lot of fun and a great experience. It was also so fun to see the Kindergarten art project in person - a table and chairs full of "good manners quotes" by the K-5 girls and a second table and chairs full of sports balls. The flowers and balls on the tables were made from the children's fingerprints and the sentiments on the tables were quotes from each child. What a wonderful keepsake - however, we were outbid!



As one of the many exciting adventures of Kindergarten this year, the entire grade (5 classrooms) got to create towns to study various occupations. Different parents came in to talk to the students about their work and the kids even went on a field trip or two. Each classroom became its own town, with hair dressers, post offices, banks, veterinarians, libraries, etc. It was really a wonderful way to teach children what occupations are out there.



Piper had been begging for a trip to a local hair salon called "Hair Doodles" for a fancy new cut - isn't she just too cute?



When the puppies were four weeks old, Lee and I took the girls to see them. There were two puppies that really stood out - Tango and Flute. We decided to think about the little ones for a little longer, but Piper was really excited.

A week or so later, we decided that Tango was our little guy. We saw the puppies once more and made our decision. Tango became ours, but stayed with his mother until he was about 10 weeks old - the weekend of Easter.



In March, Piper lost her third tooth (and now she's up to 8, with 1 loose!) I can't believe she's growing up so fast. It happened to come out just before we took Easter photos, so I have some very nice shots to remember it by.



Once again, Mitchell's Photography in Greenville took some wonderful and memorable photos of the girls with an adorable bunny. This was the first year that Amber was wearing dresses and outfits that Piper was wearing when Amber was born. For some reason, this made it all the more emotional for me (I guess my little baby is growing up). Mitchell was kind enough to work with Amber to obtain some of the same photos I had of Piper at that age. Of course, both girls LOVED the bunnies and Piper's lost tooth really shined!



Even though I had Easter photos, I had received an ad from Driggers Photography in Columbia who offered a unique photo experience - a pond of little ducklings. Well, I had to check that out. The Driggers let me change the girls outfits mid-way, as I wasn't sure if I wanted a dressy or casual look and I really just love them both. The photos are breath-taking.

As a final Easter photo / school photo, Holmes Photography in Clinton came into Thornwell and took school/Easter photos of the children. Amber just loved the attention!



This year, we started what I hope will become an annual tradition - an Easter egg hunt in our backyard. We invited the 2's from Thornwell and the Kindergarten's from Hammond as well as some other friends. Lee was terrified at the thought of close to 100 children coming over, and we had about 35. Lake Barrett won the "big kid" grand prize for finding over 90 eggs (I hid over 900 - they were found within about 20 minutes!) and David Schelling took the prize for the "little kids." All the children received a goodie bag to take home and enjoyed cookies and juice, as well as playing in the yard. Piper got a special surprise at the end of the hunt - Elaina was in town and was able to come. They were so excited to see each other. In the summer months after the hunt, we have only found 4 or 5 wayward eggs - they were all good little hunters! We hope to repeat this little get-together next year. Wish us luck - what a fun day!



In addition to our fun family egg hunt, each of the girls enjoyed egg hunts at their respective schools. Piper actually got to go to Amber's, as she was off for holidays on the day of Thornwell's egg hunt. How fun!



Easter weekend, Tango came home to stay. He was a little nervous at first, but soon warmed up. I wasn't sure how Morgan would feel about our new family member - he's now 14 and while he doesn't play as much anymore, he loves the children so. However, he and Tango have gotten along better than I could have hoped - Morgan's a very patient little fellow. Piper and Amber were also careful to give him lots of hugs and love. (Poor little thing.)

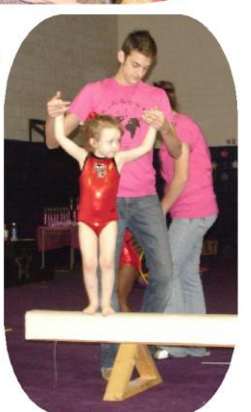
My baby is now a big girl. I can't believe it - three years old. This was the first year she decided not to nap during her birthday party, so she got to enjoy the whole time with her family and friends.



To finish out the year at Riverland Hills, the children's choir sang some beautiful songs for us. It was very beautiful and Piper always loves to sing to us.



This year, Amber got to participate in Dance South's gymnastics class for 2's and she just loved it. It was so fun to go to see the little ones perform - walking on the bar, doing the stretches, tumbling, and overall having a great time. They each received a T-shirt and medal for their efforts and Amber proudly displays her medal on her dresser to this day!



Once again, Hammond's annual "Fun Day" rolled around - this year, Piper was on a team with students from other classes and Ellie, her ballet and jazz classmate, was on her team. They once again represented a country and did all sorts of games, concluding the day with a dance on the football field and the signing of the T-shirts! Amber's excited that next year, fun day will include her!



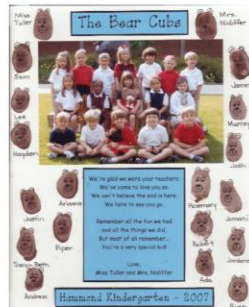
For Mother's day, the Hammond kindergartners performed the annual "Picnic by the Pond." Last November, they had a breakfast for the dads ("Pancakes for Pops") and we moms were so jealous! However, this program was ours and the children all dressed up as pond animals. Piper was a loon, which was black and white. She's also drawn my picture and written about me. The decorations were so cute and everyone did such a good job. It's amazing to me what these children can do and how much they learned this year. Wow!



Mother's day brought me a wonderful breakfast in bed, with heart shaped muffins and bacon spelling out "I love you" and the girls happily sharing it with me. For Father's day, the girls and I treated Lee to a similar experience (pancakes and bacon!). It was such a special time.



Each year (so far) Piper's Hammond class has had an end of the year party. This year, we journeyed off Hammond's campus to enjoy a wonderful time at Bronson Myer's home. There, the kids found horses, cats, sprinklers, games, and a pond to explore. Mr. Mancke joined the group for a fun nature hike. If there is one thing the kids LOVE, it's nature walks with Mr. Mancke. Everywhere he takes them, there are new and exciting things to find. On this trip, for example, we studied the grasses and fur found in a birds nest, learned that Mr. Mancke makes glue with horse poop and pine tree sap, that honeysuckle tastes great and fire ants hurt. We also discovered that female crickets have stingers on their back to lay eggs. This is also why only female bees can sting! The kids discovered grasses and hay, Carolina quartz and some great rocks, too! There was a search for black snakes, but no one found one (Mrs. Nidiffer was NOT disappointed about that!) After returning from the nature walk, Mrs. Nidiffer modeled the great outfit for the relay race. The kids had to dress in it and waddle across the lawn to the other side, where the next child in line then quickly got dressed and waddled back! Finally, everyone ate lunch and were happy and tired when they returned to Hammond. There, we saw Mr. Davis and Mr. Davis in miniature, directing traffic for us.



The day after Piper completed kindergarten, she participated in a dance recital! This year, Piper took ballet and jazz with the Columbia Ballet School. She learned so very much and I was so proud of her. Her teacher, McCree O'Kelly has traveled widely and came back to Columbia to teach for awhile. Because she was in two classes, she had two costumes and two roles in the final production - Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. These kids were so great and I was so proud. There were three pansies (Piper being the one in the split) who danced with Alice's sister (an older student). Piper, Ellie, and China took ballet together. Then Piper and her friend Ellie went on stage alone in front of a full audience to perform their jazz routine. I was so very proud of her. At the rehearsals, we discovered that her friend Rosemary was also taking classes at the school - she was one of the cards toward the end of the performance. It's so amazing what they can do! At the close of the performance, we went to California Dreaming with her admirers - Nana, Granddaddy, Mr. Todd, and Mrs. Carrie. However, before she could finish her cheesecake, Piper had fallen asleep. What a little angel.

It's so hard to believe that Piper graduated kindergarten this year. Next August, she'll start the first grade. Wow, how time flies. Miss Tuller and Mrs. Nidiffer were kind enough to get a great photo of the bear cubs (their class) with their little fingerprints all around it. They framed it and gave it to the children for a parting gift.



Come June, I finally broke down and let Amber get her hair cut. Those little curly locks are so precious and it was hard to see the little bit that Sue (Susan's Shear Shapings in Camden, SC) cut fall to the ground, but I have a couple of them, for a wonderful keepsake. Sue was very patient with Amber and answered all her questions and chatted with her during the hair cut. Sue cut my hair when I was a little girl, and she did my hair for my wedding - now, she cuts Piper and Amber's hair and what a wonderful job she does! The girls finished their visit with a lollipop - what could be better?



After finding these cute cherry PJ's, how could I resist having their photos taken? We headed out to the Picture People in the mall and HOW CUTE??!



This year, 3 of the 4 of us were heading out every day for a week in June to Vacation Bible school. I helped teach the preschool crafts this year and Piper loved coming in each day to see me. Their time is so well planned that the kids are going somewhere every minute! Amber, as a 3 year old, actually stayed in her room with her classmates and did all of her crafts there. She loves to do crafts and had fun playing with all the little children. This year was a sports related theme and Amber was a "Mighty Megaphone" while Piper was a "Mighty Duck" - and we had a "mighty good time!"



In June, we shared one of several zoo trips with Carrie, David, and Kate Schelling. This trip, we got to feed the giraffes - this was a real treat! They say that if a giraffe's tongue kisses you, you will have good luck. Well, we all had some wonderful luck that day. Kate enjoyed the carousel and the "big kids" got to feed the lorikeets as well. They all posed for me with the tiger and then we went home for a well earned nap! (Mine, not the girls - ha, ha!)

A wonderful benefit to Intel employees is that after 7 years of service to the company, you get an 8 week sabbatical. So, from the middle of June to the middle of August, Lee had time off with us. We were so excited about this opportunity to enjoy family time together and get to travel a little to see family and friends.

This year, Piper took an interest in quilling - the paper filigree art form. For her friend Elaina's birthday, she wanted to create a quilled piece and worked hard to complete an "under-the-sea" themed work, complete with fish, mermaid, and plant life. I wanted to keep it so badly, but she insisted that it was Elaina's. I did submit a photo to the North American Quilling Guild and a picture of it was in the guild's newsletter. How fun!



In June, with Lee's sabbatical, we'd planned another trip to Atlanta to visit Jen and let Piper spend the night with Elaina again. However, just before our trip, we found out that Morgan had a growth that had to be removed. We were very afraid it might be cancer, but found out that it was not - thank goodness. Piper still visited with Elaina, but I stayed behind with Morgan, to take him to the surgery and take care of him when he came home. He's doing very well now, and is actually a little more spry than before. Of course, he's trying to keep up with Tango!

Well, this time about 4 years ago, Piper went to the Governor's mansion with Candy (Candy Ward Photography) and had her photo made - this summer, Amber repeated that experience. Isn't she sweet? Candy also came back to our home and took a few photos of the girls and the puppies - she's so nice to do that.



Lee and I began his 8 week sabbatical with a fun filled afternoon with his Intel colleagues - there was an annual picnic scheduled for that day, so we got together at Saluda Shoals Park and grilled and had fun. Then, a wonderful vacation time ensued!



We headed toward PA to spend some time with Lee's family and visit with some friends from graduate school. Our first stop was to be in Gettysburg, PA. We had two puppy sitters, one for Morgan and one for Tango; however, Tango's sitter's puppy didn't like him at all, so we called the bed and breakfast where we were planning to stay and they welcomed him - we were very relieved and we left for PA. We drove to Gettysburg in one day (it was a long drive) and arrived at the "Battlefield Bed and Breakfast" in the afternoon. It's a horse farm on the battlefield and we've stayed there before - I highly recommend it. Tango also loved it and they told us he was a better guest than some people! The bed and breakfast offers lots of fun activities - a wonderfully delicious breakfast, history lessons, and lots of coupons to local events - even one for a free Boyd's Bear (that we took advantage of).



We called our friends Clif and Kim who have boys (Collin and Alex) about the same age as Piper and Amber. Piper and Collin were eager to play together again. Collin remembers us as the ticket to Boyd's Bears - he just knows Piper will love to go there! On our visit there, we got to see giant stuffed animals, wonderful exhibits, and even got to make a candle! We left to let the children rest before dinner at Clif and Kim's. Kim made a great dinner and the children went out to play while we were getting ready. Alex wanted to play with Piper and Collin, but Amber was fascinated with the dinosaurs and balls the boys had and busied herself in playing with their toys. The children also enjoyed each other's pets - Piper wants a cat (I'm allergic) and Collin and Alex loved playing with Tango. After tiring out the puppy, they headed to another portion of the house where they could tire out Charlotte and Benjamin - the Presser's two cats. We played games, ate a great meal, and had a wonderful evening. We missed our other friends, Dudley and Stella, who live in the area as they had gone on vacation themselves. It's so nice to see friends and know that, even though you haven't seen each other in a year or longer, you can pick up where you left off. It's always sad to leave - we have so much fun together and the children play so well.



After spending a couple of days in Gettysburg, we headed on into PA to Shickshinny to stay with Lee's Aunt Jeanette and visit with family. While at Patterson Grove, the girls enjoyed fishing with their Aunt Jeanette while Tango chased the chipmunks around. They enjoyed it, I think, as two or more of them would "tease" him - one would run into a hole and he'd be behind it; then, another one would "pop" up from a different location and he'd chase that one. He also kept the squirrels off the screen of the porch. While we were there, we got to visit with Lee's grandparents, some aunts and uncles, and spent some time enjoying fireworks at his Uncle Ronald's lake house for Morgan's birthday. Amber and Kamryn (her cousin and new best friend) went inside to enjoy the fireworks because they were too loud. It's so nice to get to see family.





This summer, Mama and Daddy purchased one of those wooden swingsets for the backyard for the children to play in. Lee estimated about 3 days to get it together. He, Daddy, Kim, and I worked together off and on for about two weeks, but it's really cute! The girls run out to the backyard when they go to visit now. They have stocked it with a broom, rake, and other fun outdoor things. We also got to visit with Lee's Mom and Dad and enjoy some time. Then, we were off to the beach, not for one week, but for two! It was wonderful to have the extra time.



We planned to head down to the Beach this year and the day before the trip, JK Rowling's book "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" came out, just in time for beach reading. It's a wonderful series - I have really enjoyed it.



This year, we found a new place in Surfside that allows pets in order to be on the South end of Myrtle Beach this year. It was newly refurbished, with a double oven, new washer/dryer in the unit, and all new appliances. Mama, Daddy, Kim, and Aunt Nell were also down at the strand and we had a wonderful vacation together. Tango was fascinated with the ocean and enjoyed chasing the waves around. Morgan loves to walk on the beach, but won't get his feet wet! We of course visited our favorite restaurant, the "Sea Captain's" and enjoyed the ice cream of the "Yum Yum Shop." We took the girls out on the beach one evening and took some photos with Tango and Morgan - we were so spoiled with the two weeks time!



When we returned to the beach, Lee's parents came to visit us at our house. (They weren't able to join us at Surfside.)



During the last days of Lee's sabbatical, before Piper, Amber, and I all started back to school, we went with the Schellings to visit Highlands, NC. There we found some very interesting stores and a simply wonderful ice cream shop. You start with a base of vanilla or chocolate and then add the toppings which are blended in to make the ice cream that flavor. Mmmmm! We also visited several waterfalls, even getting to walk under one. This was very fun, though Piper and Amber insisted on getting a little more wet than necessary. We ended the day with a nice dinner and drive back to Columbia. Afterward, looking at the pictures, we asked Amber why she put her head on David's shoulder in one of them and she responded "Because he's a boy and I like-ded him!" We're going to have to watch those two!

I can't believe that my little girl is now in the First grade at Hammond School. She was excited to begin her year and has been learning so much. She's now reading chapter books on her own (for fun!) having math and spelling tests once a week, and learning Spanish, Art, Music, Computer, PE, and going on Nature expeditions in her "free" time. This year, each member of the class has their own desk, school supplies, and books that they are responsible for. My little girl is growing up!



This year, the girls started school just a day apart - Amber on Monday and Piper on Tuesday. I can't believe that Amber is in the 3 year class at Thornwell Child Development Center. She was happy to see her friends, having missed them over the summer. Her teachers are Ms. Cindy and Ms. Sheri and she has learned a lot, too - letters, numbers, colors, and sharing/playing well with others. She's not a baby anymore.





Before the school year got too far underway, we went to Saluda Shoals park with the Schellings. The walking paths there are really nice and the girls and David love to run along them. Lee and Todd were also playing Tarzan with a thick hanging vine that day and got lots of giggles from the children (and from Carrie and I). Then, of course, each child had to try in turn. It's a fun way to get some exercise!

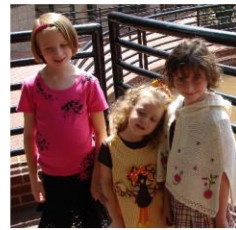


This year, Piper is again taking ballet and jazz lessons with Mr. McCree. Her friend Elizabeth is taking lessons with her and the girls really love getting together to dance. It's really fun to watch all the changes from last year to this year - and Piper just loves it all!



Carrying on the tradition of the last two years, Piper and her friends joined the Hammond Hawk cheer leaders to entertain the fans at half-time of the second home game. This year, Amber was all dressed up and really wanted to go out onto the field, so Piper took her out, too. Piper's friend Elizabeth helped Piper keep an eye on Amber and they all were so very cute!

This year, in lieu of a birthday party, we took Piper to Greenville to see the Disney musical, "Beauty and the Beast." It was put on at the Peace Center and very well done. Elaina, whose family has now moved to NC, and her mother, Kimberly, met us there and all three girls were thrilled. Amber loves "Laina!" After the performance, the actors came out to sign autographs and take photos with their fans, and Piper was very excited about that. Her program is filled with autographs and my camera is filled with photos. We then went to an Italian restaurant, Capri's, before coming back home. I hadn't been to Capri's since I graduated Furman and it is still just as wonderful as it ever was. If you're in Greenville, you should stop by for a bite!



Piper's 7th birthday also brought with it a wonderful new friend - Nana and Granddaddy gave her "Emily" the American Girl Doll. Emily is VERY loved!

This year marked the 10th year that Lee and I have been married. September 27th, our 10th anniversary began in a wonderful way, with the entire first grade of Hammond singing to us. How did we manage this, you ask? Well, our anniversary was on the same day as the annual first grade teddy bear breakfast. The children work very hard at the beginning of the year to learn songs and hand motions and then they all dress up as a fairy tale character. Then, they parade into the gymnasium and perform for all the parents. What a special event, and a great way to start the day.



After the Teddy Bear Breakfast, Lee and I went on to Camden, where Amber stayed with my parents while we had a nice lunch together.

Lee did a very special thing - he traveled to Greenville to get flowers from my favorite florist - Alan Ivy. It was such a wonderful surprise. Would you believe that after 10 years, we gave each other the same gift? Well, the same idea, at least! We both collected photos of our lives together - I put them into a scrapbook for Lee and he put them into an album for me. Guess you really do grow together!

This year, on Sunday's, Piper and Amber are participating in the AWANA's program at church. Each Sunday afternoon, the girls go from 4:30-6:30 and recite Bible verses, learn about the Bible, play games, and fellowship with others. The AWANA's had a float in the annual Irmo Okra strut parade this year, so they both were participants. Lee and I also walked along with the float, as Amber is still a little young to go it alone. What fun to be in a parade!



Well, this year, the Lower school moved the Winter festival to the Fall (so as not to overlap the auction), so we got to go to two festivals in one year! This one had the usual booths, but with the addition of some fallish themes - there was a haunted house and a hayride, and new this year was a book fair. What fun! We visited Mrs. Dobbs room first (where we made test tube sugar candy) and then headed out to explore everywhere else. It was on a Friday night, so it was very exhausting after a long day of school, but the girls left very excited and happy. I hear it was a big success, too!



Earlier this year, Piper began to ask questions about what baptism meant. She became so interested that we took her to talk to Dr. Carney at our church (Riverland Hills Baptist) and she accepted Jesus as her savior that September night. Then, Sunday, October 7th, she went before the congregation to be baptized. She was so very excited; she had her family around her, as her Grandma, Grandpa, Granddaddy, Nana, Aunt Nell, and Kim were all there, along with her Mama, Daddy, and Amber. She and her friend Abby were baptized during the service and we are so very proud of her.



We also took the girls to the Picture People in the mall for some fun fall photos - what do you think? Did they scare you?



The second Sunday in October always brings the Huggins family reunion, and this year we were able to go and enjoy it. Before leaving, Piper and I (with Amber's help) made a jelly cake to take. The jelly cake is made with a "1-2-3-4" recipe and jelly, where the jelly is spread between 8 very thin layers. When I was a little girl, Aunt Rie taught me how to make it - now, I'm teaching Piper and Amber. It's always fun to get family together and we enjoyed seeing everyone.

October also brings the SC State Fair, so the Schellings joined us for an afternoon of fun. Amber loved going on the rides with her sister and David. They are so very cute together. We had fun on all the rides (it was a "pay one price ride day") and then shared chicken, French fries, corn dogs, pickles, and elephant ears. We ran into Wayne, Suzie, and Amy Smith who were down from Clinton for the evening. We also met "Rock-It" the robot and took a final photo at the rocket before we had to leave. You never know what might happen at the SC State Fair - this year, they even had fried Pepsi! (Now I've seen everything!)



For the first time since 2002, I went to the Grace Hopper Convention for Women in Computer Science. This year, it was held in Orlando in a hotel at the Disney World Resort. I felt guilty going there without the children, but there was a lot of wonderful talks and inspiring ideas. Over 1400 women in CS from across the globe were there. It's nice to see everyone!



This year, Tom, Hailey, and Zach joined the Schellings and ourselves for a fun visit to Harmon Farms. The children always love the hay ride and corn maze - however, this year brought a new adventure. The pumpkin cannon. I think this was more for the "Daddy's" than the children, but for a couple of dollars, each "child" got to drop a small pumpkin into an air cannon and watch it shoot high in the air, landing in a field not too far away. Amber and Kate didn't like the noise, but Lee, Todd, and Tom were having so much fun. We got to pet the deer and goats and run through the corn maze before we left for a nice dinner and then home.



Halloween came with Piper's last "parade" at Hammond - next year she'll be a watcher. This year, she got to dress up and parade through the lower school. Amber also got to parade and trick-or-treat around Thornwell. Finally, the two of them got to trick-or-treat about our neighborhood. Tons of candy at our house - come and get it, please!



The AWANA's group at church has some fun concepts - for crazy hair night, the girls and I decided that we should all dress up. Lee was coming in from out of town, so we got him as he came in the door. Piper left with green hair, Amber with pink, Lee with green (and dirty looks toward us!) and me with pink and green hair! What a lot of fun. Now, whenever he wants something, he reminds me about "Crazy Hair Night!"

This fall, while the girls were in AWANA's, Lee and I took a Biblically based financial class - "Crown Financial." It was so interesting learning about how to handle finances from a Biblical perspective. There are over 6000 verses in the Bible that have to do with money and the interesting thing is that they tell you the same thing that all the financial analysts do - be cautious, don't co-sign, and save for a rainy day. It was a great experience.

This November, a very special event happened - Daddy was elected as a deacon for First Baptist Church, Camden. We went to the ordination service and it was one of the most touching services I have ever seen. We are so proud of you, Daddy!



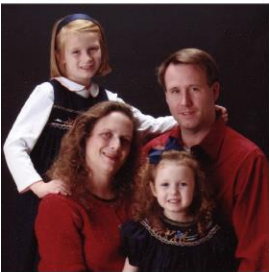
This Thanksgiving, we traveled to Sumter to have dinner with Lee's family. Aunt Jeanette and Aunt Rachel were there to help spread holiday cheer and the dinner was wonderful. We played a game of "guess the beanie's name" after eating and then went back and ate a little more.



The Saturday after Thanksgiving, we met at the "Old Armory" restaurant in Camden to celebrate my Granddaddy Huggins' birthday. It's fun for the children to all get together and play. At the end of the meal, the waitress served Granddaddy with a very large, tall, ice cream and cake dessert. Piper immediately asked if he was going to share and Amber's hand shot into the air - "I want the cherry!" she exclaimed. Granddaddy shared his dessert with everyone and we gathered up the children and went home for the evening.



As always, Mitchell's Photography of Greenville did a wonderful job on Santa Photos for us. It is always so hard to choose which ones are my favorites - there are just no "bad" ones to throw out! This year, he allowed us to bring Morgan and Tango for a special Santa photo. Both dogs were very well behaved and I was proud of them. Piper had brought a list for Santa to review, and he patiently went over each item with her as she checked them off the list. American Girl things are the big ticket items for Piper, while Amber told Santa that she just wanted a doll house with lots of little things! Morgan and Tango just wanted to get a treat or two in their stocking!



This year, we ran quickly to the Picture People for a few family photos - Tori Morris, a friend of ours, helped us out by smocking a dress for Piper to match Amber's. It was just beautiful and looked so great on Piper. Tori is very talented!



So, that's our year in review. We had some good times, visited family and friends, added a new member to our family, and took time to play and work along the way. Our contact information has not changed. It's still:

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Please stay in touch and we wish you all a Merry Christmas and Good Night!



# Love, The Meekers



Lee and Paige

Amber



Morgan



Piper



and Tango