



While we were having fun at home, Lee was hard at work in OR for three weeks - from Memorial day to June 15th. He did slip away one Sunday afternoon to go to a recommended amazing place - Multnomah Falls. He hiked the waterfall and took several photos - I'd love to see it one day and we'd like to take the girls. How beautiful!

Lee arrived back home just in time for Father's day - the Saturday before, in fact. The girls wanted to take him to their newly discovered favorite restaurant - Shoney's. (Does that bring back memories?) There's one near the airport and I took them there the day he left, as they were feeling very down. I knew their hot fudge cake and milkshakes would help lighten the mood - and I LOVE the Strawberry pie! It's always been my favorite! So, when Lee got back, they begged to take him there and we had a nice meal and a great homecoming. Three weeks is a long time!



Father's day was nice - first going to church and then heading to meet Mama and Daddy at Outback Steakhouse. (Yes - we really splurged that weekend!) It was delicious and wonderful to get to spend Father's day with the two best dads I know. It's also hard - missing Lee's dad and grandfathers (Lee's and mine) who are no longer with us to celebrate. But, we had a nice visit and a wonderful day.

The week before leaving for OK, Piper went to the barn nearly every day - trying to get in as much riding as she could before we left for OK. She and Amber worked and worked! Amber has decided to ride many different horses so that she will not have another "favorite," but I think she'll find one! It's been good for her - to experience the different personalities! Piper worked hard to be ready and was SO EXCITED about Nationals it's all she talked about. We ran into the other kids on the team at the barn, all preparing for Oklahoma. This year-round sport is great at helping keep the friendships alive and close.



Vacation Bible School at Riverland Hills is always enjoyed by the girls. This year, Piper didn't attend - she volunteered! She was so excited to get to do that and really enjoyed the 4 year olds. Amber loves church and had a great time at VBS this year! The "Colossal Coaster" theme was really fun, too. Thanks to all the volunteers who work so hard to turn the church into a fun fantasy each year!



Well, Pixar did it again, with a wonderful movie out this summer - Monster's University. Intel was kind enough to rent out the theater one Saturday morning and invite Radio Disney to entertain the kids for two hours before the movie - then, they treated us to concessions and the movie - we LOVE Intel events! Radio Disney was very cool also - lots of games, crafts, and prizes to win. Amber was really into it! Piper was a little more shy (almost a teenager, you know) but really good at the hula-hoop competition. What a fun time!



Well, the day finally arrived - we packed up Mom's van and the seven of us - Lee's mom, Paige's mom and dad, Lee, Piper, Amber, and Paige hopped in and started out for Oklahoma City! We traveled down I-20 through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, then up into Oklahoma! Coming back, we followed I-40 through Arkansas and Tennessee, into North Carolina and back to Columbia. I used the website "RoadTrippers.com" to plan out stops and it worked quite well. We saw some wonderful (and some quirky) things along the way and had a great time!

We tried to stop at each state's rest area as we entered, missing a couple that were closed if we got there too late. The states really have put a lot into their centers - lots of wonderful information and Amber loved collecting all the pamphlets!



In Eatonton, GA, we found the Uncle Remus Museum after a great lunch. The museum is a log cabin made from two original Putnam County slave cabins. Mrs. Georgia, the curator, enthralled us with stories of Joel Chandler Harris and descriptions of how these stories preserved black history and culture. She asked every visitor (there were over 30 of us there) to encourage schools and libraries to bring back the books if they have removed them, as they are preserving history. The building is similar to the one occupied by Uncle Remus, the lovable character made famous by Mr. Harris. Inside, we found shadow boxes containing beautiful and delicate wood carvings of "de critters" capture the other world of Uncle Remus (but no photos were allowed - I'll try to scan in a postcard later!). The focal point of the cabin is a large portrait of Uncle Remus and the Little Boy. I also enjoyed seeing the books and first articles published by Joel Chandler Harris. The kindness of one of the plantation owners of the time allowed him access to the publishing and newspaper industry,



without which, we'd have lost these amazing stories. Most of my relatives know that I LOVED the Brer Rabbit stories as a child and one of my childhood books (which Amber has been reading cover to cover) was IN the museum! It was a wonderful place to visit and I'd love to return. It was great to learn about the life of the author. Mrs. Georgia told everyone that the sly and wily rabbit represented the slave, the fox and bear were the plantation owners, and then was asked what the tar baby was. This was interesting - she said the tar baby was the black man that sat and did nothing. The way she told stories was so interesting! I really enjoyed our adventure there.

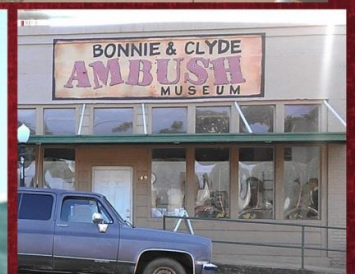


In Anniston, AL, we searched for the world's largest chair as our third stop of our first day of travel - a place to stretch our legs and see a superlative! The address we had was wrong, but Lee's dutiful Internet search turned up the right one - a couple of blocks away. This thing was HUGE - we could have driven our van beneath it! Made of 10 tons of steel, Miller's Office Furniture made it into the Guinness Book of World Records for this one in 1982. Later, larger chairs were built, but none of them were office chairs - so the record still stands that at 33 feet tall (with a 15 foot square seat), this is the world's biggest office chair! In July, 2012, Roadside America reported that a storm took the roof off the office building - but the chair was not touched! Check out the story at: <http://www.roadsideamerica.com/story/2443>



After stopping for the night, we headed into Mississippi, where we saw another beautiful welcome center. Wish we'd have had time to see the place that makes carousel horses - next trip, I suppose!

We stopped at the Vicksburg Military Park, but I was a bit disappointed. Many of the monuments to the soldiers were in the town, not the park, and the movie seemed to leave out many bits of important Southern history.



We did find "Cherry" street - that was fun! Amber loves seeing her middle name on things (and she love eating cherries!). Since we'd just gotten out and all 7 of us were packed into the van, (and we suspected it was closed), we didn't get out at the Louisiana and Texas rest stops - but Lee got some of the state brochures and took a couple of photos for us! We pulled off the road to see the Bonnie and Clyde museum, but it was closed. So, we pushed our way toward Dallas, TX and stopped for the night just on the outskirts of Dallas.



We got an early start the third day of travel and began our adventure at the Dallas World Aquarium. If you get the chance, you should certainly stop - it was amazing! Here, after being greeted by tree kangaroos and large birds, we entered the top canopy of a rainforest, complete with waterfall, where you see all these beautiful birds and primates; then look into the river below to see swans, large fish, turtles, and manatees swimming through!

As you wind your way through the canopy and move down level after level, there are displays of birds (Piper and Amber got to feed one of them!), turtles, crocodiles, alligators, tamarinds, parrots, sloths, and giant river otters! The otters were certainly playful - definitely the show stealers! They loved to come up to the glass and put their little paws up to try to touch the children doing the same thing on the other side!

Then, you start to get to the fish. Sharks, rays, sea dragons (leafy, ribbon, weedy), Japanese crabs, eels, sea horses, and many fish from "Finding Nemo", not to mention HUGE catfish and a manatee! There were jellies (always beautiful) and something called a flashlight fish - their eyes luminescence!



But wait - there's more! A black jaguar was featured, several owls, flamingos, and penguins were fun to see, a couple of different types of sloth, and an anteater! (Wish I could bring him home - but he was HUGE!) Then, we went through the shark tunnel and finally ended up at a restaurant.

Now, most places like this usually "trap" you with expensive but not so great food; not so, here - the food was reasonably priced and really delicious! We enjoyed the gift shop before we left and, while Amber was disappointed not to get a sea dragon for a pet, she did find one that was a finger puppet, so all was well! Piper enjoyed using her iPad for photos and made a wonderful photo movie in the car after we left. Such fun! Definitely something I'd return to see one day.



About an hour south of Oklahoma City, we turned off the interstate to see a huge bug - made from a VW Beetle! Someone has welded six legs to the little car and put it out in a field for all to see. It's beside a church and was just the cutest thing ever!



We arrived a day early to OK, so we headed to the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum. The artwork and size of this place was awesome! We didn't have time to explore the grounds, but inside, we saw some beautiful examples of western art, exhibits on Native Americans, Television heroes, and all things cowboy - bucking broncos, branding irons, saddles, bridals, and a room full of barb wire (had no idea there were so many different kinds - HUNDREDS of them!). This is another place that would be fun to go and explore.

Photos were prohibited in parts of the museum, but in others, we were free to take flash free photos. Piper loved the "Canyon Princess" (giant cougar statue) and inside they had built, TO SCALE, an entire Western town! Amber loved the church and school house! Lee and Daddy 'sidled' up to the bar and Piper put herself in jail! I enjoyed looking at all the cameras in the photoshop that had been collected through the years!

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum is America's premier institution of Western history, art and culture. Founded in 1955, the museum's goal, through educational programs and these amazing exhibits, is to stimulate interest in the enduring legacy of our American West. More than 10 million visitors from around the world have come to see this unique museum and learn more about the American West. It was very impressive!

I only wish my granddaddy, Dee, could have seen it. All his favorites were featured, including author Zane Grey. He would have loved this!



Thursday, June 17th marked the day we've all been preparing for - the IEA Western National Finals! Piper FINALLY put on eye liner (thanks, Mrs. Joy!) and parents, grandparents, family, and friends came to cheer on our kids!

Claire Darnall finished as reserve champion of her class (2nd in the nation!). Laney Pound was also reserve champion for her class (Way to go Laney - first time at Nationals and what a ride!), as did our Wilson Hall friend Audrey Ann Atkinson. Eilersley McCue finished 6th nationally and Piper - how did she do? Number 9 overall! Her first year on the team, one of the youngest there - WOW! She had a great ride on "Woody" and we are so very proud of all our individual qualifiers! (You can qualify both as a team and individually - Thursday was all individual competition!)





Friday, June 28th, the Hammond Upperschool team put on the ritz, giving it all they had in horsemanship and reining classes and brought home several more ribbons. Great job, one and all! It was so much fun to watch them and cheer them on! Way to go, team! Saturday morning, we had one rider, Seth, for reining and then all the teams had a parade. What an amazing experience! We did some shopping after that - finding WAY too many beautiful things.



Saturday afternoon, we visited the OK City memorial. We didn't go inside - that looked like it would be too emotional. Seeing the handprints, well wishes, side of the building, survivor tree, reflecting pool, and chairs - makes you wonder how anyone could do such a thing. Piper and Amber wrote their own thoughts in the chalk provided in front of the museum. A very touching experience.

That evening, we attended the NRHA Reining competition. Here we saw the professionals and it was amazing. Those horses spun so fast and slid at least 30 feet - the dirt was flying in there! It was really amazing to see. Now both the girls want to rein! We'll see what the future holds, I suppose.

Sunday morning, we got up, ate breakfast, and said goodbye to the Cambria Suites as we got back on the road. We had to get back a little faster than we had to go out, so we didn't stop as much along the way, but we still got to see some beautiful places.



Tucked away in North Little Rock, Arkansas, is the Old Mill. I definitely recommend it - it was beautiful! This is one of the only (if not THE only) remaining structures used in the classic movie, "Gone with the Wind." We watched the movie going out to OK (I'd forgotten parts of it - I hadn't seen it in ages) - don't know that the girls cared for the movie, but they sure liked the Old Mill. It was just far enough along our journey that we needed a bit of a rest and it was nice to get out, walk around, enjoy the beautiful flowers and the history of the place. The unique landscaping was wonderful for photos - they say many wedding and prom pictures are made here!



We rested for the night and then headed out again early the next morning. As we traveled through Tennessee, we found a neat place for a stop. Tucked away is the Minister's Treehouse. A man, a minister, said that one day God told him to build it and it's the unofficial largest tree house in the world; however, after months of holding church services there and letting people come in and look around, the fire marshal closed it, due to lack of sprinkler systems, exit signs, etc. They are working to get it open again, but for now, this is as close as we could get. Very interesting! Lots of people had pulled off to see it! After we did, we had a nice lunch and got back on the road.



We arrived home Monday night and were happily greeted by two excited balls of fur - Tango and Snowball had missed us and we had missed them! We thank Craig Haywood for taking such great care of our little fluff balls! They love him and it's nice to know they are well cared for. Each day, he sent us texts with their photographs - they looked so happy, but were thrilled to see their little girls!

Our return to SC brought the return of summer camps - two of which I led. During Hammond's summer programs, I led two computer camps for different age groups and had a blast. While I was busy, Amber attended "horse camp" with Mrs. Joy and then headed to the beach with Nana, Granddaddy, Aunt Nell, and Kim. Piper joined Mrs. Babson to learn more about writing and then helped the equestrian team make connections by having a horse camp with the summer kids at Hammond. It was a lot of fun!



When Piper and I finished our camps, she, Lee, and I headed to the beach for a few days to enjoy things with the family. Amber was happy to see us - she and Piper missed each other for the week they were apart. My favorite part of this trip was just sitting on the beach watching the dolphins play in the waves. We don't always see dolphins, but this trip we saw them almost every day. They are so playful, graceful, and beautiful! We walked the beach, collected shells, and enjoyed our time together. I also didn't drive for 5 days - a record for me! It was really nice.

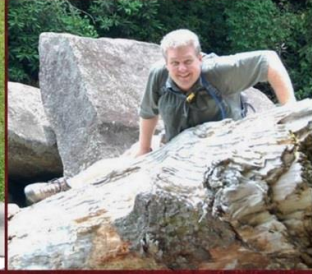
We returned from the beach in time to do laundry and repack to go on our annual mountain trip with the



Schellings. This year, Piper's friend Elaina came with us. We

had a great time hiking waterfalls, granite city, geocaching, eating Sweet Treats ice cream, telling ghost stories, roasting marshmallows, and enjoying fun cabin life. We saw the largest poplar tree in NC - several centuries old! We also saw the smallest post office - the tree was bigger around than the post office! It was a wonderful trip with our great friends and we enjoyed it immensely.





August held a surprise for the girls, as we started to lease Coosa, a beautiful gelding at Joy's barn. Coosa's now a new part of our family and the girls love taking him treats (apples and peppermints are the best!) and riding him. He's teaching them a lot and he's such a sweet boy!



School started all too quickly - this summer seemed so very short! Lee and



I can't believe we have a 4th and 7th grader already! Time has certainly flown by. Both girls are happy and have excellent teachers. Piper has several teachers and she changes classes, has lockers, and has lots of responsibilities. Amber's teachers are Mrs. Thompson and Mrs. Kneece. The fourth graders are the

kings and queens of the lower school with so much responsibility and so many little ones looking up to them. They will be in charge of putting up and taking down the flags each day, recycling, car pool duty, and morning announcements. This year, the morning announcements were recorded as a pod cast and put on YouTube - how fun! Both girls were happy to see their friends again, but the homework was not as much fun. Activities are beginning and the "normal schedule" of things are in order as we begin another school year at Hammond.



Not long after school began, our church had a real treat - Joseph Martin and his wife Sue came to give an amazing piano concert. Joseph Martin really set the piano on fire! He is a graduate of Furman University and his wife, an accomplished singer, worked with Disney for twenty years, singing as one of the Liberty Voices. She was also the first "Ariel" when the musical, "The Little Mermaid" went to Broadway! The girls loved meeting them after the concert and Amber was thrilled to talk and talk and talk. She said that THAT's how she wants to play the piano! If you ever get the opportunity, go and hear Joseph play - it's like nothing you've experienced before - and I say that with many years of piano behind me!

At one of the first football games this Fall, Hammond recognized all the teams that achieved state championship last season. Both the Western and Hunt Seat Equestrian Teams were on the field at halftime and we were so proud of our teams!



Now that we are leasing, there are even more opportunities for being a part of horse shows - the Mid-State show was a great experience and lots of fun. Amber and Piper shared responsibilities in taking care of Coosa and we had a great time - wish it had been a little cooler, though!

Our baby is growing up - as a fourth grader, Amber and her friends are the top of the lower school and responsibility is the emphasis. These kids take care of car pool duty, flag duty, recycling, morning announcements, and there is an emphasis to them that they are to be examples for all the younger students. Amber took her turn at carpool duty in September and was an expert. She's so excited to be growing up!



As a part of the youth choir, Piper is singing more often in church. We love to hear them make a "joyful noise" to the Lord on Sunday mornings!





Speaking of growing up - our eldest baby is now a teenager! Lee and I can't believe how quickly the years have flown by. Coosa's lease was her birthday (and part of her and Amber's Christmas), so a barn party was the best way to celebrate. Friends from the barn and team met us there to surprise Piper and we had cake and ice cream sandwiches to celebrate. Then, a ride on Coosa was a wonderful finish to the



party. Back at the house, Nana, Granddaddy, Aunt Nell, and Kim met us with presents and a fun visit. A great birthday!

This fall, after Daddy recovered from eye surgery, we decided that we'd like to share with family the little mountain cabin we share with the Schellings each summer. It was a beautiful time of year to go to the mountains - the leaves were changing color and the Honeycrisp apples were in season! We enjoyed shopping, saw a couple of waterfalls, and had roasted marshmallows by a campfire. Memory Mountain Lodge is a great place - wish we could visit more often!



Can't believe that we've now been to 9 years of Fall Festivals with the lower school! They are so much fun and there are actually as many middle and high school kids there as lower schoolers! It's a great tradition for the school and the girls love it. Amber was very excited, as her friend Lindsey (who transferred to another school) was there, and the two girls got together to play and participate in all the fun - cake walks, cotton candy, haunted science labs, crazy hair, funny photos, and candy galore! It's a great way to have a lot of good clean fun. It was a little sad this year, though. Not only is this our last year in lower school, but the reading tree, a beloved landmark all these years, had some issues (part of it crashing down) and had to be removed. The upper school kids could hardly believe it, as many of them sat under that tree as kindergarteners themselves. Safety first - but we'll miss the reading tree.



The "Spooktacular" is an annual horse show in Redbank which is becoming a tradition and a favorite. The girls loved showing Coosa in some classes. Amber was sporting some new show clothes this time - she really liked them. Piper's friend Alex, from church, came out to watch the fun. As it's so close to Halloween, one of the classes is a "costume class." The costumes are so full of imagination and fun to look at each year. The girls were water fairies (Amber was Silvermist, a friend of Tinkerbell's and Piper was a water fairy that would lead the "water" (poor Coosa) around since Amber had to ride side-saddle in her costume - made complete by the cowgirl boots!) The horses are so patient and love their kids to do this! They were also very cute.



This year, Mama came over to the house and we got to celebrate her birthday. It was a quiet celebration - what she wanted - but I did find her favorite - caramel cake!

The annual Halloween parade at the Lower School at Hammond is always so much fun - I can't believe it's our last one! Each group of teachers dress to a theme - the 4th grade teachers were beauty contestants from their state of origin. Amber chose a peacock this year and loved it! All of the kids love the parade!



This Halloween, Piper stayed with me and helped me eat...er that is "give out" the candy. Piper looked so pretty as a Tootsie Roll and Amber became a beautiful peacock for the evening. Snowball decided he wanted to be a horse with a jockey riding on his back. Tango went for his old standby - he likes to dress up as "Lassie" and looks great every year!

Once again, Hammond did it - with an amazing 4th grade play - "The Nifty 50 States." Each 4th grader was assigned a state that they had to research. They each chose something from that state, found facts, and created their lines and costumes for a unique parent experience! No 4th grade play is like any other at Hammond. Amber, from the great state of Kansas, was "Comanche" - the only American survivor of the Battle of Little Bighorn - a Palamino Pony! She was so excited (she loves horses!) and she found so many facts about Comanche that she had a lot of lines. She told them well and ended the play with a "flick of her head and a flourish of her tail!" (just like Comanche, when he was interviewed by reporters at the time!) An amazing experience - the 4th grade teachers and Mrs. Cherrie Herring really deserve so much credit for a job well done!



Amber's choir is also singing more in the large services - we love to hear our babies!



The first Sunday in November brought a special day - Kate Schelling was baptized! We are so happy and proud of her! She looked so pretty in her dress and afterwards we went back to their home for a nice dinner and some fun with family and friends.



This semester, after school, Amber joined the "Broadway Kids" productions on Tuesday afternoons. She has loved learning and participating in the theater productions in this after school program. Her first was "Oliver," which inspired her to read the book, Oliver Twist. She liked it, but said she liked their version better!



Each year, we try to create a leaf pile for the girls and pups to play around in - we put it at the base of the sliding board and they had a ball jumping in the leaves! I think Snowball had the most fun of all!



November also brought Piper's first IEA team shows of the season. We headed to Camden, SC for the Palmetto Classic, four shows that brought Piper a second, third, and fourth place ribbon. Each rider gets 5 shows to make their points and Piper lacks three. We are wishing her luck at her final show - coming up in December.



So, friends and family, that's our year (in a little more than a nutshell!) and we hope you have enjoyed it as much as we did. We hope to hear from each of you and wish you and your family's a

*Very Merry Christmas!*

*Love,  
Lee, Paige, Piper,  
Amber, Tango,  
Snowball, and  
Coosa*

