

(Pictures on Page 2)

Our year was short in ways, long in others. We've gained friendships, lost loved ones, struggled with our own small health needs that paled in comparison to the trials loved ones have endured. But we've both learned in our 70+ years that life is like that. There are ups and downs and sorrows and joys. Nothing has guaranteed us a rose garden—at least not a rose garden without thorns. Outside my study window I see our beautiful two-acre yard, but with leaves to deal with. The yard is covered, and we've mulched twice between rains, and all I could do was watch Becky! I had knee replacement six weeks ago, and I'm immune from mowing or raking.

Sadly, my knee says I am currently immune from kayak fishing. I ended the tournament year in October with great memories, and still loving the sport. I will be fully recovered when our next regular season begins. Gratefully before the knee surgery we got in several visits to autumn football games to watch nephews compete, and thoroughly enjoyed watching Bethany cheer for her high school team. The big event, of course, was GCT Homecoming, as Bethany was chosen as one of the 10th grade maids, and served the role with poise and grace.

Our travel adventures often come with challenges. In September we flew to St. Pete to babysit our grand dog Louie during Mark & Hannah's anniversary trip to the Caribbean. We experienced our first hurricane, Helene, with 6 foot storm surges! We learned to board up windows and hunker down. One more item checked off our bucket list. Thankfully, the next one that hit Florida's west coast had less impact on their home. We have not found a time to get to Kansas City to see Tonya, who's busy with a new job through an agency supporting medical care for women and children, and recently began working on counseling credit hours. She's also loving her side gig in photography, a passion and talent of hers. Her specialty is "people and their pets" and there's some great shots at her website (google for it at Tonya Dean Photography).

Our summer included, for Becky, a ladies-group cruise to Mexico. She enjoyed the fun & fellowship, and swimming with dolphins. Before and after that, we journeyed to a lot of great-niece and great-nephew baseball and softball games. There's a competitive trait in the Wilson family genes, for sure, and it's fun to watch it play out!

Earlier in the spring we visited the Branson area, a venue different from our usual attraction area, enjoying the Big Cedar nature trails and the amazing museum. I hauled my kayak up there and got to fish Table Rock Lake for the first time. But before that, we drove out East, to the Maryland & DC area to visit brother John & Vicki Wilson's clan. We had fun helping renovate their new home, spending time with his son's families, and---what else---attending a few great basketball games and spending time with the great-nephews & great-nieces.

Then, scattered throughout the year, we 'counted it all joy' getting moments with our Crossett loved ones, local church family, and neighborhood friends here in Jonesboro. Whether near or far, every minute together with you bonds us more deeply. When we take time to exchange joys, affirm our faith, relate our heartaches, share good food and other blessings, hope springs eternal.

We are looking forward, with hope, to Spring, when green leaves replace the dried brown pieces of the past. Kids grow up a little more—including new twins all the way up through college students. Lessons we learned in trials become truths to abide by. Sorrows we have borne become reasons for the hope we have. Jesus came to bring us hope, the hope of God With Us—Immanuel!

Becky and I are doing an advent devotional, that every day adds meaning to this hope. It is titled "An Advent for Exiles." We are not, as much as we strive to live life, in our final home. Life, as beautiful as it is here, will seem dim and pale when we arrive at our true home. To take hold of Jesus, to receive Him, is to take hold of that hope.

We pray you have the best Christmas ever, and that your hope, in Him, endures throughout the coming New Year. We will be one more year nearer to what we all long for, a peace without end.

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace..." (Isaiah 9:6-7a)

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Chicken sitting at the Roost in January



Bethany's 1st 2024 pageant



Damon's ski trip in February with Crossett guys to Colorado was scenic



Sight-seeing in Virginia in route to Maryland & DC



Fishing tourneys began early in the Spring.



Becky holding Damon's new pet, Slinky



Axl Phillips, future multi-sport star athlete!



Ending 9th grade with honors



Gwin Hall at bat



Table Rock Lake



Branson adventures



Tonya with a photo client



Pre-hurricane beach walk at St. Pete



Mark & Hannah's Caribbean anniversary



Sisters and selfies...always fun!



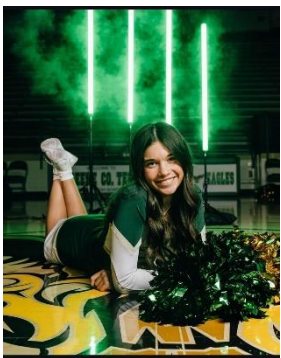
Dolphin whispering sweet nothings!



Homecoming maid Bethany and parents Dan & Jane Marie



Our now favorite sushi spot...hardly a mile from Hannah & Mark's house.



GCT! Green & Gold!