

Merry Christmas from the DEANS



We are having to look back at the torn-off pages of our refrigerator calendar in order to remember what has transpired in our lives this year. That's a commentary of sorts. And rather telling.

We have both reached that magic social security age (Becky last year, me this month) where calendars are a necessity, both for knowing what we have done, and knowing what it is we are to do today. If you could listen in on our evening prayers, you'd likely have to stifle your laughter.

'What was that we needed to pray about?'

'Now, just who has a doctor's appointment tomorrow? Oh! It's me...'

'Dear Lord, please be near ...uh...uh...you know God, what's-their-name...'

So, more often than not we have to resort to our day-by-day 'history grid.' Among the notes for church events and doctor appointments are scribbled reminders for softball games, writing webinars, and dog haircuts. Browsing through the days we find these small things of everyday life, and realize how blessed we are to have a random busyness that, admittedly, we sometimes dislike. It harries us. We feel we are meeting ourselves at every corner. Still with each evening prayer we hear ourselves utter thanks for the energy and health to do what we had done that day.



Yet among the small things there are the big events...our trip to Florida in April, where with Mark and Hannah we had beach strolls, bike rides to the cantina, and a surf-cooled cookout beside the pool.



Besides *that*, Becky completed a bucket list item and along with Mark took a skydiving adventure from 30,000 feet up. Hannah and I watched from the ground, and could hear Becky screaming before we could see her!



In May we visited Tonya in St. Louis, and we helped her with furniture painting, picture hanging, and yard improvements. We enjoyed her new more-spacious apartment, and of course our grand-dogs and grand-cat. In August, Damon went back to help out for an open house at her office in Dutchtown, learning so much more about her work as a community development director. He ran errands



around town picking up donated food, supplies, and a keg of beer. He even got into balloon aerial photography!



Summer was a blast...Bethany was swimming, playing softball, and staying with us several days a week. She had her big 7th birthday in August (a pool party of course). And started first grade a few days later, eager to learn...minus a few more baby teeth. At the end of June Bethany went with us to Memphis. We spent a fun day in the wilderness at Marsha and Bruce's country estate (the 'Buzzard Roost'), and then went to the Memphis Zoo, where Becky and Bethany hopped up on the hump of a camel. She always

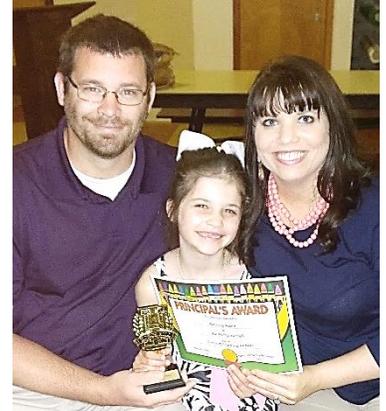


loved the Crossett Zoo camel, but Memphis gave her an up-close encounter!





Dan and Jane kept up a furious pace all year, with work, Bethany activities, and pool maintenance all swirling together. Jane had numerous radio remotes including parades and rodeos. Dan made some significant improvements in his shop, and enjoys woodworking more and more. He's become quite a craftsman and expert at it.



Mom is still living at the Pillars, an assisted living community, where several of her closest friends also live. She loves winning at Bingo and Bean Auction, and will almost always pick the Fiddle Faddle popcorn as her prize! We visit almost every day, and she gets calls from Larry and Marsha almost daily. Her health is good in spite of a few spells now and then, and overall she's doing great to be pushing 90 years old (next February 17. She loves mail as well, and her address is on the insert with this letter.)



Reflecting on where we've been and what we've done, maybe it's natural that we are tired and



frazzled. With trips to St. Louis twice, Florida once, Memphis once, and a November two-week roundabout tour through Syracuse, NY (to see Toni and the kids), down to Delaware (to see friends Larry & Linda Mattila), through Bethesda (to see Josh, Sara & kids) and back through Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, we find ourselves still for a moment.

But not for long. Life is constant change. Today we sold our home we've lived life from during the last 13 years. This place has been a host to treasured family, church, and personal moments. We've been enriched by those memories, just as we have been by blueberries, vegetables, beautiful blooms we've enjoyed here.

But they *are* memories, and we have felt God's lead to seek other venues to explore. We are calm and certain about this move. We don't know the specifics of the itinerary God has planned for us, but we do feel right about it, confident it will involve friends and family on some new frontiers, in a new adventure.

Even with that peace, there's some understandable uneasiness. Some of it just about *stuff*. We have accumulated so much, and even with a humongous garage sale last month, we still have stuff to get rid of...by the end of January. We are aiming for a simpler lifestyle. Getting there won't be simple.

But we won't panic. It's not as if we have had our world turned about, having to leave our home because of a government ordered census, and wondering if we will have a baby alongside the road. It's not as if all of our best laid plans have been undone by the words of an angel and an unsettling dream. We are, instead, the objects of much grace, granted to us by the same Baby that was born in a borrowed stall one long ago night—the self-same Child who would take our sins on Himself, die and then rise again with a promise of our complete and full redemption.

There's no doubt we'll still be 'calendar-dependent.' I don't think there's a reversal for that condition. We will still depend on the prayers, the comforts, and the listening hearts of our loved ones. We will rest in the grace and power to live abundantly that Jesus gives, wherever He may call us and in whatever He may lead us to do.

We've learned the awesome benefit, the deep strengthening, of living with the change God carries us through. One more challenge we will face, with faith, is Dan & Jane & Bethany's move to north Arkansas, as Dan takes a new job in Paragould.

Our prayer is that we become abundant in love and service to His purposes, as He unfolds them before us. And we also pray that grace and peace be to you this Christmas and in days to come, however your calendar unfolds in this New Year.

Merry Christmas with Love, Damon & Becky

(see the insert for our new mailing addresses)