

December 2008

We've had a full year of fun and fellowship with family and friends, rejoicing and resumé's & Raffi, praises and prayers, sorting, celebrating, saying so long, weddings (Wanda's!), watching the children change and grow and continue to charm us. (I'm trying hard to be alliterative and creative, but I'm terribly out of practice.) Since we have more than a couple dozen pictures to share with you, you can view them online at www.wengercd.com/pictures – 2008 Retrospective.

Highlights and What We Remember about 2008

✧ Feb. 20, "The Awakening," our favorite DC landmark sculpture, moved from its home of 27 years (Hains Point) to the new National Harbor in PG Co. MD.

✧ March 1, Three Rivers MI, Margaret Wenger's senior violin recital, assisted by Elisabeth, Emily and John Mark – we were delighted to be in attendance. (She's now at Houghton College in NY with Elisabeth.)

✧ Cross-country skiing on the Hermitage property with Raffi: we skied, Raffi romped – his first experience with substantial snow. Next stop, Chicago, to see the Hays family and Chloe, who had to share her people with Raffi.

✧ April, architectural plans drawn up for basement renovation and a permit obtained!

✧ April 25, the last Neighborhood Learning Center benefit auction, commemorating **25 years** of the NLC! While Gail toiled day and night working on the auction booklet (and ran out of ink printing the bid sheets!), Phil was in Toronto where he spoke at a seminar, something about Challenges to Collaboration in Government. His parents and brothers Dave and Doug drove over to see him, and he got back *mere hours* before the auction!

✧ Phil became an elder at our church, Peace Fellowship.

✧ Basement renovation stalled till Phil has time to find a contractor.

✧ Erica and Olivia Johnson's various performances – now in high school and middle school, they've been involved in school plays and a wonderful worship dance ministry called Children of the Light Dancers. We made it to at least one of the dance performances, a benefit for International Justice Mission; saw Olivia in her class play "The Outsiders" and Erica in her class musical "Ragtime," and suffered a little bit of freezing weather to watch the dance group bravely perform at the White House Pageant of Peace.

✧ May, Lancaster County PA, a performance of "Our Town" starring our nephew Ben Wenger in the lead character of the Stage Manager – what an impressive job!

✧ June 14, celebrated sister Laura's 50-Schmifty birthday in Quakertown PA. (It's my turn next year – woo-hoo!)

✧ Also in June, our last dinner at Los Alamos with Mark & Pam Harmon, who ended a long and fruitful time of ministry in the city to start new ministry opportunities in Nashville TN. Their boys (who I've known from diaperhood) are now out of college and relocated to Philadelphia (Andrew) and Los Angeles area (Peter Lindsay).

✧ June 28, Washington DC, Wanda & Charles got married amidst LOTS of prayer and rejoicing. We had great fun doing music for them, which included a children's choir of friends and family, praise songs with Pastor Dennis and Susan Edwards, Phil on guitar, John and Ben Verba on drums, and a surprise recessional number featuring Caroline Hays on violin and incorporating "O Canada" (for Wanda) and "Yellow Rose of Texas" (for Charles) into Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." (I was particularly pleased with myself for arranging this, and hope someone got it on tape.)

✧ Two weeks later, we picked up our niece Kathryn in Pittsburgh, where she's attending the Culinary Institute, to go to Zanesville OH for Ann & Doug's wedding. Ann signed us up for a benefit 5K run and one-mile fun walk the morning of the wedding – we did the no-sweat walk while Ann and nephews Alex and Josh did the run. Just a few hours later, Ann was gorgeous and the wedding went beautifully, including a snippet of the "Hallelujah Chorus" at the end! And Phil, as usher/bouncer, didn't have to bounce anybody.

✧ Lillie Round-up a week later in Jefferson OH, where Lynne enlisted aunts and cousins to help finish the binding of Ann & Doug's wedding quilt. Lynne did a spectacular job on that quilt!



The Awakening



Bucket and Biff, all grown up

✧ August 2, Kelsey & Zach's wedding in Lancaster (on Hannah's 6th birthday)! Phil was again an usher, and also Emcee at the reception, where he played the part of Proud Uncle and tried not to embarrass his favorite niece too much. Mention must be made that the cake was decorated with flowers HAND MADE by the Mother of the Bride!

✧ In August our back patio was refinished! In spite of the wonderful new look, Raffi no longer goes out back, after a little dead rat incident we had there earlier in the summer that involved my screaming.

✧ August trip to the Baltimore Zoo for my birthday for my first-ever camel ride: I could not get the grin off my face!

✧ Two of Phil's favorite authors passed away this fall – Tony Hillerman (1925-Oct 2008) and Michael Crichton (1942-Nov 2008). He's read pretty much everything they wrote, liked most of it, and was eagerly waiting for more – and then they died within two weeks of each other. It was a strange coincidence.

✧ October 26, 2008, Robert "Piggy" DeVaughn died at age 36. Gail knew Robert since the earliest days of the NLC. He grew up near our old church (WCF), and many of his cousins were involved in the Learning Center over the years. His adult life was not easy; he had a lot of medical and financial needs, and several children to support. He came to our door often when he was out of jail, but Phil tried to stay in touch with him when he was in jail as well, encouraging him to read his bible and get connected with a bible study if he could. We believe that Robert is in heaven with Jesus, and were pleased to see from his obituary that he had renewed his confession of faith and was baptized in 2003.

✧ Nov. 13, we celebrated our 20th anniversary. Sister-in-law Jody graciously sent us a reminder of the way we were, which we are not too proud to share with you (it's in the Retrospective).

✧ Danette Livadney and daughters Elise and Chelsea, friends of Harold and Jody's from Brighton CO who we met at the wedding, came to DC to attend a special reception with the First Lady for all the artists who designed ornaments for the main Blue Room White House Christmas tree. Elise was chosen as one of Colorado's representatives! Way cool! Phil took lots of pictures of her ornament when we took the White House Christmas tour later that week.

Just a little bit more about us in 2008

✧ Phil is still working for the Office of Management and Budget, and still enjoying it, though the stress level and workload remain high. He continues to look for a job in technology policy (he can explain what that means), but Gail is happy that he will still be at OMB to work for the new president.

✧ It was a long time coming (to be honest, I'd given up hope of it ever happening) but our Misadventure with Rats last fall prompted action on Phil's part and in March or April, architectural plans were drawn up for our basement renovation and a permit was obtained. Hurray! But Phil was so busy with work and board-related responsibilities involving the Neighborhood Learning Center that he didn't have much time to find a contractor to begin the work. In the weeks leading up to the annual NLC fund-raising auction, the decision was made to cease NLC programming at the end of the school year. Since Phil was board treasurer and later board president, he was very busy this spring and summer working to close down the physical and financial aspects of the Learning Center. (Only Gail's mom can fully appreciate the tremendous amount of work that entailed, having been in a similar position when their church closed.) So the basement renovation stalled indefinitely.

✧ Raffi learned several new tricks – he does a paw bump (the more modern version of "shake"), high five, can go around in a complete circle on command, and David Thorp taught him to jump up and "patty-cake." By November, Raffi decided that underneath the desk in the dining room was his new spot, since both of us were spending a lot of time at the computer, me during the day and Phil in the evenings working on job applications and resumé's. It was a natural spot for Raffi to take a nap and be close to us, but it was a little uncomfortable having the dog's head so close to my feet and the wheels of the chair! In February the (unofficial dog) park I take Raffi to closed for reseeding and I had to find other outlets for Raffi to socialize. We're not doing too well with that – ie, he's not getting much socialization. He's just too big to let off leash and I don't trust him to play nicely. But he's still our sweet puppy, and he loves people.

SPEED BUMP

DAVE COVERLY



✧ Only 18 kids' afghans donated to Project Linus this year – that's less than half my normal annual output. I have to remind myself that I did make a few more afghans than usual for babies and friends. I also actually read a book series – the Yada Yada Prayer Group (seven volumes) by Neta Jackson, which was highly recommended by our friend Amy Johnson who is always recommending books for me to read (which I usually ignore, because I would rather be crocheting than reading, that's just the way I roll). Surprisingly, this was different and I liked it, and would recommend it.

Back to December

As we reach the close of 2008, I wish I could wave a magic wand and – POOF! – all the clutter in our house disappears to its proper place. (So I got a good laugh when this comic appeared in the Sunday paper. Makes one think of Longaberger baskets, doesn't it?) In getting ready for the basement renovation, our living room is full of boxes of papers and miscellaneous items, as is the dining room and front bedroom, and I'm realizing I've got well over 10 years of displaced clutter to sort through. (I just went through what turned out to be **unopened** mail from 2003. Ack.) So that is my life right now.

Phil is still getting bids for the basement work and figuring out where everything will go for the duration. He put together a shed in the backyard last November and has it pretty much filled. Having lived in this house for close to 17 years, we have accumulated a fair bit of stuff that one or the other of us just cannot part with.



We reach the end of 2008 grateful for the many blessings God has given us – Phil's job, our home, our Raffi, our health, church and church family, our parents and families, friends – and for the birth of Jesus into the world to be our Savior.

**Down in a lowly manger
The humble Christ was born
And God sent us salvation
That blessed Christmas morn ...**

Peace and blessings to you and yours,

Gail & Phil