Family News

December 15, 2008



We are approaching the end of another year and its time for our newsletter.

<u>Here's the latest:</u>

Last February Kathy and I spent a week in Anaheim, California across the street from Disneyland. It was anything but sunny southern California. We only saw sunshine for 2 hours in 5 days and the temperature never got higher than the 50's!

The following month we were able to travel to Orlando (with all of our kids and granddaughters) to surprise Kathy's mom on her birthday. I think she was very surprised. While we were there, some of us went to Sea World and had a blast.



Taylor at SeaWorld



Caitlynn, Michelle, Angel, Justinn at SeaWorld

In August Kathy and I were able to go to the Bailey Family Reunion in north Alabama. All of our kids and granddaughters were able to go as well. We all had a great time. Kathy and I decided to stay an extra day and enjoy the beautiful park at Gunthersville. We are getting used to this empty nest thing.



Kathy's sister Lori, and her husband Bill once again graciously opened their home to us for the second time this year when we went to Orlando for Thanksgiving at her brother David's house and enjoyed LOTS of great food and fellowship.

I also traveled to South Carolina for a week in June, and two weeks in North Carolina at different times. Its good to know we will be at home for the next couple of months.





Caitlynn (top) & Angel

This past summer I received a kayak for my birthday. We have lived on a 640 acre lake for more than 23 years and I finally found a way to really enjoy being on the lake. I love taking the kayak a couple of miles on the lake and just ... drifting. Its very relaxing and I've only encountered one alligator ... so far.

Kathy and I continue to spend most of our Saturdays building houses with Habitat. We have helped put four families in brand new houses in 2008!





A kiss in 1986 & a kiss in 2008



Kids in the pool – taken about 1989

All the kids and their families are in good health. Taylor is enjoying the First Grade. Her most recent report card had four A's and one B. Great job Taylor!! Kathy is still enjoying retirement and I am still riding my bicycle to work. Somethings don't change. :)



Justinn (front center), Perry (back center), TJ (back right) & cousins Michael, Michelle,&BJ







Favorite Quote:

"Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

Mark Twain

Merry Christmas

Family News

December 15, 2009



Taylor and Kathy on top of Taylor Mountain

Here's the latest:

Kathy and I celebrated our anniversary in New Orleans this year. I had a work conference down town by the river. I took a couple of extra days off and we enjoyed seeing the French Quarter, riding a boat to the other side of the Mississippi, and a couple of Maudi Grais parades. On the way home we took an extra day and spent the night in a hotel on the beach at Orange beach. The next day we visited Fort Morgan at the mouth of Mobile Bay. Even though the trip was work related, we had a lot of fun!

While we were in New Orleans we received calls from each of our kids. Justinn called to let us know she and Cory would be closing on their first home! They closed in March and after a little painting, they were able to move in. They now own a beautiful house and they are less than ten miles driving distance to the beach.



Angel & Caitlynn

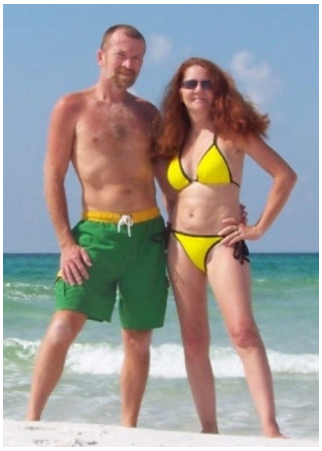
Perry also called us, but his news was not good. Michelle decided she was no longer happy and asked Perry to leave. About two months later Michelle decided it would be best for Perry to take care of the girls. Perry and Michelle are now divorced and Perry has custody of Taylor and Caitlynn. They have a nice home and are living in Choctaw Beach just west of Freeport. He's had a lot of help from Justinn and his new girlfriend Sammy. Caitlynn is in daycare and Taylor is in 2nd grade and they are doing great. Kathy and I are VERY proud of Perry, Taylor, and Caitlynn!



Family Night at Justinn & Cory's

Since Kathy retired three years ago (and yes, she still enjoys being retired - you can tell from the smile she has most days), she is free to travel with me on work related trips. She went with me to a conference in Myrtle Beach, SC for a week in June. On the way up we spent a night in Charleston and spent the next day exploring downtown Charleston. We had a great time, even though the beaches in SC just do not compare to our beaches in north west FL. In August we (and most of our family) traveled to Taylor Mt outside of Guntersville, AL for the Bailey reunion. Kathy and I spent an extra day to go on some of the nature trails on Taylor Mountain. On the way home we stopped and explored a cave north of Birmingham. What a wonderful way to spend a long





Still the PRETTIEST girl in town!

weekend. In September Kathy drove to Orlando and joined her sisters for a cruise to the Bahama's. It looks like they had a ... really fun time (I've seen pictures).

We still try to have our family night as often as we can (which is not often enough for me). In May TJ and Angela hosted family night at their home in Crestview. Angela served up a wonderful meal and we capped off the evening playing phase ten. In July they moved back to Kansas, so if they want to host another family night we've got a lot of traveling to do.





In June, Justinn and Cory hosted our clan and served up a big crayfish cookout with all the fixin's (we vegetarians had delicious grilled black bean burgers I made). It was an evening full of fun and laughter. There are lots of photos on face book.

In October Marc and Heath hosted family night at their apartment in Panama City. They fed us well with a delicious potato soup and salad and a coffee cheese cake for desert. After eating we played video games with their wii. It was my first time playing a video game and I have to admit I liked the tennis and bowling games. Perry had the bowling figured out so well that he could make the ball hug the edge near the gutter and then spin in it into the center of the pins for a strike just like the pros.

Kathy and I are still spending Saturdays building houses for Habitat for Humanity. I continue to ride my bicycle to work each day and go kayaking most weekends. This past summer Kathy and I went kayaking with three other women on a river near Milton. We had a blast! There is something about drifting in a kayak and listening to or playing flute music that is very relaxing. Speaking of flutes, if you have not heard, I have a new hobby - making bamboo flutes. A good friend of mine is helping and we have opened a website called TrueGrassFlutes.com. We have shipped flutes to Alaska, Nebraska, New York, and North Carolina. That wraps it up for this year. We hope you are healthy and enjoying life.



Favorite Quote:

"A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone."
Henry David Thoreau

Merry Christmas!

Family News

December 15, 2010

Its cold in Florida. Can it be December already? It does not seem so long ago when Kathy and I were kayaking on the river and enjoying much warmer temperatures! I miss and love summer time!



Proud Mom and Dad

Announcements:

Last July Angela and TJ exchanged vows. They were married in Kansas. Kathy and I were not able to go there, but we gladly welcome Angela into our family (its official now - although she has been a part of our family for 5 years).



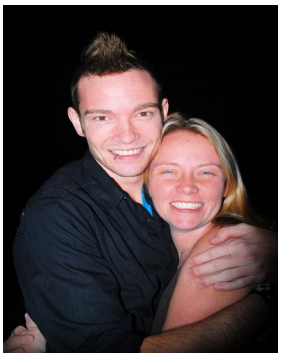
The Newlyweds!

On October 8th we welcomed Abigail Eliza Kurtz into our lives. She is beautiful! If you have not seen them - there are LOTS of pictures on facebook.

We are also happy to share - Perry and Sammy are engaged to be married in March of 2011. Sammy has two children (Kacey 5, and Ryan 3) and combined with Taylor & Caitlynn, they will be a miniature version of the Brady Bunch.



Perry & Sammy's new family



Marc and cousin Michelle (no comment on the hair)

Travels:

We spent Valentine's day in Atlanta this year and had over 4 inches of snow. We walked from our hotel in downtown to the Georgia Aquarium and had to be careful because of all of the ice on the sidewalks. Brrrr … give me summer time any time.

In June we stayed a block away from the river in old downtown Savannah and then spent a few days in Myrtle Beach. Our room on the beach was 23 floors up. Doing my morning yoga routine on the balcony while watching the sun rise over the Atlantic was a great way to start my mornings. Coming home we spent a night at Stone Mt outside of Atlanta. We saw the laser show at night and went to the top of the mountain the next day. What a wonderful trip.



Savannah

This was our last year for the Bailey family reunion at Guntersville State Park in AL. We will miss the annual gathering on top of Taylor Mt, but will remember all the great times we had with a big smile. My mom rode home with us and on the way home we stopped at the highest point in Alabama.



Stone Mountain



My Mom took this photo

Last month Kathy and I drove to Orlando to spend Thanksgiving with her family. Justinn and her family were also there along with Marc. We had a great time seeing everyone. Ask Marc who won at chess and tennis. We won't mention UNO at Patsy & Kevins.

The Latest:

In March, I took a week off from work and Kathy and I removed all of the old shingles from our 25 year old house and put on new shingles. What a job. Several folks helped us pick up old shingles and haul them to the dump, but we did all of the roof work by ourselves. I've already told all of the kids in 25 years its their turn. We will supervise the job from the ground. All of those roofs we have done at habitat helped! We just finished the roof of the 15th habitat house we have worked on since 2002. I guess if I wanted to change jobs I could become a roofer. Don't think that's going to happen.


New shingles being installed.

Kathy is still retired. She and a friend have made dozens of beautiful cakes. She has also made a couple of beautiful quilts this year. She bought a new band saw for her shop, and graciously shares some of her space with me so I can make bamboo flutes (see tgflutes.com). I like to spend time making and playing bamboo flutes, kayaking, – and beating Marc at tennis (some of the time anyway).


At Marianna Caverns

I have been riding my bicycle to work for 16 years now. I am approaching the 40,000 mile mark. Last January we saw 14 straight days with morning temps below freezing and most of those days were in the low 20's, one morning it was 16 degrees. I rode every day, but it was cold! Did I mention I love summer? :)

Kathy and I have gone out on a "date" once a month every month this year. On some of those we went to the movies, played goofy golf, or visited a park (I highly recommend snorkeling at St Andrews State Park in Panama City). We like to visit with our grandchildren and often meet them at a park with their parenets.

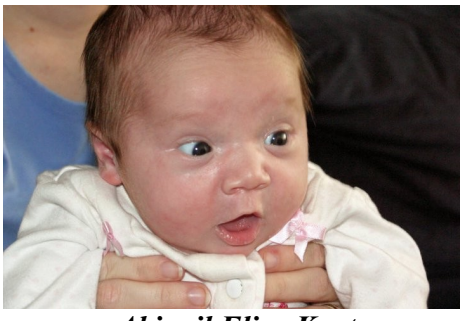
We bought a wii for each other for our anniversary last February. Kathy and I play bowling and golf nearly every week. Some days she wins and some days I win. That keeps it interesting. :) You can find this and old newsletters at ***www.atfar.com/fn***


Cousins saying good-bye to Michelle at Thanksgiving

Favorite Quotes:

"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man." William Shakespeare

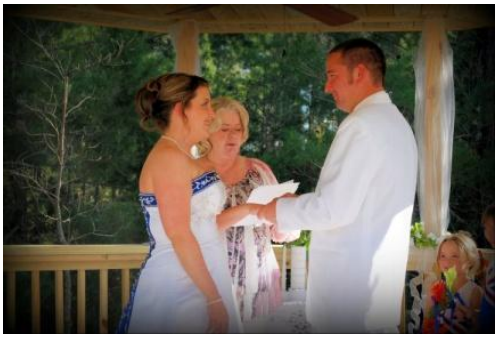
Merry Christmas!


Abigail Eliza Kurtz

Family News

December 15th, 2011

As I glance back over last year's newsletter, I am reminded of all of the changes that have taken place since then. It always amazes me how much things can change in one year. Perry and Sammy were married last March. It was a beautiful wedding. All of our children were able to come and that may be the last time we see all the kids in one place for a long time. It was a wonderful and special day.



Yet while some things have changed other things remain the same like - Kathy and I continue to spend most Saturdays building houses for Habitat for Humanity, I am still riding a bicycle 10 miles a day to work, I am still making bamboo flutes, and Kathy continues to enjoy being retired.



Our local Habitat does not build during the summer months, so this year Kathy and I took a boat to Shell Island in Panama City. There are no man-made structures on the island (not even a dock) and it is home to one of the largest bottle nose dolphin populations in the world. Kathy and I went kayaking on the river north of Milton again this year (more than once) which is always a blast. I also took my kayak to Lake Stanley and Morrison Springs. In July Sinder, a good friend of mine, and I took our kayaks to Grayton Beach State park and had a wonderful time kayaking in Western Lake and then following the river connecting it to the Gulf of Mexico.





Travels: I had to do a lot of work related traveling this year. Kathy was able to go with me on 4 of the 5 trips. I always took extra days off to allow us to enjoy seeing some of the sites. In March we were in Orlando and took Jamie and Clayton's advice to see NASA. I am glad we did. I now wish we had taken the kids there on one of our many trips to Orlando. Maybe we can do that with some of our grandchildren. In June we spent a week at Myrtle Beach. Our hotel was right on the the beach. I love seeing the Atlantic Ocean, but there is no comparison between their beaches and ours. In October we spent a few days in San Antonio. Our hotel was on the Riverwalk just a couple of blocks away from the Alamo and the Tower of the Americas (which was well worth the price to go to the top). We returned from TX and a week later went to Edmonton Canada. While we were there we spent a day in a huge mall that has the largest indoor wave pool in the world along with a water park, ice skating rink, aquarium, and the largest indoor roller. I expect the mall gets a lot of visitors during the cold winter months there. I had to get a passport and Kathy had to upgrade hers to travel to Canada. What an adventure that was! Now that we have passports, Mexico may be on next year's radar.



Updates: All of our kids and their families are doing well. We had a family night last March days after Perry and Sammy's wedding. We all (well almost all of us) got together and played goofy golf in Destin. Then some of the bigger kids raced go carts while Kathy and I took all six of our grandchildren and did some of the rides in the amusement park. It brought back fond memories of all of the wonderful family nights we used to have.



TJ and Angela are still living in KS. TJ has come off the road and is the department manager in electronics (I'm sure he is a natural at that!). Angela is s Sales Representative for the Northeast Spirit Market of GTM Sportswear. They enjoy going to the KState games and have spoiled their dog Ammy. We were very happy they were able to come visit last March.





Perry is working for Budweiser and Sammy works at the Walton County Courthouse. Last spring they were coaches on Kacey and Caitlynn's T ball team. Kathy and I were able to go to some of the games and I was very impressed with both the players and the coaches. With juggling school schedules, ballgames, and jobs they are on the go much of the time. Kathy and I remember our time raising four kids and Perry and Sammy have our sympathy.



Justinn earned her two year degree from Northwest Florida State College this year. We are *VERY* proud of her! She is taking more classes working toward her 4 year degree in between working at a radio station and Carters. Cory is an assistant manager at Publics and with Angel in school this year they too have a sometimes hectic schedule. Justinn continues to paint wonderful paintings and has even taught some art classes. We proudly display some of her great paintings on our living room wall.



In April **Marc** surprised us by moving to Miami. He is working at Barns and Nobles and hoping to take some classes in 2012. In August Kathy spent some time with her sister Lori in Orlando. Marc surprised Kathy with a visit while she was there. One good thing about having a son living so far way in Miami is - we have a warm place to visit if it gets too cold this winter.



It's hard to believe but Taylor is nine and now in the fourth grade. It seems like just yesterday she was about to go to her first day of school. Kayce turned six last January and is in the first grade. She will soon turn seven just three days after Caitlynn turns six. Caitlynn started kindergarten this year. She reminds me of Perry (in more than just her resemblance). And Ryan turned four last June. He is handling having three older sisters without too much trouble. Angel is five and she too started kindergarten this year. Angel (like her mom) is very creative and loves dolphins and butterflies. Abigail turned one year old this past October and is a very happy baby (reminds me of her Uncle Marc). She is very inquisitive and loves trying to play bamboo flutes. She decided it was time to start walking this past Thanksgiving.





We are all healthy (for the most part) and that is always a good thing. We hope you enjoyed this year's newsletter (or at least enjoyed seeing recent photos anyway <g>) and hope you have a very MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Favorite Quote -**"Don't sweat the small stuff." -Richard Carlson**

Family News

December 15, 2012

This year's Family News marks several anniversaries.



- 30 years ago Kathy and I said - I do - until death do us part.
- 25 years ago I began working at Chelco, our electric cooperative.
- 20 years ago we published our very first Family News Letter.
- 10 years ago Taylor Nicole Fannin came into the world.
- 10 years ago Kathy and I began building houses for Habitat for Humanity.

It's always amazing to stop and reflect on the passage of time and the many changes that come not from day to day, but from year after year. With all the anniversaries we decided to do a four page newsletter.



Celebrating 30 years in Key West

Kathy and I celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary on February 14th at a hotel in Key West. We woke up that morning watching the sun rise over the water from our room with a huge wrap around porch right next to the water. Then we had breakfast on the beach. I highly recommend having breakfast while listening to the sounds of waves with the one you love. And for the record, she is still the one I want to spend the rest of my life with.



Hunting Island State Park, SC

This has been another year with lots of traveling for us. After the trip to south FL in February, in June we spent a week next to the Atlantic Ocean in Myrtle Beach. In September and October I had 4 trips in 8 weeks. The last one was the best because it was not work related. We took another vacation to the Keys. We spent a week on Sugar Loaf Key with our friend and gracious host, Marty. In November we enjoyed a great Thanksgiving meal at Kathy's brother's house. Dave and his wife Deb sure know how to prepare a feast! And once again Lori and her husband Bill were kind enough to let us stay at their house. And Sea World at night with Christmas decorations is something to see!







In May Kathy finally got the new truck she has been wanting for a couple of years. Since we had the truck, we were able to take our



kayaks to the Keys with us in October. I loved watching the sunrise and sunset over the Keys from my kayak!! What a relaxing vacation!



Speaking of kayaking, we've done quite a bit of that this year. We've kayaked on the Cold Water River near Milton, the Ecofina near Panama City, Morrison Springs, Seven Runs, and Grayton Beach. And most weekends I find time to take my kayak out on Lake Juniper and play one of my bamboo flutes.



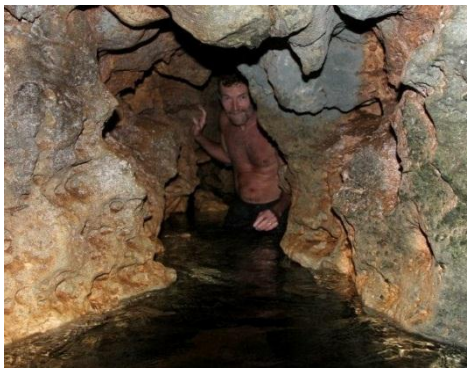
In the Keys again in Oct.

Sinder (my dear friend and partner) and I continue to make and sell flutes. We sell primarily through our website (tgflutes.com), although we did do one festival this year for Octoberfest. We sold a record 18 flutes at that festival, but are still short of selling more than the 65 flutes sold in 2011.

I continue to ride my bicycle to work. And after 18 years of riding, I am happy to say I now have a bike rack to park my bike at work. We had to buy Kathy a new bike after hers was stolen from our front porch. That's the first time since building our house in 1985 that someone stole something from our yard. I also ride my bike to have lunch with mom once a week. It's kind of strange to ride a bike on the same streets where I rode my bike 45 years ago!



Future Flute Player?



Blue Spring on the Ecofina in Bay County



Taylor, Caitlynn, Abigail, and Angel

In November I began laying the first sandbags for a new sandbag cabin. It will be much bigger than the hut (which is now 7 years old) and will have a second story loft. The kids love to go down to the lake and check out the hut. Maybe I can get them to help build the cabin when they come over.









Kathy and Taylor

Taylor turned 10 this year and she is in the 5th grade. She loves science and geology. Hopefully she will still be interested in science in another 5 years and then she and I can have some great conversations about particle physics, biology, quantum mechanics, and astronomy. She is getting very good on computers. Maybe she will let me teach her how to write computer programs someday.



Caitlynn, Taylor, and Angel with Grandpa



Caitlynn, Kayce, and Ryan



Abigail & Great Grandma Barb & Grandma Kathy



Angela and TJ

All of our grandchildren are doing well. Kayce is now 7 and in the second grade. Caitlynn and Angel are 6 and in the first grade. Ryan is 5 and in kindergarten. Abigail just turned 2 in October.

TJ and Angela are still in Kansas and doing well.

Perry, Sammy, and the kids have moved to a new house near Black Creek outside of Freeport.



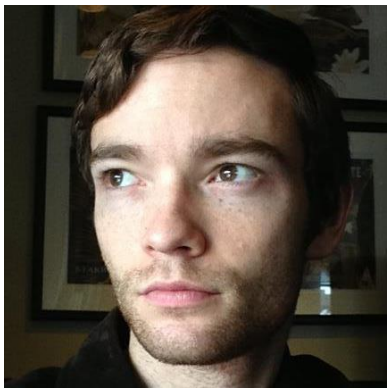
Sammy and Perry



Nancy (Cory's mom), Cory, and Abigail



Cory and Justinn



Marc

Justinn and Cory still live south of Freeport. Marc has moved back to Walton County. All of the kids are healthy and happy (as far as we know anyway). Here are more pictures from this year:












That ends this year's newsletter. Looking forward to the next 20 years! For now we'll leave with more kayaking photos from the Ecofina and sunset near Sugar Loaf Key (10 miles north of Key West).



Favorite Quote:

Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect

Mark Twain.

View past newsletters at hosttg.com/fn



Merry Christmas!!!!!

Family News

December 15th, 2013



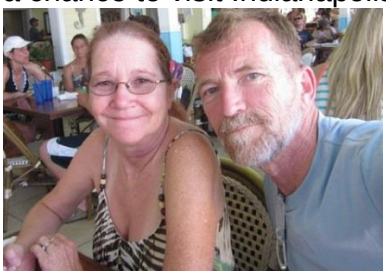
It's time for our annual Christmas Newsletter. Here are some of the things that have happened in 2013. Kathy and I did not travel as much this year as we have the past couple of years. In fact we had no trips from July - December. I think that is a first in many years. Last February we spent a week in New Orleans. One the way over we stopped in MS and ate with a cousin from Nevada we had never met. It was great meeting Toni for the first time and there is no doubt we share some of the same DNA! On the way back from New Orleans, Kathy and I stopped at Fort Gaines on Dauphin Island near Mobile We had the entire fort to ourselves (other than the park staff and museum personnel).

In April we spent a week in downtown Indianapolis and loved it. What a beautiful, clean, entertaining city! Our hotel was next to a big park, a zoo, museums, ball fields, beautiful canals and rivers, and lots of great restaurants. We were able to go to our first minor league baseball game while there.



Perry and Sammy with their kids in the Mountains

It just so happens a long-time friend from before high school works in downtown Indianapolis, so we were able to meet Tim and enjoy a couple of wonderful meals while we were there. Excellent restaurant choices Tim! If you ever have a chance to visit Indianapolis - we highly recommend it.



Kathy and I in Key West

Shortly after getting back from IN, we loaded up our kayaks and my good friend Sinder and headed south. We spent a fantastic week on Sugar Loaf Key (just 10 miles north of Key West). What a wonderful time! I loved taking the kayak out on the water each morning and watching the sunrise. What a great way to begin a day. It would be so easy to live on the water full time in the Keys! Great weather, excellent company, and lots of delicious food. Sinder and Kathy talked me into going to a



Angel's first dance recital





yard sale while we were there. I found (okay, maybe Sinder found) professional $100 scuba flippers for $1. I used them at some local springs when we kayaked on Ecofina back in July and they work great!

After the Keys, Kathy and I spent a week looking out at the Atlantic Ocean in Myrtle Beach, SC. That was a work related trip, but as usual I took some extra time off so we could enjoy the beach. On the way up we stopped at Santee state park. We followed a nature trail and saw sink holes and alligators in SC rather than FL. It is a huge beautiful park that we will definitely go back and explore.



In the summer our local habitat group takes a break from building houses. Kathy and I use that time to do a lot of kayaking. This year we not only saw several new springs on the Ecofina, we also found a river within 45 minutes of our house with crystal clear water. It is on the Eglin military base which also means … no houses. Turkey Creek quickly became one of our favorite places to spend a day kayaking. We returned to again and again until October came. I'm sure we will go back again (several times) next year as well.



Each year Kathy and I treat ourselves to 3 or 4 Broadway plays at the local college. This past spring we saw "Hair" for the first time. Our seats were on the 4th row and my seat was the end seat next to an aisle. That meant I was so close to the stage, I was asked to stand up in the aisle to dance with one of the performers (Sarah from Ohio) as part of the play. It also meant at the end, a dozen audience members (and yes, I was one of them) were asked to join the entire cast on stage to sing - let the sunshine in (Aquarius). So I joined hands with the others on stage and helped



close the show. So now I can honestly say I have sung on stage under the big lights in front of 2,000 people.



Mark 2013 down in the history books - I recently got my very first cell phone! As an IT manager for an electric utility, I decided it would be best for me to learn to use them especially the texting part. That does not mean I will take the phone with me wherever I go! I hate talking on phones and love my quiet time.



A year ago last November I filled up the first of what would become one thousand sandbags to build the lower floor of what I am calling “harmony cave”. It was not easy filling up that many bags (with just a shovel and a wheelbarrow) and still working at a full time job. On top of that we helped build two more habitat houses last year. I’m still not finished with the cave, but it is far enough along where I have been able to spend the night there at least once a month since my birthday this year. I love the peace and quiet in that place. It is a very comfortable space. There are lots of pictures of it on facebook, including several with the grandchildren in and on it.

Speaking of grandkids, we had all six of our grandchildren over this past summer for a campout. Our tents were set up near the lake and we had a good fire to roast marshmallows and hot dogs (veggie dogs for me). We were having a great time, but around 10:30 a nasty thunderstorm hit us. We quickly piled sleeping bags, pillows, and clothes into a wheelbarrow and ran back to the house (the cave was not waterproof at that point. You can imagine Kathy’s surprise when we all came barging into the house (she was expecting a quiet evening at home alone) just as it began pouring down rain. Despite the rain, we still had a good time and will try it again next year.



TJ and Angela are still living in KS. Its been way too long since we have seen them. It’s a good thing they are both on facebook. At least we can check in with them now and then. If they do not come visit soon, Kathy and I may have to take a road trip to KS.



Perry and Sammy spent much of 2013 building a new addition to their house. They added 2 more bedrooms and another bathroom which means all four kids now have their own bedroom. They did a wonderful job! The new addition looks great. In October they took all of the kids to the mountains. After looking at the pictures, I think it is safe to say they all had a lot of fun!



Justinn started a donut shop on the beach in 2013. The owner has a bike shop next door and decided to open the donut shop after talking Justinn into going to work for him. Justinn worked at a donut shop while she was going to college in LA. She talked Marc into leaving Publics to help and then a few months later, she convinced Cory to leave Publics to work at the Donut shop. So all three are working there and they make some delicious donuts. Every time I have stopped by to visit they have always been very busy. Guess word is getting around about the delicious, fresh donuts.



Marc lives just down the road from Justinn. He is within walking distance which makes it easy to carpool to work with Justinn and Cory. He recently wrote a new song and did a video recording of him singing it and playing the guitar on facebook. If you have not seen it, you should.



That about wraps it up for this year. Kathy and I are loving the empty nest thing … a lot! With our grandchildren living 45 minutes away, we do not get to see them as often as we would like. They are all growing SO fast and each of them are very special to us!



Our grandchildren's ages:

Taylor 11	Angel 7
Kacey 8	Ryan 6
Caitlynn 7	Abigail 3

Favorite Quotes:

"Health is the greatest possession. Contentment is the greatest treasure." **Lao Tzu**





For past newsletters go to: **hosttg.com/fn**

Merry

Christmas!





Family News

December 15th, 2014



2014 has been a great year with a couple of firsts. On Valentine's Day Kathy and I spent the night with a room right on the Gulf. I surprised her with two concert tickets to see Elton John. It is the first concert she has ever been to. We had a blast! And then in July Kathy and I joined Sinder, Ronda, and Ron on an 8 day cruise to the Caribbean. That was the first time I had ever been on a cruise and I loved every minute of it. We stopped at four different islands and had a blast relaxing on the ship. I may have even kissed … a sting ray.

This year Kathy and I also spent time in Myrtle Beach, the Smokey Mountains, Nashville, Athens (GA) - home of the tree that owns itself, Orlando, New Smyrna Beach, and Sugar Loaf Key. And I had one trip alone to Kansas City (which was also a first for me).



This past April I marked 20 years of riding a bicycle to work. In July I began riding a small fold up bicycle and I love it. People ask me if I can do circus tricks and make other funny comments about the bike, but I don't care. It is much easier to ride and I love that I can fold it up and put it in a back seat or trunk if I need to.



TJ and Angela moved back from KS this past summer. It sure has been good to have them home. Once they settled into their new place in Crestview they hosted our first Family night in years.

Kathy and I sent saliva samples in and had our DNA tested this year. We now not only know more about where our ancestors came from, we also have a good idea of what major diseases we are at higher risk for. It is very interesting discovering what our DNA says about us.



In September we received news that Kathy's brother Jimmy was killed in a motorcycle accident. The world is missing a unique and free spirit. We were in Orlando for Thanksgiving and it was the first one without him. It is never easy to lose a loved one, especially at the age of 55.



I finished the lower floor of my sandbag "cave" in July of 2013. Every month since then I have spent at least one night in the cave. I call it Harmony Cave because of the peace and harmony I enjoy during my monthly retreats.

In August we had all six of our grandchildren campout in our back yard down by the lake. We had a blast taking turns in the kayak and taking the paddle boat across the lake to see the beaver lodge. Unfortunately we had about an hour of heavy rain around 9:00 pm. Everyone was able to get inside the cave except Angel. She was already asleep in the tent and slept right through the storm.





In September we joined Perry and Sammy and all their kids for a camp out at Grayton State Park. Sunset on the beach was spectacular. Next time we will plan to take our kayaks and enjoy the lake and the beach. It was a quiet event which made up for the excitement from Ryan's birthday party in June. They had a huge blowup slide for his party that began blowing away when a thunderstorm suddenly started. I think I may have been airborne for a bit.



Kathy and I did not go kayaking a lot the last half of the year, but we made up for it in the first half with trips on Cold Water, Ecofina, Grayton, and several trips on Turkey Creek. I also continue to enjoy taking the kayak out on Lake Juniper nearly every weekend.

Justinn opened an art gallery last spring. She spent much of the summer teaching art at the Library. The kids she was working with not only drew pictures, they wrote a book to go with their pictures and Justinn had it published for their parents. She continues to amaze me with her creativity.



If you have not seen some of the sun rise pictures Marc has been taking on the beach, you owe it to yourself to visit his Facebook page. The donnut shop where he works is right on the beach and at break he slips down now and then for some spectacular photos.





Everyone in our bunch is doing well. All of the grandchildren continue to shoot up. I predict Taylor will be taller than Kathy before her 13th birthday next June. She is within an inch now. We enjoy going to school events, ball games, recitals, … when we can. All of the grandchildren are about 45 minutes away, so we do not see them as much as we would like. We are SO proud of each of them!



Our dog Charlie passed away last May. We've had her for over 12 years. She was one of our favorite dogs. And for the first time in our almost 33 years of marriage, Kathy and I are alone in our house with no children and no pets. Although Kathy says that may change soon. She is keeping her eye out for a new pet.

Grandchildren's Ages:

Taylor 12 Kacey 9

Caitlynn 8 Angel 8

Ryan 7 Abigail 4

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Favorite Quote:

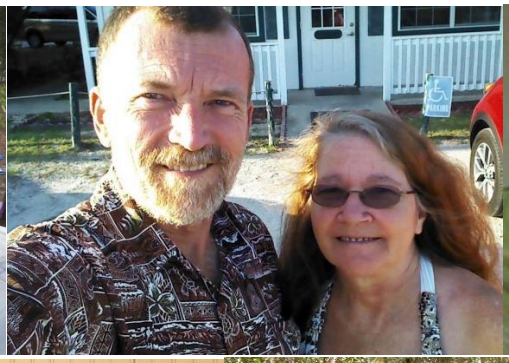
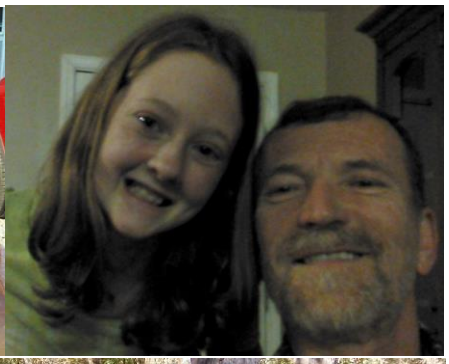
"*Happy is he who forgets ... what cannot be changed*." **Mark Twain**



More pictures from 2014:

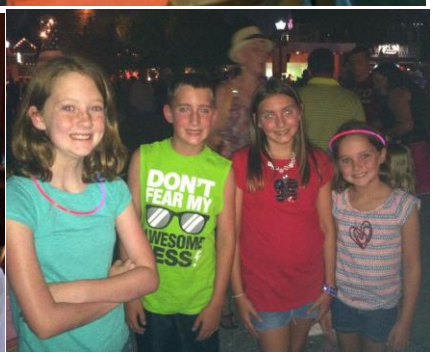








We wish each of you a very Merry Christmas!

Family News

December 14th, 2015



What a wonderful year we have had. I'll begin with a couple of big events. Last January we were having a Family Night at TJ and Angela's. After a great meal, Justinn passed around a sonogram. That was her way of letting us all know she and Cory were having another baby. On August 22 James Tiberius Kurtz came into the world! With the name - James T Kurtz we just … have to call him - Captain.



Two months later, the last of our children got married. Marc and Leo tied the knot on October 17th at a wonderful ceremony in their spacious yard. The wedding had a movie theme complete with a huge blow up screen for watching slide shows and a movie once it got dark. It was a great time and we proudly and officially welcome Leo into our family!!

We've had some wonderful Family gatherings this year at each of the kids houses. In February we were at Justinn and Cory's and Kathy and I were given a fantastic gift. All of our children, spouses, and grandchildren posed for some western themed photos. They gave us framed photos as an anniversary gift. Kathy and I loved it!!!



When we gathered at Perry and Sammy's house last spring we had a great time playing corn hole. In fact, Kathy was inspired to make some corn hole boards which we carried to our first annual Family Campout at St Andrews State Park. It was a big hit.

In September we had all of our kids, their spouses, and grandchildren (a total of 17 people) pitching tents and enjoying the waters of St Andrews Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. What an incredible time

we had (in spite of eating breakfast under canopies because of heavy rain). The rain cleared out and everyone had a great time. Perry took his boat which led to an … adventure (just ask him about it). We took 4 kayaks which were a big hit with everyone. Abigail and I were able to get within 30' of some dolphins on one morning. We all agreed to make it an annual event.




I finished my two story sandbag cabin in May. I continue to spend at least one night a month down by the lake to give Kathy a break from me as well as to recharge my batteries.

Last January the hut turned 10 years old. What a difference when I look at the photo from 2005 and compare it to how it looks today. When sitting in it, you can see half a mile away looking out across the lake. I have to say, I have spent many peaceful hours sitting inside, meditating, playing my flute, or just sitting and watching nature.




Kathy and I took our first trip to Denver last April and had a wonderful time. We were on the 22nd floor (top floor of the hotel) and looking out our window, the only thing between us and the Rocky Mountains was the Mile High football stadium. There was still snow on the mountain tops making for a spectacular view each morning.



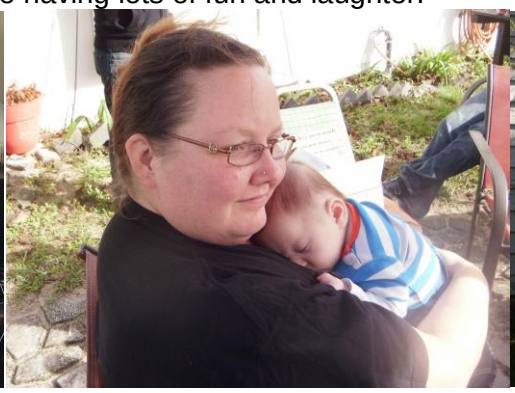


In June we spent a week in Myrtle Beach, SC. On the way up we stopped at Huntington Beach State Park and took a tour of the Atalaya Castle. Kathy and I both love history and touring old forts and buildings and this one did not disappoint us!

In September we spent a week in Athens, GA (home of the tree that - owns itself). And two weeks later I went to Hampton Beach, NH for a few days. After that our traveling days came to an end for the year.




Kathy and I bought new river kayaks this year. We've gone out on different rivers almost a dozen times this year. One of our favorite rivers (and most often visited) is Turkey Creek about 45 minutes away. We kayak with our friends Sinder and Ronda and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature while having lots of fun and laughter.


Kathy and I continue to have a date night each month and we also enjoy going to Broadway plays at our local college. In July I bought a new folding bicycle for my daily commute to work. It is so easy to fold, I can fold it up and take it into my office with ease.



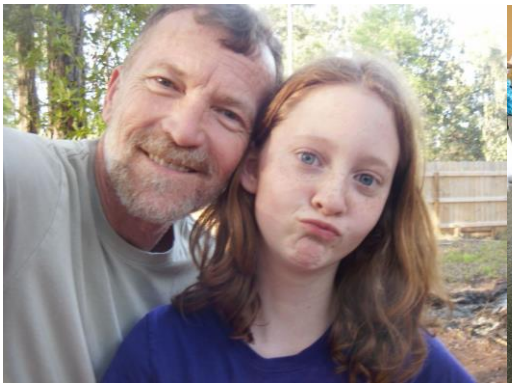


We welcomed Max (Kathy's new Yorkey) into our house last Christmas. This year Kathy and I celebrated 30 years in our house. We built the house in 1985. Thirty years is a long time to be in one place, but there is no doubt about it - it is home sweet home for us.












All of the above photos were taken in 2015.

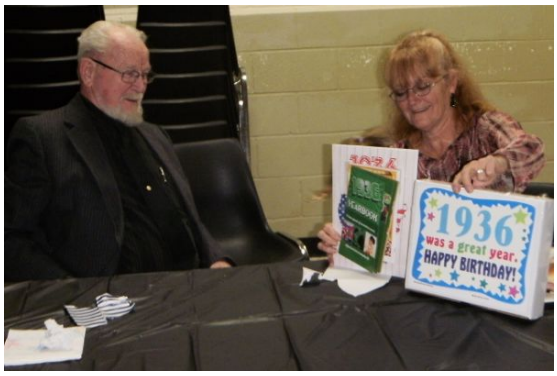
Favorite Quote: "Rainbows introduce us to reflections of different beautiful possibilities so we never forget that pain and grief are not the final options in life." -- *Aberjhani*

That's the latest in our family news for 2015. **We wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful 2016!!**

Family News

December 14, 2016

We began 2016 celebrating my dad's 80th birthday. What a great time! I think he was surprised when he walked into the Civic Center expecting to see a concert and instead saw dozens of family and friends. Here are some photos taken at his party:







Kathy and I traveled to New Orleans for a week in February, Myrtle Beach for a week in June, Athens for a week in September, and Orlando for Thanksgiving. Even though most were work related trips, I took a couple of extra days off on each trip to allow us to do some sightseeing.



In August our entire clan went camping at St. Andrews State Park in Panama City. We had a great time. Marc and TJ were brave enough to paddle the kayaks from our campsite all the way to the beach. That was quite a workout.

Corn hole was a big hit at our family campout again this year. In fact there may have been one team that went undefeated no matter how hard TJ, Perry, Marc,

and Leo tried to beat them. Yes, that would be the team of Cory and myself. We were 8 - 0, even though there were a couple of really close games. You did a great job Cory!! :)

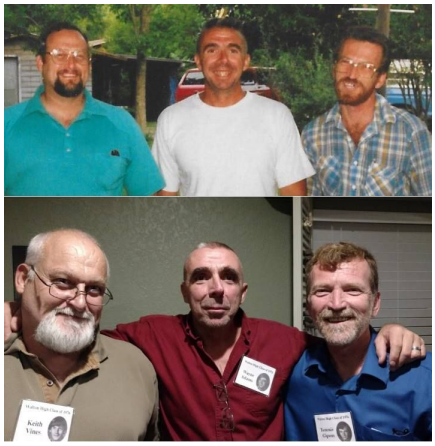










In October my high school class held our 40th class reunion at a local restaurant. Out of a class of 192 we had 88 people show up. Some of these folks are really getting old. Sure glad I am not one of them (wink). Here is a photo of me with two of my friends from that night along with a picture taken after our 20 year reunion. Guess we will have to do it again in another 20 years.

In October, I decided it was time for a new bike. For the past 12 years I have been riding single speed coaster bikes, but the new bike is a 21 speed. I hate to admit that I am getting older, but the three hills I climb on the way home were getting harder and harder. With the new 21 speed bike, it is SO easy. I probably should have done that months ago.

Kathy and I continue to kayak and she is still enjoying retirement. We now have 17 people in our clan. So, let's move on to the grandchildren. One of the biggest things from 2016 - Perry adopted Kacey and Ryan!! And now a little more:



Taylor keeps getting taller. She has beautiful red hair and blue eyes. She had to start wearing braces this year, but that just makes her smile brighter. She is also good at doing magic card tricks thanks to cousin Josh.

Kacey went to south FL back in the summer with her all star softball team. She is becoming a great pitcher and now that she is taller than Taylor she is taking up basketball. And she is wearing braces too.

Caitlynn has been asking me for 4 years to show her how to make a flute. I told her to wait she was 10. This year she made a bamboo flute and a pvc flute. And may I say - she has a great laugh? She is a fun person to have around.

Angel was an angel at a beauty pageant this year when she shared some of her flowers with a girl who had none. She did a great job at her dance recital this year and even helped Abigail's age group. She has been a great big sister to little brother Captain.

Ryan has become quite the athlete from basketball to soccer, he can do it all. In fact he was on an all star baseball team and they did so well they qualified to play at Disney Elite 32 in 2017. But then what do you expect when you have parents like Perry and Sammy giving him great support (Sammy was even his soccer coach this year). And … Ryan is wearing braces too.

Abigail was in her first dance recital last May. Talk about marching to the beat of a different drummer - while all the other kids turned left, she just had to be different and went right. She celebrated her birthday at Chuck E Cheese in October. All of her cousins were there along with several friends. Grandma and Grandpa could only last about an hour before we were wore out and had to leave.





Captain began walking when he was 15 months old (which ties me and Taylor for taking the longest to start walking). He is quickly learning to beware of Ms Abigail. Here he is saying a prayer when he saw her getting wound up. Even though his name is James T. Kurtz, he will not answer to James, only … Captain. :)

Favorite Quote:
"It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."
Chinese Proverb

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Merry Christmas!



Family News

December 14, 2017

It is time for 2017 to wind down which means it is time for our annual Family Newsletter. I often begin these newsletters by sharing some of the places Kathy and I have traveled during the year. Well, this year marks the first year in many, many years where I spent every night of the year at our property. Notice I said *I* spent every night at home and not Kathy. That is because Kathy celebrated her 60th birthday by going on a cruise to the Bahamas with her sister Lori. They had a wonderful time. Still it was very unusual for us to not take our normal 2 or 3 trips this year.



Even though I did not travel, each of our kids did. TJ and Angela spent some time in New Orleans, Perry and Sammy and the kids had a great time in Atlanta, Justinn and Cory and the kids found a beautiful cabin in the mountains of Tennessee, and Marc and Leo went to Universal.

For our anniversary this year, Kathy and I decided to go to Lowes. Yes, that's right - one of the reasons we did not do any traveling was because we decided to spend our anniversary at Lowes. She bought me a new refrigerator and I bought her a new stove for our anniversary this year. Afterwards we saw a movie, went to a photo booth, and played goofy golf.





In May of this year all of my siblings, our kids (well most of our kids), most of my nieces and nephews from my side of our family, and dozens of others surprised my mom to celebrate her 80th birthday. We did a 50's sock hop theme and most people dressed in 50's clothes. We had a DJ playing Elvis tunes, a hula hoop contest, and lots of food. There may even be a video of me dancing with my mom, who can still "cut a rug" on the dance floor.



It was a wonderful time marking a big milestone in life for one of the most amazing women ever. I have nothing but wonderful memories of my mom. In nearly every memory I have (including photos and videos) she is smiling and laughing. The only thing that surpasses her good nature and humor is her kind heart. There is no doubt - if the world had more people like my mom, the world would be a much better place.

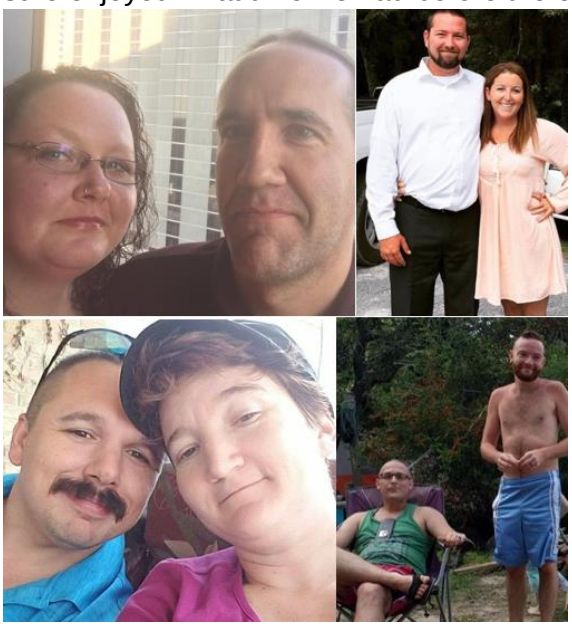
We have lived on Lake Juniper since 1985. This year marks the first time Kathy has ventured out into the main 665 acre lake in a kayak. She has paddled in the smaller 12 acre section in our backyard before, but it took a visit from my cousin and his wife to get her out in a kayak on the main lake.



We were very sad to hear Kathy's brother David lost his battle with cancer in July at the age of 55. Rest in peace David. You are missed by many.



Our annual Family Campout on the beach at St Andrews State Park was cut short this year due to Hurricane Irma. We were kicked out of the park two days early because of the storm, but we sure enjoyed what time we had before the evacuation. And for the record - I should mention - Cory and I remain undefeated in corn hole for the second year in a row.



TJ went back on road again this year. That means we get to watch Ammie whenever Angela has to travel. She has been a wonderful house guest. One of the many things Perry and his clan did in Atlanta was to go to a Braves baseball game. We now have a video of the kids on the big screen and some may have been … dancing. Justinn made us VERY proud this month when she graduated from college and was pinned as a teacher. There will be some lucky kids in 2018 with a wonderful new teacher! Marc and Leo moved into a new house earlier this year. They now have much more room and Leo is within easy walking/biking distance to go to work.



The grand kids just keep growing. They seem to be growing at a faster pace than our kids did. Taylor went to her first Homecoming dance at the high school this year (see photo on page 1). Kacey made the volleyball team and was in a beauty pageant (see photo on last page). Caitlynn made the cheerleading team. Angel started a new school at the Seaside Academy this year. Ryan continues to excel at baseball and fishing. Abigail still has more energy than the Tazmanian Devil. And Captain James T. Kurtz, well let's just say he has his own way of doing things and likes to be the Captain.



Ages:
Taylor - 15
Kacey - 12
Caitlynn - 11
Angel - 11
Ryan - 10
Abigail - 7
Captain - 2

Favorite Quote:
"*Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.*"
Oscar Wilde



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Merry Christmas!



Family News

December 14th, 2018

Well, 2018 turned out to be a full year for our clan with several life changes. What a great year it's been!! I'll begin with the announcement of the birth of our 8th grandchild - Acadia Blakely Kurtz on 11/27/18. Welcome to the family Cadie!! We now have 18 in our clan.





We are very, very proud of Justinn for getting her BA in education!! At the beginning of the year Justinn began teaching 1st grade at Freeport Elementary School. Now she is teaching 2nd grade and from what I hear she is an excellent teacher.

Justinn and Cory now have 3 girls and 1 boy (the reverse of Kathy's kids). Their family has gotten so big, they are moving into a bigger house. The house is still under construction and should be finished around March.

Speaking of new houses, this past January TJ and Angela bought a new house here in DeFuniak Springs. They are just on the other side of town from us. They hosted one of our family nights at their new house back in June and had a ton of room for our big clan.

Kathy and I also experienced a major life change this year. After 31 years at the electric cooperative, I decided to retire. My first day of retirement was on March 28, 2018 (Angel's 12th birthday) at the age of 59. And I have to say - it has absolutely been the best year of my life!!





We celebrated by taking a cruise to Mexico on Kathy's birthday in April. In June we rented a house on the Withlacoochee River north of Tampa with our friend Sinder for a week. We were 3 miles from the Gulf. We were able to kayak every day and loved seeing manatees directly below our kayaks (close enough to touch them). What a fun, relaxing time in Yankeetown.

During the first weekend in August our entire clan gathered at the St Andrews State park on the Gulf of Mexico. What a wonderful time. We rented a pontoon boat for the day and all of the grandchildren were able to go to Shell Island. It was a big hit! Relaxing days and enjoying campfires each night - what a lot of fun! The only downside this year was … Cory and I lost our 3 year winning streak playing corn hole. Yes, I know it is hard to believe and I could go on and on about how close it was, but all I will say is TJ and Perry earned bragging rights by beating us. They are the current reigning family corn hole champs.

In September Kathy and I drove to Atlanta to visit my sister Tonja and see her new house. It was a fun trip. Tonja and I rode bicycles on a great bike path. We did 25 miles one day and 42 miles the next day. Even though I am retired, I still take the bike out for a 5 mile ride every morning. I also spend an hour kayaking on the lake. I spend many days in my sandbag resort down by the lake (I call it Harmony). I am still making flutes and I may have gotten a few naps in the hammock down by the lake. I am very happy with retiring early and highly recommend it!





Our bunch is doing well. The grandchildren will not stop growing. Taylor turned 16 last June! Yes, that means she is old enough for Homecoming dances. Current ages: Kacey 13, Caitlynn

12, Angel 12, Ryan 11, Abigail 8, Captain 3, and Cadie less than a month old. Taylor is loving her second year of high school.











Kacey played softball, won the Miss Firecracker title, and is very good on her volleyball team. Caitlynn made the cheerleading team and is growing up fast. Ryan stays active and somehow found time to play football and basketball this year. Speaking of basketball, Angel was selected for the Seaside basketball team and is still going to the charter school near the beach. Miss Abigail is one of the top readers in the second grade. And Captain has some adjustments to make now that he is no longer the youngest child. Kathy and I celebrated our 36th anniversary with dinner and a movie followed by a walk on the beach. Sometimes the best anniversaries are the ones were we stay in our own area rather than traveling somewhere, especially when you live near the world's most beautiful beaches. In the photo of us and the kids (below right) there is 30 years between the top and bottom photos! I am 30 years old in the top photo and 60 in the bottom. Since retiring, Marc and I have gone kayaking a few times and I had time to write a book. It's 240 pages and titled "Life In Harmony" and is available on Amazon. We celebrated Thanksgiving in Orlando with Kathy's family this year - what a wonderful time!! Now that I am retired, we hope to make more trips to Orlando (so consider this fair warning). :)











Whew - that was a lot to cover for just one year. I'll end with a family photo from our campout. We hope everyone is healthy and happy. We wish you all a very **Merry Christmas**!

Favorite Quote:
"Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." — **Ferris Bueller**

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Family News

December 14th, 2019

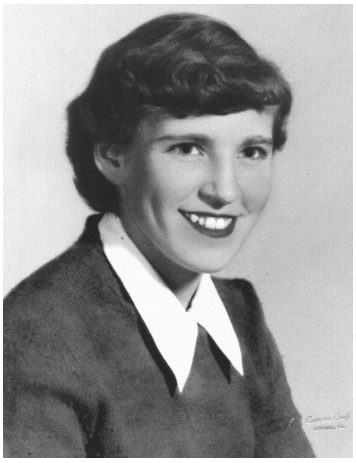
I began doing these newsletters in 1992 and this is the hardest one I have ever done. This will be the first one that Kathy will not proof read. We lost her on April 26th a week after her 62nd birthday and our lives will never ever be the same again.

Me, the kids, their spouses, our grandchildren, and both of our families and our friend Sinder still struggle with Kathy being gone. We miss her so very much!! Kathy loved to have fun. She loved life and knew how to enjoy every day. On the day before she died, she showed me, her mom, and her sister Lori - she still knew how to have fun and enjoy life to the fullest even though her life was near the end. It was a gift to see her smile. She loved to go kayaking on the river with Sinder and Ronda. She retired in 2006 and could do anything she wanted - most people only dream of that. She often said she was a lady of leisure, but mostly her life was one of pure joy, adventure, and fun. It is still hard to believe she is gone. She is dearly missed.

Exactly two weeks after having a memorial service to tell Kathy good-bye, we had one for my mother. She died on Mother's Day, May 12th two weeks away from her 82nd birthday. I am thankful mom sat beside me at Kathy's funeral. I think the thing I miss most about mom being gone is - her laughter. Mom always had a smile on her face, laughter in her soul, and love in her heart. I cannot tell you how much I miss these two ladies.

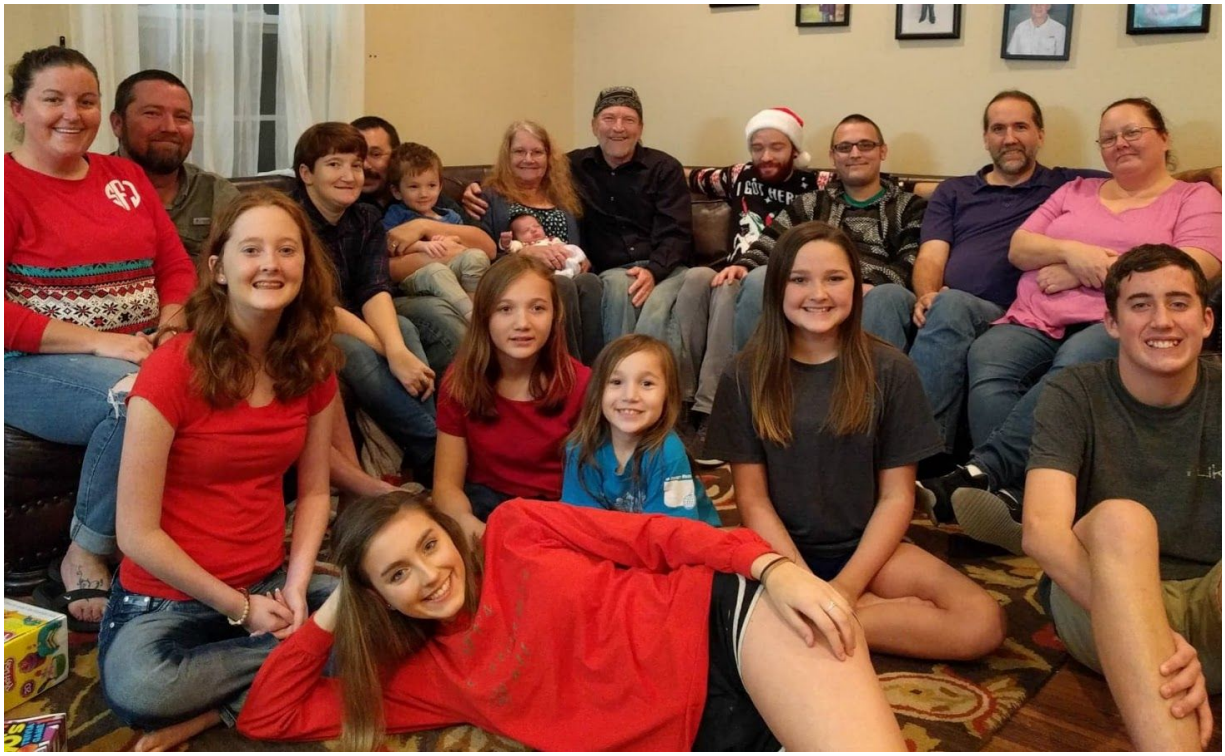








Missing mom and Kathy. Below, our first and last family photo after Cadie was born and before Kathy died:



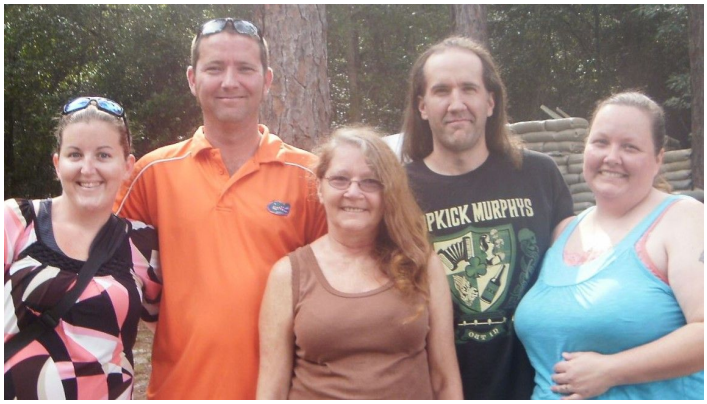
Justinn and Cory moved into their new house in March. I spent a few days with them in the mountains in June. In July I camped with Perry and his family in their new camper in Panama City. TJ and Angela have a new deck on their house and Marc is now managing a store in Panama City. I have visited with my sister Tonja in Atlanta a couple of times. I set a new record for riding a bicycle 56 miles with her one day. Had a wonderful road trip with my sisters, Tonja and Terri to NC to see mom's younger sister (Aunt Dean) in August. I also camped with Terri and Chester in July. Last February Kathy and I camped with them in St Augustine and took a tour of the lighthouse there. It is exactly 219 steps to the top. I speak from experience!! And Chester and I had a great time kayaking near the lighthouse!! And I have to give a big shoutout to my dear friend Sinder for helping me get through this year. Who knew last January would be mine and Sinder's last bean lunch with mom and Kathy. Those sure were some good beans.





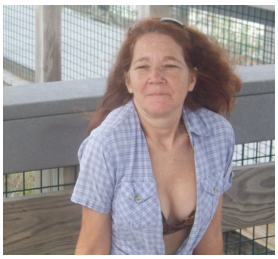
All 8 of our grandchildren are pictured above! Kathy sure did love her grandchildren!! I will let the photos below share a little more about my beautiful bride. We had a grand and blessed life filled with lots of fun:









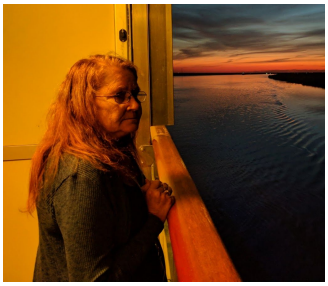
















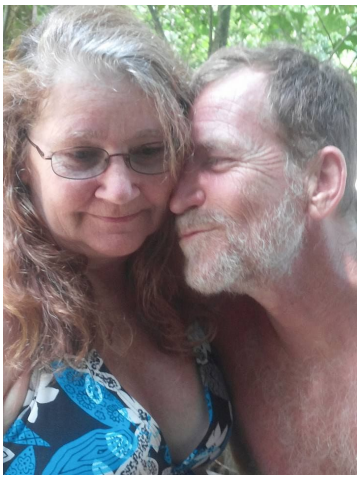


Above - the last time Mom made cheeseballs and the first family campout without Kathy.





Merry Christmas. We are looking forward to a better year in 2020!! In 2020 we will go on our family cruise that Kathy had been planning the past few years. Me, all the kids, spouses, and grandchildren will be heading for Mexico in June. Kathy's ashes will be going along with us.



Favorite Quote:

"The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living." – ***Marcus Tullius Cicero***

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Family News

December 14th, 2020



I ended last year's family newsletter by saying: "We are looking forward to a better year in 2020!" Well, I have to admit, I do not think there could be another year as hard as 2019 because of losing Kathy and my mom, but 2020 was not one of my favorite years, What an … insane year this has been!!!

The family cruise we had been planning for almost 3 years was cancelled because of Covid along with all of my other travel plans for the year. But that was just the tip of the 2020 iceberg. I will not even mention all of the hurricanes that hit the northern Gulf of Mexico. So, I will repeat what I said last year and say - we are looking forward to a better year in 2021!!!

Last year at Christmas, Marc and Leo gave me and all eight of the grandchildren a very special and unique gift - a teddy bear made from some of Kathy's clothes. It made my heart smile. Earlier this year they got two kayaks and began taking regular kayaking trips on Lafayette Creek which borders the subdivision they live in. Last June I was kayaking with them and Marc found two turtles on a tree limb above his kayak. When he stopped to look at them one of them dropped into the seat of his kayak and it was a … snapping turtle. Marc looked a little awkward holding his butt up in the air to avoid the turtle and not flipping the kayak. But he never flipped.





Justinn and Cory have their hands full managing and raising 4 children. The new subdivision they live in continues to grow. They are next door to the pool and clubhouse, which allows them to meet all of their neighbors. Justinn is teaching the second grade again this year and Cory is working hard on getting his four year degree while working at a local bank. They celebrated their anniversary this year by flying to Nashville and enjoying a long weekend without the kids. Last Spring their whole family went camping on Anastasia Island in St Augustine.

For three years Kathy made corn hole boards as Christmas gifts for each of the kids and their spouses. When we exchanged names for Christmas last year the only one of our kids that did not have corn hole boards was TJ and Angela. Perry stepped up to the plate last Christmas and hit a home run. He drew their names and made the exact corn hole boards that his mom was planning to make - one for Notre Dame and one for Kansas State (TJ and Angela's favorite college teams). Well done Perry!!

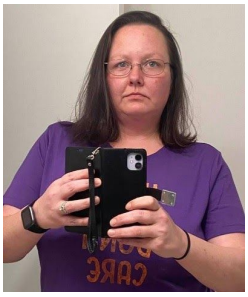




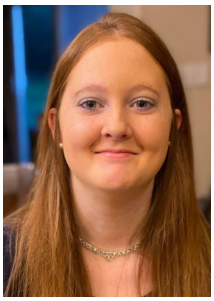
Speaking of Perry - he and Sammy and their family have been getting a lot of use out of the new camper they bought in 2019. Plus he was able to trade in two of his smaller boats to get a bigger and better boat (and I will not mention the fantastic deal he and Sammy got on her new Cadillac, but I will say - Perry is one of the best horse traders ever).

TJ and Angela are learning what it is like to be home owners. After replacing their back deck in 2019, this past year they replaced the windows in their house. But they take it all in stride and are enjoying their house, especially when they can look at the woods in the back and often see deer coming up to their backyard. Angela is able to work from home, but TJ often has to work out of town. That has made it hard on her this year with covid, but she is managing it well.



Even though our family cruise was canceled we were still able to pull off our annual family camping trip in spite of the wind and rain from Hurricane Delta. We had a wonderful time! My sisters Terri and Tammy were able to come join us for one afternoon. And I have to give a big shout out to Caitlynn for doing SO WELL in playing corn hole. She is only 14 and I think next year I will have to team up with her instead of her teaming up with Marc.



Taylor began her senior year in high school. She is doing the best she has ever done so far. She is a school spirited girl with a love for life and has a beautiful class ring she wears proudly. She is working on getting a job soon. For her 18th birthday I took her out to eat. We had a great time. Her red hair and blue eyes make her one of the prettiest girls in the county.

Kacey received her driver's permit in January on her 15th birthday. She missed school to get it. She had knee surgery and came back to play volleyball, but her season ended with a back Injury. She had her first real job over the summer.

Caitlynn began her first year of High School this past fall. She absolutely loves it. She has a couple of honors classes. She is gearing up to get her permit In January on her 15th birthday. She caught up in height with her siblings and she still has more to go.

Angel is finishing up her last year of middle school this year. She is a great big sister and a huge help to her mom and dad. She will be 15 in March. She lets her dog Tank visit me and Max now and then which is always fun. And she is very creative with her phone apps.

Ryan played on the Varsity Basketball team and Baseball Team as a 7th grader. He also decided to give Football one more shot this fall and has enjoyed it as he plays offense, defense, and special teams. He's a straight A student with 2 honors classes. He did extra classes over the summer to gain his Boaters and Hunters licenses. He also held his first job this summer at age 13 doing landscaping for a local company.

Abigail turned 10 in October. She got a pro skateboard for her birthday and loves trying new tricks. She is on the Lego robotics team at school this year and is in her last year of elementary school. And her energy levels are as high as ever. I gave up on trying to keep up with her.

Captain James turned 5 this year and started kindergarten. He is doing really well and is at the top of his class despite being the youngest.

Acadia "Cadie" is a typical two year old. She loves playing with her brother and sisters and making a mess. She is starting to talk really well. Her favorite person to talk to is Captain. Cadie tied my record of taking 15 months before she started walking last March.

I continue to ride my bike 5 miles each day, kayak (bought new kayaks this year), and take Max on weekly hiking trips, usually some place on the Florida Trail near DeFuniak. Max often goes with me kayaking. If only he would learn to paddle. In September I went camping with Perry and his family. I was planning to go with Justinn and her family last March, but Covid got in the way. We built our house in 1985, so this year marks 35 years in the same house. To the right is a photo from our house warming party.











I am loving retirement. I highly recommend it as early as possible. Our clan is doing well in spite of 2020. We hope you have a very **MERRY CHRISTMAS!!**

Mother and daughter at St Augustine and father and daughter on the porch.



Favorite Quotes:

"Adopt the pace of nature. Her secret is patience." *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

"I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees." *Henry David Thoreau*

Family News

December 14th, 2021

Welcome to the 29th year of our family newsletter. Let's begin with a first in our clan (our first grandchild to graduate). Yep, Taylor graduated from Freeport High School on May 20th 2021, complete with beautiful fireworks in the sky behind her as she walked off the stage.





Last February I went camping with Marc, Leo, and their roommate Taylor at a campsite near the river. Even though we had rain one day, we made the best of it by spending the time telling stories under a covered pavilion. We were able to hike a few miles on the FL Trail and enjoyed some kayaking time.



Marc and Leo have gone to the Smoky Mountains twice this year. In October they went as far north as the Shenandoah Valley where they did a ten mile hike to a summit with a view that looked like the top of the world. Marc and Leo enjoy hiking on the FL trail and Marc got his Eglin permit this year and he and I did a fun hike to Little Alaqua Creek at the end of summer.



Justinn and Cory are doing well. Justinn still teaches the second grade (teachers do not get nearly enough credit for ALL that they do) and Cory changed jobs and is now in the cyber security field. He has his associates degree and is close to receiving his bachelors!



Perry and Sammy are staying very busy raising four teenagers. Sometimes their lives go at a non-stop pace. This past September Sammy adopted Taylor and Caitlynn!! Perry had already adopted Kacey and Ryan, so now they are officially … one family with no more of the yours and mine hassles. Congratulations!!



TJ and Angela are doing well and continue to live on the south side of town. They often see deer in the woods behind their house and recently they had to call a beekeeper to come remove a swarm of bees. For our family campout this year they rented a camper and retired their older pop up camper. This was their dog Ammestist's last year camping with us. They have had Ammy over 14 years. She passed away 10/19/21. Kathy and I often watched her when TJ and Angela were out of town.. Ammy will be missed.

Taylor graduated high school and at the beginning of the summer began working at McDonalds. Now that she is an adult we put her name in our family Christmas drawing. Now she can spend some of that hard earned money on one of the other adults in the family.



Kacey turned 16 last January and immediately took her driver's test and got her license. She has been a big help to mom and dad now that she can drive and run errands for them. She is a junior in high school and over the summer worked two jobs. Her boyfriend, Robby also began a new job working for the same company that Perry works for. The two of them teamed up to coordinate the fireworks at Taylor's graduation. Kacey called Robby who was in the woods behind the stage at the football field and she told him when to shoot the fireworks when Taylor and all of her many friends received their diplomas. It was a spectacular firework show!! Great job Kacey and Robby!

Caitlynn is now a sophomore in high school and continues to grow and grow. I don't want to stand back to back with her for fear that she might be taller than me. She got her learner's permit and is starting to drive. She also worked two jobs over the summer. And she is still pretty good at our family corn hole games when we are camping. Right is a photo from the adoption at the courthouse.





Angel graduated 8th grade at the Seaside Academy last May. She is now in high school at Freeport with her cousins and likes it a lot. Angel got her learner's permit and is now driving. She too is growing fast and helps mom and dad a lot with her sister Cadie.

Ryan is also now in high school (which means Perry and Sammy had one graduate and the rest of their three kids are in high school now). He is active with sports and fishing. He is becoming a fine young man and I am very proud of him (and so are mom and dad).



Abigail turned eleven in October and continues to be full of energy and intelligence. She got a new drum set for her birthday. She loves skateboarding, surfing, and swimming and hanging out with her best friend Ava. She recently made a motorized bank that sucks in $20 bills from an old toy car motor. So if you give her $20 for her to demonstrate, you may not get it back.

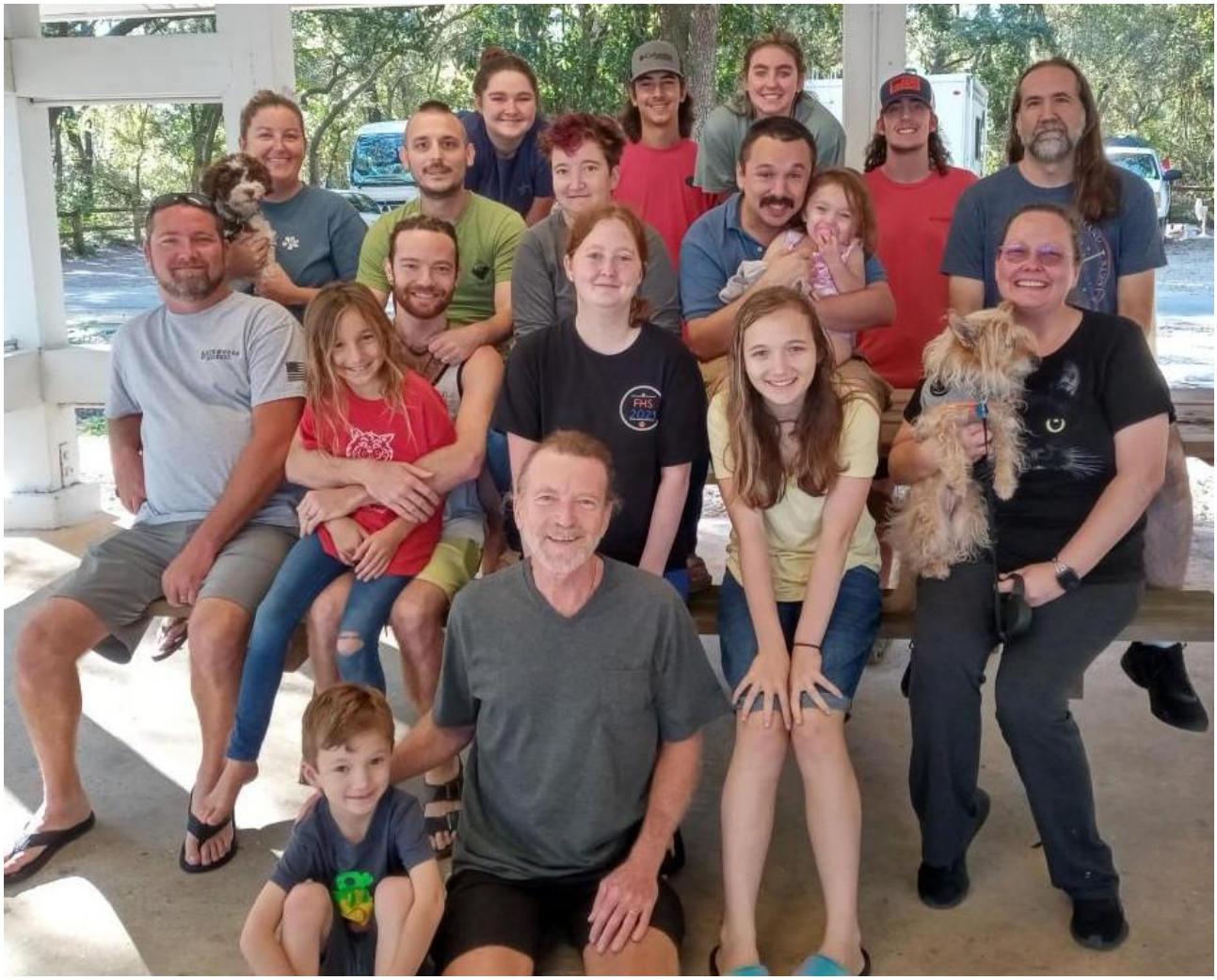


Captain James began 1st grade at Freeport Elementary (the same school as Abigail and where Justinn teaches). He loves his teacher this year. She has inspired him to do his homework after school this year instead of sleeping (which is what he preferred last year).

Acadia (better known as Cadie) just turned three this past November. Her mom takes lots of photos of her and she almost always has a different expression. I recently saw a video from her mom of Cadie playing with Abigail's drum set. I have to admit, she did pretty good. She really enjoyed going out on the kayak with Grandpa on our family camping trip this year.

I still ride my bike every day around the neighborhood. My dog, Max and I continue to hike on the FL Trail and kayak. Last May we hiked to the highest point on the FL trail (272' making it the lowest highest point of all eleven national trails LOL). We met two ladies there and I began hiking with one of them. Deb and I have now hiked all of the FL Trail in Walton County (over 60 miles) and plan to do even more miles in 2022.

This past spring my best friend **Sinder** and I split the cost on a condo at Treasure Island (part of St Petersburg, FL). We had a wonderful time. One day we traveled to Fort DeSoto. Another day we rented kayaks at Weeki Wachee springs. And another day we rented a speed boat and found some islands where we hung out with a family of dolphins. I have to admit it was kind of fun driving a boat that was a little faster than our kayaks. And we enjoyed lots of beach time and pool time, not to mention a delicious breakfast every morning!



Taken at our annual family camping trip at Fred Gannon State Park in October.

Merry Christmas!

To the right: TJ and Angela with their friend Denise Crosby (Bing's granddaughter)



Favorite Quote:

"*Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds.*"

George Elliot

View past family newsletters at: http://hosttg.com/fn/

Family News

December 14th, 2022



I began doing the Family News in 1992. This marks 30 years of newsletters. I've decided 30 years is long enough. This will be the **last edition**. All things change over time and all things come to an end.

This past February my father died at the age of 86. He was a man of many talents and loved by most people who knew him. Rest in peace dad.

Several people have died since I began doing this in 1992. When I look at past newsletters and think of the many people that have touched our lives, I cannot help but to feel grateful. I will never forget those who have left us. I know death is part of life, but it is still sad to lose the ones we love. Maybe 30 years of newsletters will keep some of the memories alive.

Looking at the photos over the years, tells a story. I glance over past newsletters and the memories put a smile on my face. I give thanks for the "*many blessings that have been ours.*"







Marc and Leo have had a busy year. They took a vacation in south FL in February. They hiked from the southern terminus of the FL trail, rode bikes on a section near the Everglades, had an airboat tour, kayaked and camped before going to Key West. They went to the bouy ten years after Kathy and I were there for the first time (in 2012). It was appropriate that Marc spread some of Kathy's ashes there. In June Marc took a work promotion and they moved to the east side of Birmingham. Deb and I paid a visit in September and hiked to Kings Chair on Oak Mt with them. They camped in KY in Oct at Mammoth Cave. Marc was only five when I began this. He has had a wonderful smile the whole time. Keep smiling! I am blessed to be called your dad.

Justinn and Cory were brave enough to take all of the kids to Maine in the summer to see his dad. They flew into Boston and took a car to Maine allowing them to do a lot of sightseeing, including spending a night with my nephew Jason and his family in Boston. Justinn still teaches the second grade and Cory is loving his new tech job. The two of them make a great couple. They have a wonderful family and I have to say - I am very thankful for my creative, hard working, fun loving, free spirited, "little girl"!





Perry and Sammy stay busy with work and three teenagers in highschool. This year Perry built Sammy a new office (with some help from Ryan) that looks amazing! Perry got a new truck this year. He and Sammy have done a wonderful job raising four great kids. When I started the Family News in 1992, I had my doubts about Perry, but he has become one of the best young men I know! He is strong rock for our clan. I am proud of you son!



TJ and Angela are doing well. They had a great time on the cruise to Mexico with Marc and Leo. They still live in DeFuniak on the south side of town. Angela got a new ride this year. TJ was with Kathy even longer than I was. We all miss her. I know Kathy was VERY proud of him. As the oldest of our kids, he often had to help out the most and he always did it without complaining. Hard to believe he is 45 this month. Thank you for all you do TJ!! He has touched many lives and all for the good.



Taylor is 20 and working at McDonalds. She is living with AJ (Aunt Justinn) because she can walk to work. I am very proud of my red headed, blue eyed granddaughter. She is a gentle soul and has a lot of patience and a kind heart. The Family News has featured Taylor for the past 20 years. She can see her whole life in these photos over the years.

Kacey turned 17 last January and is a senior in highschool. I remember all of the grandkids camping in our backyard ten years ago and I wonder how can that sweet little girl now be a senior in highschool? Fly high and far Kacey!! You have an amazing future ahead of you.



Caitlynn is 16 and has her drivers license. She is a junior in highschool. For the past few years she has gotten very good at cornhole and has always been one of my favorite cornhole partners. I predict great things are waiting for this young lady.



Angel is also 16 and has her drivers license. She drove me around in the golf cart on our family camping trip and I can certify she is a safe driver. She is a sophomore in highschool and is kind, polite, intelligent, and beautiful. She has my blue eyes and she will always be my angel.

Ryan is a sophomore in highschool. He is 15 and has his learners permit and loves fishing and sports, especially playing baseball. He is a hard working, polite young man and I am very proud of him, so is his mom and dad.

Abigail turned 12 in October. She found a geocaching stash at family camping faster than the older kids and that includes the adults!! Abigail is taking advanced science at the middle school and she is one of the smartest 12 year olds I have ever known (and that includes me)! I look forward to all of the creative, energetic, and amazing things she will do.

Captain James T Kurtz is seven and is in the second grade. He wears glasses and this year he lost his two front teeth. He smiled when I showed him a picture of his mom without her front teeth. He played soccer this year and is very good on his scooters and hoverboard. He does a good job being the only boy with three sisters. I know Kathy would be proud of him (I am)!

Acadia (better known as Cadie) just turned four this past November. I promised Kathy I would not let the grandchildren forget their Memaw. Cadie is probably the most photogenic of all the kids. She always has a smile! So Cadie, this picture is for you. I hope you remember the smiles on both of these faces in the years to come.



Deb and I met at the highest point on the FL Trail last year. We decided to hike to the highest points in different states this year (AL, SC, FL, MS, AK, & LA). We also hiked some of the Foothills trail in SC along with more miles on the FL Trail. We have now hiked **300 miles of the FL trail** so far. Deb joined us at our annual family camping trip and we had a blast. We returned to St Andrews state park for the first time since Hurricane Michael in 2018. We had a wonderful time, but the park does not look the same with most of the trees gone. I should mention that did not hurt our corn hole skills (at least not mine and Perry's since we went **<u>undefeated</u>** this year). There's nothing like sitting around a campfire at night, especially once the fireball comes out (thanks to Perry). The adult e-scooters I bought were a big hit! We enjoyed sunsets on the beach and had great weather for camping.



I continue my daily bike rides, kayak often, and take Max for a walk each day (he also loves to go kayaking and hiking with me). Max has been a true blessing to me. He is loved by Deb along with friends and neighbors Dan and Janet (who spoil him)! It is safe to say, Max is loved by many and is living the good life.



The above photo was taken at our annual family camping trip at St Andrews State Park in 2022.



Kathy and I had an amazing life together. I cherish all the photos of her and the newsletters that told much of our story for 30 years. I have grouped past newsletters into two separate volumes of 15 years each. Click the link below if you want to go down memory lane. Note: it may take time to download the pdf files (*especially the first volume*). I am looking forward to more hikes and adventures in the coming years with Deb. She and her son Rollin (who will soon be an officer in the Army) are a big part of my life. My life has been better since meeting Deb! I am grateful for my siblings, as well as my wonderful family! **I love you all!** The time has come to end the Family News. I hope you have had a wonderful 2022 and I hope that 2023 and the years after are great years! From the editor (aka Tommie). **In Peace!**

Merry Christmas!

Favorite Quotes:

"I found things in the woods that I didn't know I was looking for." Jennifer Pharr Davis

"*Two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less traveled*" Robert Frost

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