

The Morris Chronicle



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Happy New Year, and God Bless You!!!

Happy New Year to you and your family!

We thank God for His provision and all of His blessings this year.

We have also had our share of trials, but we are

also thankful for those, as we know that God is with us in the good times and bad, and that it is in the tough times that He works in us to help us grow in our character and walk with Him.



Our Growing Family

Our biggest blessing has been our time together at home as a family. What fun it has been watching our new addition from last year, Evan, grow from a baby to a toddler.

He is such a pleasant and joyful child - any activity becomes a joy with him around. He is always

talking, singing, dancing, and laughing. He is very curious, always asking "Wha' is 'dat?" and "Who is 'dat?" He loves playing "ball", and loves for you to read with him.

He loves his sisters very much, and is always playing with them, and they absolutely adore their little brother!



Our Travels

We also were blessed to get to do some traveling this year. In February, Jeff had a visit to Columbia University for work, and Dana came along. We enjoyed a special Valentine's Day together in Manhattan, and while Jeff worked, Dana got to catch up with her good friend Leigh Ann.

We traveled as a family to PA in June, getting to go the DeMarco family reunion for the 2nd year in a row, and going to the

New Jersey Shore with MeMe, Tina, and Carlo. We spent 10 days at Disney World in September, and had a great time! Nancy came with us for 5 of the days. We enjoyed their first trip there since they were babies, and Evan loved it too (his favorites were "Pooh" and "Miiiii Mouse").

The girls also enjoyed that we got to see Hannah Montana in concert at the Houston Rodeo in March, and to see High School Musical on Ice in December.





School Days

It has been an adventuresome year school-wise for our family.

For Brooke, she was excited to finish Kindergarten and to start 1st grade at Challenger Elementary this year. She has become an excellent student. She is getting straight A's in 1st grade. Her reading is really coming along - she can read on her own and really enjoys it. She loves writing and drawing, and besides writing in her journal, she also likes to write little stories and staple them together into a "book." She also has started playing Upwards Basketball this year, and is doing very well.

Taylor finished 2nd grade very strong, doing very well and developing quite an intellectual curiosity and love of learning. Because of this, Dana decided trying something new this year and home-schooling Taylor. We went to home-school conferences in the Summer and got some ideas, and got going with it.

Taylor has excelled in this setting, moving very fast in her basics: grammar, spelling, math and vocabulary, getting to read books and do some writing, as well as do some "custom" subjects like logic, Spanish, and piano. She got a guitar for Christmas, and wants to take lessons to learn to play that. She also has gotten to do lots of field trips: to the zoo, natural history museum, and health museum, plus to MD Anderson for a science lesson seeing healthy and cancer cells under the microscope, and going to San Antonio and seeing the Alamo.

Evan is also learning at home with Mommy and Taylor. For Christmas he got his own little dry erase board so he can draw while Mommy and Taylor work. He is learning to count to 10 and learning his letters. He has a very large vocabulary, and talks a lot for his age (We have no idea where he got his talkativeness from - we are such a quiet, shy family ☺)

Trials and Tribulations

We also had our share of trials and tribulations this year. Jeff tore up his right knee playing basketball at the end of February, tearing his ACL and doing meniscus damage. After surgery in April, the late Spring and Summer was filled with recovery and rehab, with Dana having to care for a "4th child."

It was a hard time, but we thank God that it healed up well, and is close to 100% by now. We also had our share of trips to the ER, with Brooke having an infection with high fever, Taylor with intense stomach pains, and Evan falling and biting through his tongue. All ended well, and we are especially

thankful for our church friend Anthony Brissett, who is a pediatric plastic surgeon, and came into the hospital at 3 in the morning to stitch his tongue back together, good as new.

Our dog, Prancer, had a bad sore on his front right leg in the Spring that healed, but then came back as a bump in the Fall. We took him to the vet, who found it was a solid tumor, and removed it in a surgery. The surgery was mostly successful, but they found that it was cancerous, soft tissue sarcoma, and that it would likely come back later this year. We have had Prancer for 12 years now, and he is a big part of our family, so we will make sure he really enjoys this next year, as Dana says "we will let him hang his head out of the car window and bark all he wants."

We were also very sad to lose both of Dana's maternal grandparents, Elmer and Annie Lee Nielsen (Gigi and Nana), with both passing away within a month of each other in November. They both lived full lives, and God used them to touch many people, but we will miss them. Their funerals were beautiful, and we take comfort that they are together with God in heaven. We also pray that we live our lives so that at the end, we will know we have lived with integrity and allowed God to use us to bless others lives in the same way.

We are thankful for God's presence with us throughout the year, keeping us through the difficult times.

God Bless you and your family in 2008!

Love,

Jeff, Dana, Taylor, Brooke, Evan, and Prancer

