



CHRISTMAS 2008 As we reflect on what has been an “evolving year” for us...we are so very Thankful for the wonderful people who share their lives with us—as we are richer for the experiences shared. This year has provided us new avenues of opportunities along with some enduring memories. Gary reached a milestone—Age 40. Jason and Jeanel restored the 65-year old dresser of her mothers. Jeanel, with the help of good friend Jerry Jackson, completed the last project for our home—We’ll see!!



In the Spirit of being better stewards of our Mother Earth, we’ve been, and now have shifted to an electronic format for our Christmas Card & Letter—If you are able, we’d invite you to do the same. Appreciate you sending us an email to ensure we have yours.

Our summers are spent watching T-Bones baseball. In our 5th year as host family, we initially hosted Dan Jackson—then Neb Brown and his brother who spent most of the summer with us. The team started strong, then struggled with injuries and players leaving for affiliated ball throughout the season. Having made the last playoff spot, everything fell into place and they won their first championship since arriving in Kansas City!!! Jeanel was ready to watch several of the championship games in Gary, IN, but the Chicago area (and Kansas City for that matter) had four straight days of rain. By the time the sun came out she was back home. We listened to each game on the radio and were among the crowd to welcome the champions back home later in the week! Fun well done, job well done!



During the political season, Jeanel actively volunteered for Barack Obama & The Johnson County Research Triangle campaigns. The Research Triangle is a strategic community investment that will now provide a cancer research facility at the KU Cancer Center; New educational programs at K-State’s National Food Safety & Animal Health Institute and expanded engineering, science and Tech programs at the KU Edwards Campus. In addition to Jeanel spreading the word about the proposal, we both spent a morning with other volunteers assembling almost 6,000 lawn signs. Amazing how heavy those things are when stacked up!



You might remember Gary enjoys listening to old radio shows. He discovered that a comedy radio show, [Right Between The Ears](#), is performed in front of a live audience at the [Off Center Theatre](#) in [Crown Center](#). So we went with Jerry & Patty to a show in early

March. We had a blast and laughed for an hour straight. Gary thought it would be fun to video tape the shows so he sent them an e-mail offering to do so. He’s now taped three shows and they’ve been able to use some of the video recordings on their website and YouTube.



Gary had most of this letter completed when he remembered one of the biggest events of the year—he turned 40!!! (Must be old age affecting the memory.) Jeanel arranged a party that included many friends, pizza, volleyball, croquet, & a Texas hold ‘em tourney. Good friend Bonnie created a simply memorable evening! A week later his parents made a surprise visit to continue the celebration.

March Madness was wonderful for Kansas University this year. With friends Erica & Maria and Jeanel’s brother Jerry, we went to the celebration parade in Lawrence. Along with everyone else, we rushed the starting players as they came by and both Jerry and Jeanel got to “high five” many of the players. Now that’s the way to end the season!!!



On a cool February evening we played basketball at the new [Basketball Experience](#). It’s a two story facility that includes the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame, but most of the space is dedicated to a variety of hands-on basketball court experiences. We enjoyed shooting hoops and playing one-on-one for several hours!



We cook on the outside grill fairly regularly, even sometimes during the winter. In early spring we were ready to start the grill. As Gary opened it, he was quite surprised. A bird family had taken over the entire grill and there were several eggs already in the nest—By all measures we were looking at a 3-story condo!. Well, we weren’t about to foreclose on them so we just cooked indoors for several weeks. Unfortunately, the eggs and the parents disappeared one day. No idea what happened—Sadly, we had our grill back by mid-summer.



Shows and Musicals

For Valentine's day, we went to the [Screenland Theatre](#) in downtown Kansas City. This is a good old fashioned theatre that Gary got reservations for, sight unseen. It worked out great. Our evening came with a bottle of wine, Christopher Elbow chocolates, and we both saw [Casablanca](#) for the first time.



Jeanel and friends Terri and Barb could not wait to see [Michael Buble](#) in concert at the [Sprint Center](#). It was a cold walk from dinner, but the music & entertainment more than made up for it!

At the [New Theatre](#) we saw [Married Alive!](#) with Barry Williams, [Rumors](#) with John Davidson, and [The Last Romance](#) with Marian Ross. After [The Last Romance](#) performance, the theatre asked everyone to remain seated as it was announced that it was Mrs. C's 80th birthday. Once flowers, cake, and a few speeches were given, everyone was treated to a 10 minute video where numerous actors wished Marian a happy birthday. What a surprise for her and us!



For our anniversary, we enjoyed the [Chestnut Fine Arts Center](#) production of [Greater Tuna](#). The theatre is in an large, older home where they've converted/expanded basically the family room to include a raised stage and seating for about ninety people. They put on quite a professional show and we look forward to future performances.

At [Theatre in the Park](#) we sat outdoors and watched [Titanic The Musical](#), [Oklahoma!](#), [Beauty and the Beast](#), and [42nd Street](#).

Some new websites from this year:

chestnutfinearts.com
collegebasketballexperience.com
www.hfmvgv.org
rightbetweentheears.com
screenland.com
www4.oakland.edu/?id=80&sid=87

On the Road and In the Air

Jeanel arranged for us to both take an [Amtrak train](#) to [St. Louis](#) where we spent a day walking and enjoying the downtown area, and then watched the [St. Louis Blues](#) that evening. On Sunday we saw the [Bodies](#) exhibit which was incredible and educational. Afterwards we walked through [Forest Park](#) (similar to New York Central Park), where we saw people ice skating in 60 degree weather—let's just say if you fell down, you'd find yourself soaked in about an inch of water on top of the ice! Such a fun weekend.

We expanded our regular [Las Vegas](#) trip to include [Washington](#), where we spent a few days visiting Gary's Uncle and grandparents. We explored a bit of [Wenatchee](#) and played with Gary's two young cousins before heading south to Las Vegas where we met up with friends Patty and Jerry. This year we saw [Spamalot!](#), which brought back all sorts of college memories for Gary.

We did another trip to [Puerto Vallarta, Mexico](#) with the Acosta family and friends. Much like last time, we spent a week sitting beside the pool, in the pool, or at the beach. And nothing else. No cell phones, laptops, etc. Ah, it was sooo wonderful!!!

For almost three seasons ('04-'06), we hosted T-Bones pitcher David Viane. During that time we met his parents and his fiancé, Abbey. In August we were honored to attend their wedding. It was an amazing weekend with the ceremony held in [Auburn Hills, Michigan](#), at [Meadow Brook Hall](#). Known as "America's Castle", we spent time exploring and learning about it's history. Of course we also met many of David and Abbey's friends and shared their history too. Congrats David & Abbey!

While in [Detroit](#) for the Viane wedding, we visited [Greenfield Village](#) and the [Henry Ford](#) museum. We can't say enough about these awesome facilities. We were lucky enough to visit on a day when over 1,000 old cars were on hand. This complemented so well the early 1900's village. We can both now say we've seen traffic jams involving pre-1940's cars!!! We could have spent a full day in the Henry Ford museum but we rushed through in a few hours, learning not only about automotive history, but seeing several key historical items including the chair that Lincoln and the limo that Kennedy were assassinated in, and the bus Rosa Parks sat in. They have exhibits on aviation, furniture, farm equipment, diamonds, clocks, trains, and more!



*In the hearts of those who believe...
it's Christmas everyday of the year.
To You and Yours, a very Safe and
Blessed Holiday Season.*

Gary & Jeanel