

Better Late Than Never!
Nebraska Or Bust

Gill Gazette

Christmas 2013 – Issue 3 – News From Nebraska



Moving North To Nebraska (And Robert buys himself a Snow-Blower!)

As 2013 dawned we knew we would be on the move again. After having three enjoyable years in Missouri we were wondering where the Air Force would send us next – Europe, Asia, Hawaii, DC, Colorado. So many options! After a very snowy winter Robert declared a snow blower was in his future if the Air Force took us further North to a snowier place. We also discussed re-



placing our aging Ford Explorer with something to help us move. January went by – no assignment news. February almost went by

with no assignment news, but one day Robert came home and declared we were buying a snow blower...to which Davina replied where are we moving to? We were pleasantly surprised to hear the destination was Offutt Air Force Base just outside of Omaha, Nebraska. So the snow blower was put on the must buy list and the new truck was ordered.

The Move North

As soon as we received word that we would be heading north to Nebraska we started scouring the internet to see what areas we might like to live in and available housing in those areas. We were fortunate to get connected with a super realtor. We brought her our wish list and let her go. After driving



around a bit we decided living closer to the base would be best and narrowed our search. Twelve house showings later we made an offer on the one we liked the

most and began negotiations with the owner. Once we agreed to include their pool table

with the purchase of the house the deal was sealed. We signed for the house on June 7th and began moving-in things like clothes, books, and tools over the course of the next month. We let the government paid movers take care of the furniture & toys.



Given our location in the middle of the country it is somewhat amusing that we live in an area called Pilgrim's Landing at the



corner of Plymouth Rock Road and 22nd Street. Once all of our things were here we settled in fairly quickly. Robert enjoys



handyman projects and has already made the house better than it was before. The addition of a fence around the backyard has provided some containment for the little people and the dog. Robert has begun a tree fort and hopefully in the spring we will put in a garden. For now we are hunkered down for the winter with a shiny new snow blower at the ready.



Out With the Old; In With the New!



Our old Ford Explorer was showing signs of being on its last legs or at least on the verge of an expensive problem. So Robert began research-

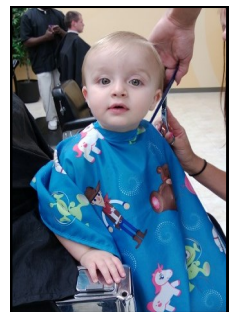
ing the next vehicle. One unknown in the process was where we would be moving to, but once we knew it was Nebraska it was a green light for a Ford F-150 pickup truck.



With the move and the house the pick-up bed has already been much appreciated and well used.

Dominic's First Hair Cut

In August Dominic went to the barber shop for his first much needed haircut. He sat in Mom's lap and did a great job. Even the clippers didn't faze him. He went in a baby and came out a little boy. It was a milestone event.



Another Year Ends and A New One Begins

Editorial by Davina Gill

Happy 2014!! Yes, we finally finished last year's Christmas letter this year. We had good intentions of being done before Christmas, but a stomach bug that visited every member of the family the weekend before Christmas changed those plans. We had good intentions of finishing before Robert's parents came for a visit after Christmas, but getting the house ready changed those plans. And we had good intentions of getting done while his parents were here, but games, movies, and grandparent fun changed those plans.

So here we are getting it out now. Hopefully, you can look back on 2013 and see the good things that happened, both expected and unexpected. For us the expected good things were watching the children as they

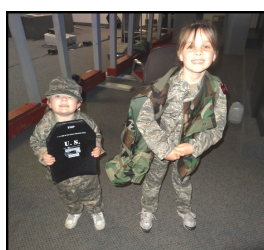
grew and preparing for the adventure of another move with the Air Force. The unexpected was finding out that Omaha, Nebraska is really quite a nice place to live. Surely 2014 will have these expected and unexpected things as cutbacks in the Air Force may bring earlier retirement and the search for a new job/career for Robert. The best we can do is to make the most of each and every day and wonder what surprises await knowing that ultimately everything will work out for the best.

As always we are delighted and privileged to share tales from the child-rearing trenches. Corinne, Faelynn, and Dominic make each day unique and mostly enjoyable. They are certainly three independent personalities and bundles of fun. We hope you enjoy all that you read. Happy New Year!!

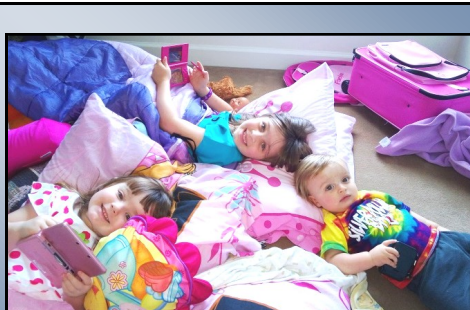
Corinne & Faelynn Join the Air Force



This year Corinne and Faelynn spent some time seeing what life is like in the Air Force. First Corinne went on a mock deployment with her dad. They spent the morning preparing for a deployment, boarding the aircraft, and then returning home. On another occasion Robert took both girls to work with him. They had the opportunity to see military working



dogs in action & visit the air traffic control tower, firing range, & vehicle maintenance.



Furniture is Gone! Looks like we are camping out on the floor of an empty house!



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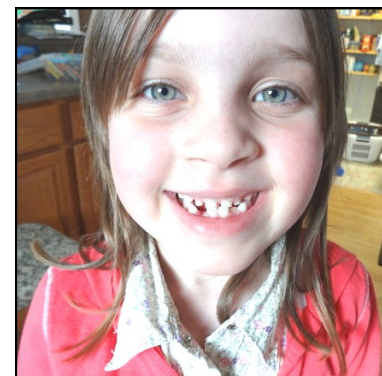
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Visits by the Tooth Fairy

The beginning of 2013 brought to an end some of Corinne's baby teeth. The first ones came out just about the first of the year. She is now up to eight that have made their way to being magic tooth fairy dust. Of course Corinne enjoys the visits by the tooth fairy who leaves her a lovely note and two golden dollars. Faelynn can hardly wait to lose her own teeth!



Daddy-Daughter Date Night

To celebrate Valentine's Day Corinne and her dad enjoyed a dinner date at the local community center with other dads and daughters. The two of them got all dressed up and enjoyed fine dining and fun activities. Two highlights from the evening were Corinne having her nails painted and Corinne guessing the closest number of Her-



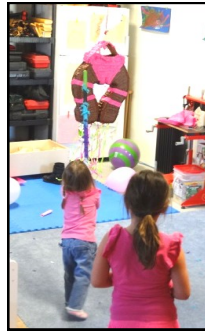
shey's kisses in a big bowl. (Guess who got to bring them home?) Both Daddy and Daughter look forward to another fun evening in the New Year. Perhaps Faelynn will join them this time ...

Auntie Jeanne Visit

At the end of April Davina's sister Jeanne came for a long weekend and last visit to Whiteman. We enjoyed games, a trip to the swimming pool, and playground fun. Her visit marked the beginning of the end of our time at Whiteman because after we dropped her off at the airport we continued north for house-hunting in Nebraska.



Cowgirl Birthday Party Rounds 'Em Up for Cake & Ice Cream



For Corinne's sixth birthday and Faelynn's third birthday, a joint celebration was planned. A pink Cowgirl theme was chosen. The girls enjoyed delivering the invitations to the invited guests in the neighborhood. Robert worked to make a pink cowgirl hat out of cake and fondant icing. The result was breath-taking. At the party the girls enjoyed a light lunch, a whack at the piñata, and of course cake and ice cream. A good time was had by everyone. On a side note, Davina fulfilled a secret lifelong wish of



having an Easy Bake Oven by getting one for Corinne and Faelynn. Ahhh, after the first round of nickel sized cupcakes the magic had worn off (it has only



been used twice since then). After the party the girls had fun putting all the balloons into their trampoline.



New Home Updates...

With the boxes mostly unpacked Robert headed outside to get serious about the yard. He designed a tree fort to go around one of the trees in the yard and began construction on the foundation posts and frame. The girls & Dominic loved helping out. We also had a fence installed. Robert then went to work trimming bushes and trees that were way over due and over grown. He also shored up the deck to make it a little more sturdy. We look forward to springtime & finishing the tree fort & putting in a garden. Should be fun!



Grandparents Visit for Exciting May/June Events

We welcomed all of the grandparents for a fun-filled weekend of dance recitals and Dominic's first birthday celebration. Davina's parents came early for some time with the grandchildren before the excitement of the weekend. Robert's parents came for the excitement and then helped out with moving some of our things to Nebraska.



Christmas In Nebraska

Our 1st Christmas in Nebraska was quite nice. It was white for most of the day as temperatures rose above freezing. We went



to Christmas Eve Mass then came home & donned our Christmas pajamas. After dinner we

watched a Christmas movie & then went off to bed late before Santa caught up to us. Thankfully, the three slept in until 9AM



Christmas morning. Yeah! We woke up and got to the work of emptying stockings & unwrapping gifts.

Corinne, Faelynn, & Dominic were quite happy with all of their gifts, although Faelynn commented that she did not get everything on her list. Oh well, better luck next year, kid. We spent the rest of the day assembling toys and playing. The next days were spent getting ready for



Grandma & Grandpa Gill's visit. They arrived the Friday after Christmas. We had a great visit spending time reading, playing games, and being together. Robert & his dad also undertook the not so minor project of upgrading the shelves in the storage



room. For New Year's Eve we went to the old train station in Omaha (the Durham Museum) for "Noon Year's Eve." At exactly noon confetti and balloons dropped from the ceiling.



It was quite a sight. The rest of the day was spent relaxing at home and waiting for midnight. We made it and rang in the New Year. We all look forward to seeing each other again.



Trip to the Natural State

With all of the moving complete and only Robert's final out-processing to complete, we took advantage of the 4th of July holiday and traveled south to visit the McCalls in Arkansas. They were excellent hosts as always and showed us a good time. We watched area fireworks from their backyard and visited a local wild animal park. There

were several good games of Canasta as well and the girls loved spending time with the McCall's older daughters as well.



Aunt Kat Visits Twice!

Davina's sister Katherine came for a visit at the end of August. It was hot so we stayed close to home and played a lot in the cool basement. We did venture out to the Omaha Children's Museum and a few other places around town. Then at the end of



September Aunt Kat returned for a surprise visit in conjunction with a business trip. The girls were so surprised when she knocked on the door. They thought it was great and talked a mile a minute. It was a short, fun visit.



Snow, Snow, & More Snow!

Well the snow this past winter more than made up for the super mild winter the year before when Robert was in Afghanistan.

While we were a bit disappointed at not having a



white Christmas, we had back to back snowstorms in February. They were each about a foot of snow with very little melting in between. The neighborhood kids (ours included) had a blast. I think the girls were outside every day for a week. They loved sledding and playing on the snowy playground. Robert helped them build a huge fort and a huge snowman.



One afternoon Corinne came running in the house to call for help because Faelynn had lost her boot in the snow. So Davina quickly went out to retrieve the lost boot. Talk about traumatic!

Fun Visit From Western Family

Before the snow hit in February we enjoyed a great long weekend with Robert's sister

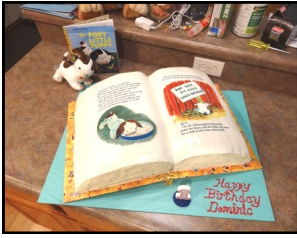


Debbie and her daughter Claire. Corinne and Faelynn enjoyed having an older girl around with lots of new ideas for having fun and playing including a sleepover on

the trampoline in the garage and a picnic with grilled cheese on the hill above the house. We also enjoyed flexing our creative muscles at a paint-your-own-pottery place nearby. On their last day we did a quick trip through the Kansas City zoo and were surprised to see loose kangaroos just hopping around and following people. It was quite the sight. We look forward to seeing them (the family, not the kangaroos) again.

Dominic's First Birthday!

In conjunction with the dance recital weekend we planned Dominic's first birthday party. The theme was Little Golden Books.

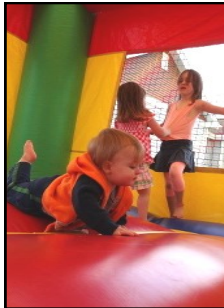


Robert really delivered on another gorgeous cake. Being a later spring birthday we were able to

plan outside activities. We inflated a bouncy castle, fired up the grill, put out a



spread of food, and invited the neighbors. The kids had a fun time taking whacks at a pi-



ñata too. Dominic got into the spirit of the party as he dived into his cake with both hands. It looks like more ended up on his face and hands than in his mouth. It was a fun and memorable time.

Autumn Activities



This fall we welcomed Davina's parents to Nebraska. They drove from Pennsylvania to see exactly what is between here & there — lots of corn! While they were here we

carved pumpkins, celebrated Halloween, & visited the Fontanelle Forest and the zoo. For Halloween this year we had a princess, Strawberry Shortcake's friend Raspberry Tart, & a cute little clown. The girls trick-or-treated with Mom & Grandpa Leccese and had a fun time. They ran out of energy before we ran out of houses to visit. Dominic & Dad handed out candy. Dominic loved putting the candy into the treat bags. We enjoyed the rest of



Grandpa & Grandma's visit & even squeezed in a little backyard baseball.

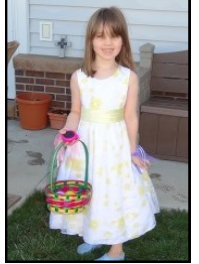
After they left most of the leaves came down and we had a fun time raking them into a big pile and jumping in. Raking leaves is still kind of a novelty because at our previous house we had one little stick tree in the backyard. Corinne attempted many times to have a leaf collection there, but it was an exercise in futility.

For Thanksgiving we stayed close to home & Robert cooked up a feast along with excellent pies, even the girls helped out. The rest of the weekend was spent decorating, decorating, decorating for Christmas. One highlight of the weekend was a tree lighting at a local outdoor mall with fireworks going off in the background. Quite pretty!!



Easter Egg-citement

Our celebration of Easter this year began with the traditional Egg hunt at the base park. The girls had fun running around gathering eggs. We then welcomed Davina's sister Gloria who is always up for a good game of "Candyland" or a trip to the park. Looking back at the pictures there were still piles of snow from the big storms. Our friends the McCalls drove in from Arkansas to join the fun. The girls dyed eggs with Robert and we all ate way too much candy before and after Easter Sunday



Mass. (And don't let us forget to mention the two egg hunts Easter Sunday morning!) So it is easy to see that a good time was had by all.

A New School Year Begins

The new school year began in August. Faelynn started pre-school at St. Matthew's



School. She enjoys going two mornings a week. At our fall parent-teacher conference the teacher said she was doing well and that snack time was her favorite.

Corinne began first grade here at home again. The new house has a nice space for us to work and move around more. Corinne enjoys all of her subjects, but she especially loves history and reading with science in a close third. In history we recently studied ancient Egypt and ancient Greece. Davina now knows more than she ever has about these two topics. (Even older dogs can learn new things!)

Focus On Corinne



Ah, Corinne. Is she really going to be turning 7 in January? She has just blossomed this year. She started in first grade in August here at home

and is doing quite well. She loves her new swim class and gymnastics. Corinne also started in Daisy Girl Scouts this fall. (Be prepared for the cookie phone call.) She loves reading and helping around the house. She



Star Trek and *Star Wars* with her dad. She gets outside as much as she can to ride her bike and scooter. We are slowly meeting other girls at all of her activities and in the neighbor-



has also become a Science Fiction fan enjoying watching



hood too. Her enthusiasm and curiosity in learning new things and meeting new people is infectious. She has a great can-do attitude that keeps us going.

Focus On Faelynn



Faelynn has had another exciting year. She started pre-school in August and goes two mornings per week. She jokes that she is in pre-school twice a week and first grade (with Corinne) the rest of the time. Faelynn also



own Build-a-Bear with her dad. She is doing



better in swim classes and definitely getting more comfortable with putting her face in the water. She also tried soccer for the first time and really enjoyed it. Now she has started basketball. She goes with Corinne to gymnastics too. In her free time she loves to play with Legos, do whatever

Corinne is doing, ride her tricycle, make crafts, and color. We continue to be amazed at how much this 3-year-old learns and understands. She has even been bugging us to teach her to read...as she already recognizes and sounds out many words on her own. She looks



had the fun opportunity of picking out and accessorizing her

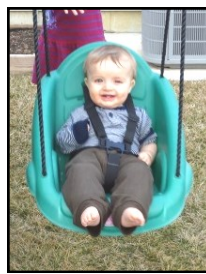


forward to new adventures and as you can see she likes hanging out. She does not miss anything!



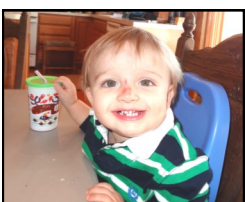
Focus On Dominic

Well Dominic has come quite a long ways in the last year. He started the year crawling, eating baby food, and with a couple of teeth. In February he realized everyone was eating more interesting food than



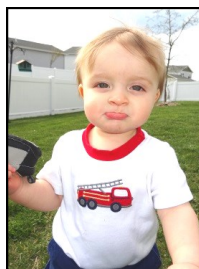
eating everything, and has a mouth full of teeth. He loves his sisters and wants to do all of the fun and interesting things they are doing. Unfortunately they don't always want baby

he is once more stuck with his mom. Poor kid. Just now he is starting to talk more so we look forward to three young ones simultaneously talking to mom and dad.



he was and he went on strike until the baby food was out and the real food was in. In April (at 10 months old) he took his first steps. By his first birthday there was no stopping him. Now he is running,

brother around so he is stuck with his mom. He also likes to follow around his dad and get into all of those neat tools Daddy has – drills, hammers, screwdrivers. Again, he is not always welcome when he does this and



Going East To Visit Family After Move To Our New Home

With Robert completely finished and signed-out at Whiteman Air Force Base and not yet signed-in to Offutt Air Force Base, we took an extended trip to visit family and friends in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York in late July. Our first stop (after a quick overnight at Robert's parents' house) was Davina's parents in PA. It was summer and it was hot, but we managed to stay cool. The highlight of the visit was an outing to see the Philadelphia Phillies play. The seats were great, but the heat was oppressive. We did our best to enjoy the game and drink ice water and eat ice cream. Robert spent most

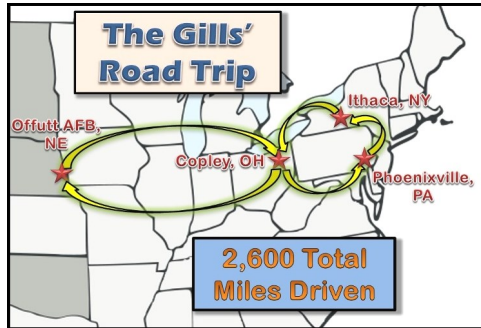
of the game with Dominic in a big shady play area. The girls ended up there too. Davina's dad and Davina watched as much as they could, but then decided to leave early and seek a cool car. It was a good call because the game ended up in a rain delay. In the end the day was fun and we decided to

forward to visiting her in Buffalo and seeing Niagara Falls sometime soon!

Our final stop of the trip was in Ohio to visit Robert's parents. While we were there we were happy to visit with his sister Amie and brother Donny and their families. We spent a cool day at a local water park. We practically had the place to ourselves &

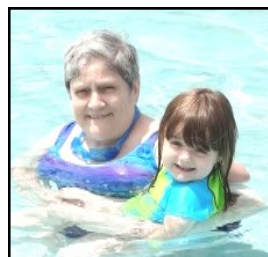
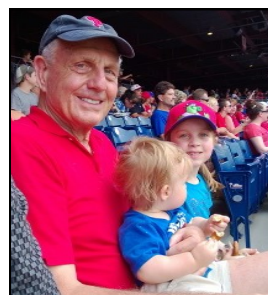
spent a good deal of time in the huge sand area because it was a touch chilly. We also enjoyed a trip to the Akron Zoo with our friend Dara and her three children. The new bear exhibit had just opened up so we were able to check it out. There were also the traditional Canasta card games at night. Overall it was a fun trip.

When it was time to head west to Nebraska it was a bittersweet trip. We were excited to be getting back to our new home and for Robert to start his new assignment, but the daunting task of unpacking boxes and getting mildly organized awaited ...



go again another time at night or a cooler time of year.

Next we were off to Ithaca, New York to visit Davina's sister Jeanne. We enjoyed many great sights in the area including Buttermilk Falls, Purity Ice Cream (yum!), a children's museum, and beautiful waterfalls. Jeanne was an excellent hostess. We look



LOTS OF MILES!
LOTS OF SMILES!



Comics



The Big Dance Recital

Another year, another exciting dance recital weekend for both girls. Davina volunteered as a back stage mom which added to the fun. (She was much calmer than previous years.) Corinne danced in four numbers – jazz, tap, ballet, and hip-hop. Faelynn danced in one number with her tap class. The girls had a



fun time and did really well. It was a highlight to have all of the grandparents and our friends the McCalls there too.



Other Activities

Faced with a long list of possible activities the girls were asked to pick two to focus on for the new school year. They chose gymnastics and swimming, and Start Smart Soc-



cer for Faelynn. We found a really nice gymnastics facility in Omaha and the girls go weekly for tumbling, balance beam, uneven bars, and other events. Swimming lessons are at the



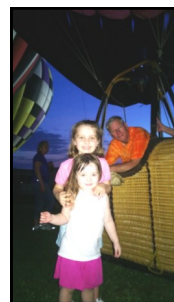
YMCA.

Both of the girls have made great strides in their swimming becoming more comfortable and confident in the water. It seems they may miss dance a little bit, but there is always next year



Hot Air Balloon Festival

In September we crossed the river over to Iowa to enjoy a hot air balloon festival at an apple orchard. It was quite cool to see them inflate and launch in the early evening and then return to inflate and glow once it was dark out. It was a nice evening with good live music and some yummy apple donuts too.



Pele's Pet Notes

Well Pele would like to report that she is doing well and is finally happier in her new home. At first



there was no fence in the backyard so someone had to take her out every time she had to go. Now she has complete and independent access to the backyard 24/7. She mostly sleeps and keeps to herself, but she still has her occasional spurts of youthful energy. She turned 16 in October and looks forward to 2014.