

This Old House

Quite a few house projects were (mostly) completed in 2008. Ned installed a tankless hot water heater, which makes it much easier for all of us to have hot showers every morning while saving on our energy bill. We also replaced our kitchen countertops, installed a tile backsplash, and replaced the dishwasher. Our kitchen's mini-redo has made it much more functional and enjoyable to work in.

The big project of the year was an exterior paint job. Ned took a week of vacation in June to paint—then flooding rains hit the area. The project progressed over the summer and into the fall, but there will still be some trim to paint in the spring. Though Heidi has helped with the main level trim, she's not willing to climb the 28' ladder to help up high. So it's mostly been Ned's tireless efforts that have led to the transformation you see below.



Winona House - Before



Winona House - After

THE BRYANT REPORT

is published pretty much annually by
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THE BRYANT REPORT

2008

20th Anniversary Edition



*Ned and Heidi enjoying Killepitsch
in Düsseldorf, Germany*

20 Years and Counting

A few of our faithful readers were present on April 9, 1988, Ned and Heidi's wedding day. Well, we've made it to 20 years, believe it or not! That's 20 years, 2 kids, 6 houses, 5 states, 6 cats, 4 dogs, and uncountable jobs and used cars. To celebrate, Heidi met Ned in Europe for several days. Ned was on one of his round-the-world business trips, flying in from Singapore for a conference in Brussels.

We took a day trip to Paris and, within a few hours, managed to see the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Arc de Triomphe, and ended our day having dinner on the Champs-Élysées. Back in Brussels, our hotel was just off of the Grand Place, so we explored the old part of town and Heidi did more exploring while Ned attended his conference. One evening, we drove to Düsseldorf, Germany, for dinner and a shot (or two) of Killepitsch (see front cover). It was such a great trip that we repeated the idea in September, visiting the Palace of Versailles, exploring Aachen, Germany, and visiting the RTP plant in Beaune, France, in the heart of Burgundy. In Beaune, we were entertained by Ned's friends at RTP and enjoyed exploring the beautiful old town.



Dinner in Paris on the Champs-Élysées

Heidi

As all of our long time readers know, news from one year will likely be completely obliterated the next. This is true in the case of Heidi's employment. Last year, we were proud to report that Heidi had landed a perfect job in the textbook publishing business. Well, in February, the main office of that company decided that the Winona branch was not making enough money and they fired the whole group of five people.

For about half of the year, Heidi was unemployed and scraping together freelancing jobs to keep busy. One freelance job turned into a permanent part-time position, doing accounting and graphics for a renewable energy data logging company in town. In August, the company that let our group go asked her to come back part-time as a temp to work on a long-term archiving project. This expanded into production support for the Cincinnati office. Hopefully, it will continue and keep her busy in the coming year.

A fun addition to her year was volunteering as an usher for the Minnesota Beethoven Festival. A few concerts of note: The King's Singers, Joshua Bell, and Branford Marsalis. That's another "job" she hopes to continue in 2009!

Maple Syrup

For those of you that remember this story from last year the quote was "Hopefully we'll make enough for at least one breakfast..." Well this now needs to be reported as one of the biggest successes of 2008. In the middle of March, Jack and I drilled holes in the tree and sap started dripping before we could even get the taps in. The sap was sweet to the taste and it ran and ran for a couple of weeks, at times nearly overwhelming our ability to keep up by boiling it down. We ended up running out of proper containers to put it in and during the finishing process we had to press some pint glasses into service. Final production was over a gallon of delicious maple syrup. And for those of you concerned about the tree, by June the holes were completely grown over and filled in. We can't wait to try this again in a few months.



A lot more maple syrup than expected

The Commute

I am very happy to report that after two and a half years I have still either walked or pedaled to and from work virtually every day, only driving when I needed a car for some other reason during or immediately after work. Unfortunately, and in stark contrast to last year, we had a long, cold, dark and snowy winter...Brrr!

Maddy climbing up the trail in Cranberry Canyon



Maddy cooling down at the Colorado River

Madeleine

While this year was not as dramatic as 2007, Madeleine did maintain her usual fast pace of life. February brought her first college dance performance, as a dancer in Winona State University's Dancescape, a production incorporating both student and professor choreography. She is currently rehearsing a piece that will be performed in the 2009 production. In the spring, she was the soloist in the modern dance piece at her studio. She stayed local in the summer and participated in her dance school's summer intensive. At their performance, she danced in many pieces but had the opportunity to perform a variation from *La Bayadère* as a solo.



Our senior's favorite portrait

In September, she was delighted to find out that she had been cast as the Snow Queen for *The Nutcracker*. For those unfamiliar, the Snow Queen ranks with the Sugar Plum Fairy as the two most demanding and technically difficult female roles in the ballet. It involves partnering, solo work, and solo with corps sections, for a total of about 10 minutes of dancing. Madeleine rose to the occasion, working very hard for three long months and her efforts paid off. She was brilliant. We have posted a rehearsal video of her solo on YouTube (search "Madeleine Bryant") along with her performances in Arabian and Waltz of the Flowers.

*Madeleine as the Ballet Mistress in the comic
Modern Dance piece - "Be the Tree"*



Madeleine also continued her studies at WSU as a high school senior. She went to La Crosse, Wisconsin, with a group of friends to hear Barack Obama speak. Her group got their early and managed to get very close to our President-Elect, as is evidenced in this picture.



President-Elect Obama

College plans are not yet set, but she is leaning towards majoring in dance with an eye toward pedagogy and preparing for a career in dance education.



*Madeleine as the Snow Queen, with Zach Ruben (above)
and the Snow Corps (below)*





NED BRYANT

Grand Canyon

Amazingly, this year Maddy was still interested in hiking the GC with her father, and with this being her third hike it was time to elevate her experience level to that of full GC hiker. I also christened two other friends to the GC, Bruce and Rick, both from the Portland, OR area, and the four of us went on the George Steck loop hike down Kanab and up Cranberry Canyons. Hikes described by Steck are the top end of backcountry GC hiking, and to take the drama out of things, I'll tell you now that every one did great. The only sad part was that I wasn't able to recreate my feat of swimming back behind Deer Creek Falls, but it wasn't for lack of trying!

While there were many highlights, such as Rick's ability to be gifted over 18 cans of beer from any number of river rafting parties or Bruce's spot on identification of the watercress growing in Deer Creek, the really special part was seeing a California condor. This bird soared over us for over 40 minutes, at times no more than 25' away, putting a clear shadow on top of us. He was so close that on a number of occasions it was possible to clearly read the numbers on his tags. With a 9' wingspan it was a lot like a sheet of plywood flying overhead. The California condor is a very rare bird—there are only 70 in Arizona and 320 in the world. While that isn't very many it is still good, because it is up from 1987's low of 0 in Arizona and 22 in the world.

Maddy at Deer Creek Falls



Ned's obsessive hike description can be found at: <http://www.design-on-call.com/GC.html>

And for those who count such things, we only saw one rattlesnake this year.

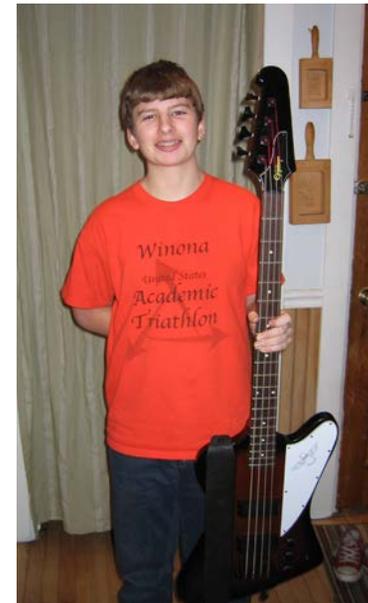
Ned and Maddy cooking dinner



California Condor

Jack

In less than a month, the Bryant family will have two teenagers living at home! Jack had a good year and a rough one. He enjoyed continuing his participation in extracurricular academic activities like Math Masters, Academic Triathlon (placing 2nd in regionals and 1st in most recent meet), History Day, and Project Science. He also played a lot of tennis in the summer and plans to pursue that interest, weather permitting. Jack performed in the spring dance production, partnered with the summer ballet students, and was a soldier in *The Nutcracker*. Music has become his favorite activity and he added the bass guitar to his list of instruments (which also include piano, French horn, trumpet, and a little guitar and double bell euphonium). He is playing bass guitar in the middle school jazz band and French horn in the regular band while continuing piano lessons.



Jack with his Thunderbird bass guitar

The rough part of the year came with a rapid growth spurt that brought on migraines and other growing pains. He handled them well and the migraines have subsided in the last couple of months. He also is now taller than both his mother and his sister, growing over 4" in a year. All signs of baby pudg are gone and he's now a tall, lean young man with a crack in his voice and braces.

Jack is on the front row, second soldier from the right

