

Travels

In May, we traveled to Augusta and Savannah. Savannah is beautiful and Anneke and I have already been talking about spending more time there so we can see all the sights. Heading south, we made stops in Tybee Island, St. Augustine and Cocoa Beach before coming home.

In August, we spent two weeks in Idaho visiting Anneke's parents, Jim and Joyce. We also spent some time with Anneke's BFF, Cary, and her husband Tyler (along with their family). We visited the local theme park, Silverwood, and even spent some time shucking corn!

September was another adventure for us as we spent a few days in Cocoa Beach, Florida before embarking on Royal Caribbean's Mariner of the Seas for a five-night cruise to the Bahamas, Jamaica, and Haiti. Anneke's parents joined us for the trip, and we all had a great time exploring the Caribbean.

In October, we made a trip to Alabama to explore several places that James had only seen as a child. Both sides of his family are from Alabama, and it was fun to be able to explore places he'd been to in the past, but as an adult.



Photo Caption: Jack and Hank look out the back window of Royal Caribbean's Mariner of the Seas.



Photo Caption: James, Anneke, Hank, and Jack in Safety Harbor, Florida after the city's annual 4th of July parade.

ABCs and 123s

We Love Learning

We realized a long time ago that Jack was intelligent like his dad, but this year, as we've been teaching him the alphabet and his numbers, we've been able to see a new side of him that is excited to learn new things.

We've been reading, nearly daily, to Jack since he was a newborn. For a long time, he didn't show a lot of interest in books. If they didn't have a pretty picture, he wouldn't be super interested. One day though, it was like someone flicked a switch on a light, and he was very interested in what we were reading.

We started to encourage his reading skills by putting on educational TV programs that teach the ABCs and counting, and Jack was soon singing along to the songs he was hearing on TV. We realized that he knew the general order of the letters, but still got confused in the middle of the alphabet song.

Jumping forward to November of 2023, Jack can now recite the entire alphabet without having to resort to singing the alphabet song. He can identify letters at random, and he's starting to sound out words and learn spelling. Additionally, he can count to 20 on his own, and often counts things to entertain himself. He knows most of his primary colors and often colors and paints with Anneke.

For 2024, we'd like to find a curriculum that will help us to organize his studies so that we can continue to guide him down a path of learning and discovery. We purchased an annual pass to the local zoo so that he can learn more about wildlife, which will complement our pass to the Florida Aquarium. We're going to be spending a lot of time in the pool and at the beach, so he learns how to swim safely too.

Potty Training

The Complete Saga

Jack Gamble

I no want to poopy in the potty. I no want to peepee in the potty!

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No Walkie

No Cry

Hank Gamble

Walking is hard. Crawling is easy. My two cents.

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Merry Christmas

And Happy New Year

James Gamble

From our family to yours, our wishes for 2024.

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Jack Gamble

Potty Training

The Complete Saga

January - “Jack, do you need to go potty?” “NOOOO” *proceeds to immediately hide behind a curtain and potty in his diaper*

February - “Jack, do you need to go potty?” “NOOOO” *waits until someone changes the subject, hides behind a curtain, and potties in his diaper*

March - “Jack, do you need to go potty?” *while giggling* “NooOOOoo” *runs away, finds a curtain to hide behind, laughs, and potties in his diaper*

April - “Jack, do you need--” *Jack, grunting in a corner, potties in his diaper*

May - “Jack, it’s time to go potty in the toilet!” “NOOOO” *runs away crying, finds a chair to hide behind, and potties in his diaper*

June - “Jack, let’s go potty in the toilet.” “NOOOO!” *manic laughter, while going potty in his diaper*

July - “Look Jack, you need to start going potty in the toilet! It’s fun!” *not convinced, walked towards the bathroom, changes direction, runs to a corner, and potties in his diaper*

August - [see July]

September - “Jack, it’s time to go potty.” *pees in the potty, much celebration ensues, runs to a corner and poos in his diaper*

October - “Jack, it’s time to go potty.” *THE EAGLE HAS LANDED*

November - “Daddy/Mama, I need to go potty.”

December - *Hank, holding onto the couch in the living room, eyes crossed, grunting* “Here we go again...”



Photo Caption: Hank found a pumpkin!

Gamble Family Travels Word Search

I	L	S	U	E	J	B	B	G	I	D	A	H	O	Z
J	Y	M	F	M	M	D	S	Y	C	Z	G	Q	V	W
W	E	X	H	A	I	T	I	N	R	H	B	H	M	N
S	R	S	B	M	N	S	I	P	U	M	B	U	E	A
C	R	U	I	S	E	L	H	C	R	R	I	H	N	B
U	X	Y	I	C	H	U	R	C	H	R	E	D	N	O
S	H	R	Y	M	U	A	U	B	A	G	K	K	S	Q
Q	W	I	U	S	M	E	L	U	L	F	P	A	P	A
J	G	Z	Z	Q	I	X	Q	A	V	D	M	E	C	I
O	E	U	B	C	C	A	F	K	B	A	F	I	N	R
N	O	A	L	G	H	X	X	K	H	A	A	Y	O	D
P	R	A	R	I	I	Y	C	A	X	M	M	S	Z	V
X	G	Z	X	C	G	C	B	V	A	V	P	A	T	D
J	I	N	Q	U	A	S	P	J	D	D	B	B	G	Y
G	A	A	O	H	N	W	M	C	Z	H	S	F	S	T

Clues

- Alabama
- Aquarium
- Bahamas
- Church
- Cruise
- Georgia
- Haiti
- Idaho
- Jamaica
- Michigan

Is there such a thing as too much Bluey?

It’s inevitable that one day, another parent will ask you, “Do your kids watch Bluey?” “No,” you hear yourself saying, “but we’ll check it out.”

Later that night, you find Bluey on a streaming service and see that each episode is only 7 minutes long, and it seems benign, so you let your kids watch it with the volume low.

Six months later, Bluey is now the only thing your kids will watch. One day, you decide to turn up the volume, and it’s the episode where you find out that Aunt Brandy stays away because she can’t have children and seeing Chilli’s children (Bluey and Bingo) makes her sad. And then you realize that Bluey, as a show, has incredible depth.

So, you mark all the episodes, all 151 of them, as unwatched, and start from the beginning with the sound and captions on.

And then, in 7-minute increments, you feel all the feelings that a parent can feel.



Photo Caption: Jack riding his pony/

Road Trips



Photo Caption: James and Anneke walk a 10k across the Skyway Bridge.

I don't know whose idea it was to pack up two children 2 and under into a 2016 Mazda CX-5, along with 2 full sized adults, and all the provisions and clothing we'd need for nine days of travel, but I'd be lying if I said that. It was me. It was my idea. What was I thinking?

For my first mistake, I tried to do the typical dad thing, and get on the road at the crack of dawn, muttering under my breath about having to "make good time".

None of us had gotten enough sleep the night before, and none of us were awake enough to appreciate each other's company at 7:00 AM.

For the first leg of our journey, I didn't stop driving for four hours, which I later realized was my second mistake. Toddlers just aren't built with that kind of road warrior endurance. It wasn't until the last day of our trip before I came up with a rule that limited driving to a maximum of two hours at a time before taking a minimum of a 15-minute break. I should have thought of that sooner.

My third mistake was not anticipating the number of snacks, toys, and distractions children need when they have nothing else to do but stare at the back of your head for hundreds of miles. When children don't have distractions, they start hitting each other, and then the crying starts, and once I start crying it's hard for me to stop.

My last mistake was planning a second road trip for October, before we completed our first road trip in May. I should have won an award for "most optimistic thought, like, ever". But, in the end, we survived, and lived to tell the tale.

Hank Gamble

No Walkie, No Cry

Realms of wonder, where laughter is near,
A toddler explores, devoid of fear.
Crawling with glee, a joyful spree,
Standing on tiptoes, so proud and free.

Tiny hands grasp, the world in delight,
Feet on tiptoes, a whimsical sight.
Yet walking, it seems, isn't the goal,
Crawling and standing, the toddler's own stroll.



Photo Caption: Hank, enjoying his sheepskin rug.



Photo Caption: Dedicating Hank to the Lord.

Jack Gamble

Cars, Monster Trucks, and Legos

Oh, my!

I like tractors! Big, green tractors go vroom-vroom when I push them. Monster trucks are loud and jump over things. Crash! Cars are tiny and zoom-zoom in my hands. Red, blue, yellow – so many colors! I put them in a line and make traffic noises like beep-beep. I sit on the floor with my toys – tractors, monster trucks, and cars. I give them to Hank, so he has a toy to play with. We go on adventures together, rolling in fields and climbing mountains.

I make engine sounds, and they follow me everywhere. Mommy and Daddy smile when they see me playing. Sometimes, they

play with me too. We have races, and I always win – yay! Toys make me happy. Tractors, monster trucks, and cars are the best toys in the whole wide world!

I also play with Legos and build tall towers and rocket ships. I put astronaut in rocket ship and fly around. My best friend Jackson helps me build towers. I like Lego blocks. I make cars with Lego blocks and throw them on the floor to watch them break.

I hope Santa brings me more this year.



Photo Caption: Anneke, Hank, James, and Jack on Royal Caribbean's Mariner of the Seas.

Merry Christmas And Happy New Year

The last year has been a long season of change and growth for our little family. Our oldest son, Jack, turned two years old, and in the months since, has shown himself to be an intelligent and headstrong little boy. Most days, he knows exactly what he wants and as his vocabulary has improved, he has become better able to express his desires. Hank, our youngest, turned one year old in August, and is proving himself to be a happy, yet determined little boy. If he has his mind set on doing something, there's nothing that will get in the way of that (unless Dada or Mama steps in).

We've already mentioned several of our travel adventures, but we have also been busy in other ways. Both James and Anneke actively serve our local church, Bayside Church. James serves as one of the church's elders along with running sound for the church's live stream, while Anneke teaches Sunday School to the 2 and 3 year olds. Additionally, James serves our local neighborhood as president of the homeowner's association and has driven several improvements to the community. On top of our service to our church and community, James has a full-time job that keeps him very busy, while Anneke has a full-time job raising two little boys who are getting more energetic by the day.

We have so much to be thankful for. God has been incredibly good to us this year, always faithful as we wrestled with busyness, sickness, travels, and chores. We have a roof over our heads, we can pay our bills, and we have plenty to eat. Our boys are growing up to be wonderful people, and even our little dog, Rosco, still has his silky-smooth ears.

Our wish for 2024 is to continue to find ways to serve others around us, leading our boys by example. We also seek to deepen our relationships with our family and friends because, ultimately, relationships mean more than just about anything else.

We are thankful for each of you because you are a part of our lives if you receive this. Without you, life may be a little less sweet. We are honored to be a part of your lives and hope to have more shared adventures next year.

We wish you all a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you, and give you peace." -Numbers 6:24-26

If you'd like to reach out, our contact information is below.

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