

Happy 2009 from our Blue Boat Home!

While pundits around the world seem to be in agreement that “2008 sucked,” Jessie and I had our best year ever! We got engaged in February, on our six-month anniversary as a couple. Jessie interviewed for jobs and started a new career as a professor. We bought a house together in August, just after the real estate bubble burst and just before the stock market crashed. All in all, we've been extremely fortunate this year.

Of course, there were things that went wrong, notably the basement flooding with sewage just 12 hours after we moved into the new house. But that's all taken care of, and the challenges have just brought us closer together. We both left a lot of friends behind when we moved, but Emporia has a lot going for it, and we are enjoying putting down roots. You can read more about our adventures in homeownership at BlueBoatHome.com.

Looking forward to 2009, we're getting married in Omaha on May 24 and doing some traveling during Jessie's summer vacation. We have an abundance of guest beds, so if you're passing our way, please stop by and visit!

Ben says:

I started the year in Fairfield, Iowa, working $\frac{3}{4}$ time for *Smartphone & Pocket PC* magazine, which by the end of the year had become *iPhone Life* magazine and laid off most of its staff. I was very gratified to play a role in Fairfield's Sustainable Living Coalition, Habitat for Humanity, Folk Arts & Dance Co-op, Trails Council, and Unitarian Universalist fellowship. They threw me a great farewell party, and I miss them all!

I spent much of the spring putting up signs around Fairfield for a bikeway-walkway system that was 4 years in the making. It felt good to make such a visible contribution to the town!

Highlights of the summer included my sister 'Becca and her family visiting Fairfield, and attending my 10-year Grinnell College reunion with Jessie.

Here in Emporia, I've been enjoying working on the house and getting a garden ready for next year. I've found some green-minded folks through the farmers' market and community college.

I'll be making two business trips in the spring, to Duluth, MN and Washington, DC. I hope to visit friends and family along the way!

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Jessie says:

I started the year in Omaha, working 50+ hours a week at three jobs. At all three, I worked with individuals with varying levels of Autism. I miss them and am grateful for all they taught me!

In February, I participated in the State of Nebraska's first ever Democratic caucus. They expected only 100 people per polling place, but over 1,000 turned out per place, so we caucused outside on that 30 degree day!

In the spring I interviewed for jobs in Cedar Rapids, IA and Emporia, KS. Later I was thankful to have accepted the Emporia position after eastern Iowa flooded. In May, Ben and I attended my 10th high school reunion at Weeping Water (NE) Public School.

Here in Emporia, I am an Assistant Professor in the Psychology, Art Therapy, Rehabilitation, and Mental Health Counseling department at Emporia State University. I manage to only work 40 hours most weeks. I am training to be an academic advisor and prepping spring classes, as well as submitting articles for publication.

Oh, and I got to see New Kids on the Block in Concert in November! My inner 9 year old is very satisfied!

Between teaching, advising, and the wedding, 2009 will be a busy year! Even so, I can't wait!

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