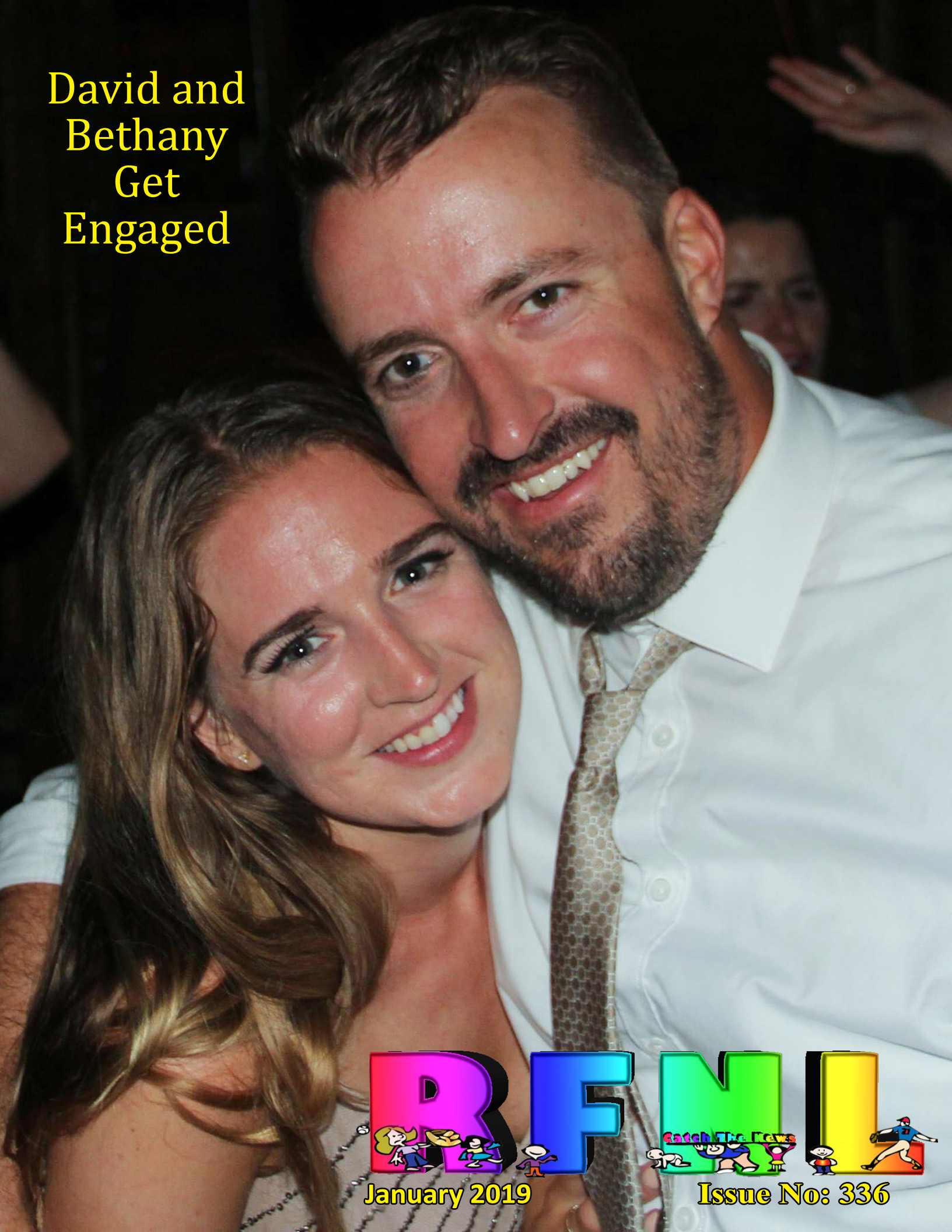


David and
Bethany
Get
Engaged



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Planning a Proposal

By David Gillingham

Our engagement is something we have been talking about for a very long time. We had picked out the ring in September, and little to Beth's knowledge it was ordered a short time later. Following the appropriate and natural, traditional steps of the engagement process, I secretly planned to meet Bethany's parents to ask for their permission to propose. However, that meeting was postponed due to an unexpected trip to the hospital from her parents (which ended up not being serious!). As would become a pattern in this story, that secret was spoiled almost immediately as Bethany happened to be searching on my phone when her mother texted me to cancel the secret rendezvous. Bless her heart, she never asked me about the meeting! The next chance I had, we scheduled a plan to secretly meet at a brewery in Del Mar while Bethany thought I was "golfing." The dinner went extremely well! Bruce and Sarah Tipton were flattered and ecstatic to be officially gaining a new future son in law. As I arrived back home, having thought that I had executed the secret plan to perfection, I arrived in our kitchen only to see Bethany reading a book right next to the golf clubs that I had forgotten to grab that morning! Again, she never asked me about the obvious false golfing story.

The weekend following the secret dinner with the Tiptons, Bethany had planned for months to camp overnight in Joshua Tree national park. I knew that this would be the perfect place to propose to Bethany because it holds a very dear place in Bethany's heart. When we arrived in Joshua Tree, we stopped at the visitor's station to talk to the rangers about potential hikes that we could embark upon. This was my very first visit to Joshua Tree, so while I had done some research about spots that would be perfect for the big moment, I really had no idea exactly where I was going to propose. The ranger spoke about a hike up to the top of Ryan Mountain where at the top you could have a 360-degree view of the entire park. I instantly knew that this would be a perfect spot for the proposal and shortly after we headed to the trailhead.

About 15 minutes in to the hike Bethany and I began to realize that this hike was not exactly a leisurely stroll! With the ring in my pocket, we continued to hike up the mountain and by the time we approached the summit, we were winded, cold, sweaty and surrounded by tourists! I thought to myself, there is no way that this is the moment that I ask her to marry me! I can barely catch my breath! So we turned around, hiked down the mountain and drove to our campsite.

When we got to the campsite, we happened to have a site adjacent to a young family with 3-4 screaming kids. Don't get me wrong: I appreciate a family enjoying the great outdoors, but the only thing on my mind was how to get the ring out of my pocket and on to her finger, so again I was underwhelmed with the location.

Once we got our campsite set up, we cracked a couple cold ones and decided to go explore the surrounding areas. If you haven't been to Joshua Tree, it feels as if you are walking on a 1950's journey to Mars movie set. The terrain, vegetation, and natural surroundings collaboratively form a landscape that is as unexpected as you could imagine but is somehow breathtakingly beautiful. There are giant boulder formations all around just waiting to be climbed, and at this moment the sun was beginning to set. We walked a good distance away from our campsite to find the perfect rocks to climb and eventually made our way to the top of a large rock. As we sat

waiting for the sun to set, I asked Bethany to list her favorite moments in our relationship, and we reminisced together. As she finished her last memory, I slowly dropped to one knee and told her that it was time to create knew one. As I asked her the fateful question, her eyes filled up with tears and she unexpectedly shouted "Stop, stop, stop!" Later she explained that she was completely taken by surprise and wanted to have a moment to process this special event in our lives (After the proposal didn't happen on Ryan mountain, she figured she was off the hook!). We watched the sunset together while she stared intently at the new jewelry she was wearing and enjoyed truly one of the best moments in our time together, with the understanding that there are many, many more to come in the near future! Cheers!!!





Riel Bowl 28

By Listy Gillingham

Bob and I would like to thank everyone who was able to make it to Riel Bowl this month! For those of you who were not able to make it, you missed a fun time. We started the event with plenty of family bonding with lots of amazing food set up around the house. The “mini cousins” (kids of our kids) were happy to have other kids around to play with and spent plenty of time in the game room finding things and people to play with. The Air Hockey table got lots of use and I suspect over time, we may need to set up some tournaments!



Lunch came quickly and a shout out has to go to Robert Riel for the amazing prime rib we were all waiting for as it certainly did not disappoint. It was supported by many other amazing delicacies that were shared by each family which kept everyone well-fed for most of the day!

Mom’s birthday was also highlighted after lunch, as usual, and we sang off tune to celebrate her 94th birthday in style. Gifts were given which included one big family gift

for mom this year. She is the proud owner of a portal for Facebook calls which she can take whenever you feel the need to call home!

After the birthday, we let the grands open their gifts from Great Grandma Ya Ya! There was a flurry of excitement as they all got something they never knew they wanted but instantly loved.

And finally, it was time for the adults to have fun with a white elephant exchange with a little twist. Instead of picking numbers everyone was asked to submit a card with "two truth and a lie" about themselves. We then shuffled the cards and picked the gift openers by their cards. It was fun to try to identify the lies as some were quite clever with their statements. For example, you might have to ask Robert about the night he slept with Ali McGraw (true story but not as sordid as it may sound). It turned out to be really fun and of course the white elephants added a few laughs as they were opened each time.

Overall, the day went well, and we were very happy to share time with our family in a festive and fun way. Special thanks to Bob Gillingham for always being gracious and helping host our large family. His latest project, the new outdoor kitchen, got lots of approving remarks as people arrived through the tennis court. Happy New Year to everyone and much love to all. Hopefully everyone can make it next year (Save the Date as it will be on Dec. 28th)!







Riley Keith Celebrates his Golden Birthday



By Listy Gillingham

On January 4, 2019 Riley turned 4 and was treated to a day of fun and surprises. A Golden Birthday is noted when someone's age matches their birthday number. So, turning "4" on the "4th" got him special attention. The day started with an early visit from Grandma Listy at the Keith's home. She woke up Riley after her early morning run and had Golden Donuts, a Golden Confetti Popper, and Hot Chocolate to start his day.

Because he also wanted a Spiderman party, she included a few Spiderman surprise gifts as well.

For lunch, Kristy took the Keith clan to Corvette Diner, where Annie, Birdy, and Grandma Listy showed up for more Golden and Spiderman presents (think a golden slinky, Spiderman straws and pillow cases, and a few toys too).

For dinner, we had the house decorated in Gold and Spiderman to keep the theme rolling with more gifts and toys to make this birthday feel special. In addition, the three boys got to spend the night so that the adults (Kristy, Seamus, Annie, Kevin, David, and Bethany) could hit the town and celebrate some freedom after the festivities. We also celebrated our Gillingham Christmas (yes, it was a little late) so everyone walked away with gifts which made the evening especially fun!



Emmy Turns Five!

By Mike Mehan

Emily's birthday is on New Year's eve and we had planned to bake her a cake and go see Mary Poppins in the afternoon with her friends. Unfortunately, the power went out at around 10:30 making it impossible to bake a cake. The movie theater had power, but while they were there something malfunctioned and they had to refund everyone's money. Emily was a really good sport and we went next door to buy a birthday cake. We had cake and presents at the cabin, which had gotten pretty cold by this point with no power. The power finally came back on at around 7:30 and we traded birthday hats for New Year's Eve hats and celebrated the end of a great year.



When we got home, we had another family birthday with both set of grandparents. A few days later the same group of friends went to see Mary Poppins, this time without incident. Exhausted after three birthday celebrations Emily is now a happy five year old.



Bucket List*** Alaska and the Pursuit of the Northern Lights

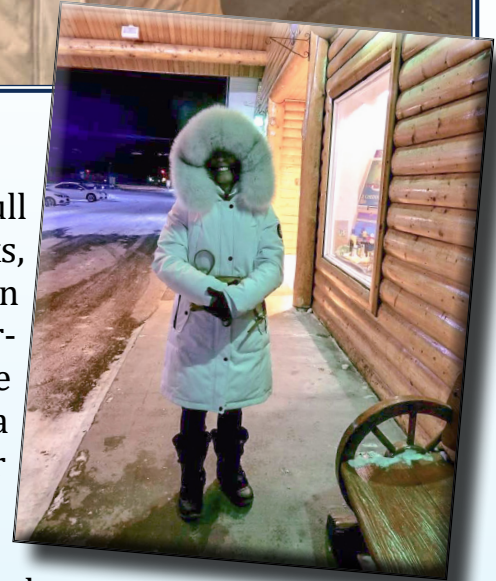


By Birdy Hartman

Lyle and I

have always dreamed of seeing the Northern Lights. There are few things more majestic than seeing mother nature at its best! So, we made plans for Dec. 27th to fly to Fairbanks, Alaska in hopes of fulfilling this bucket list item.

To say it was cold would be an understatement. However, we went prepared for freezing and so when the thermometer said that it was -3, and that it would feel like -22, we knew we were going to be cold. But we soon discovered that buying the right long johns and jackets made those temperatures seem not that bad.



On our first full day in Fairbanks, we embarked on a full day excursion over the Arctic Circle via a 10 passenger Piper twin engine Warrior plane that landed us in Coldfoot, Alaska. That plane ride afforded us the most amazing panoramic views of the icy tundra below us. I can't tell you how much fun it was to have our tour guide point out each mountain, river, village and frozen lake. We saw Danali from only 150 miles away. The views were spectacular and made only better by the sun slowly setting in the background.



We landed in Coldfoot on a snow packed runway. From there we hopped inside some toasty vans and enjoyed a narrative tour of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline as we barreled down the Dalton highway. We stopped along the way for photos and a quick slide down a hillside in a sled for those that were dying to play in the snow. We stopped for dinner at a truck stop and enjoyed delicious salmon soup and a Bahn me sandwich at the Yukon River Camp.

Then we boarded a tour bus and again traveled down the highway. Now you must understand that we were in the middle of NO WHERE! So the highway was completely dark, other than the lights that our tour bus had, and the few trucks that passed us on our journey south. There were no homes or lights for 250 miles. So when there was, all of a sudden, lights in the sky, we knew something was happening.

Our tour bus pulled off the road and we hopped outside into the cold night. It was there that we were rewarded with the joy of seeing the Northern Lights literally dance across the sky for us. They are so hard to describe. For once, I was not tied to my camera. I just wanted to stare into the sky and watch the movement as ghost like shapes oozed into different forms. I had my good camera and a tripod in the bus, but neither Lyle nor I wanted to go get it. We just stood hand in hand and watched the lights entertain us as only the Northern Lights can. It was a wonderful show for about 20 minutes before the darkness returned and they left as mysterious as they came to us. But we saw them! We were overjoyed with the delight of knowing that we got to see something that few people ever get to see! It was quite a thrill!!





That was the highlight of our trip but not the only thing we got to do. I won't bore you with the details but here are some the things we did while in Alaska:

*We visited the North Pole and got to enjoy Santa's ice playground!

*We got to see these ghost trees that were almost as impressive as the Northern Lights. They are trees that have been covered in snow from the ice fog and frozen into the most amazing shapes we have ever seen! There were hundreds of them lining the highway and they went back farther then the eye could see. And when you stopped to look at them, they would sway from the winds that whipped by them.



*We took the Alaskan Railroad from Fairbanks to Anchorage.



*We stayed at the top of a beautiful hotel that faced the Cook Inlet.

*We were on the top floor of this hotel having happy hour when a 5.0 earthquake hit...wooooohooo

*We hiked in the snowy park in search of a moose. Lyle spotted one in the bush, but it was very hard to see.

*We saw fireworks bring in the new year in Anchorage.



*We learned that Alaska is as big as 4 Californias, 73 New Jerseys, or 470 Rhode Islands!

*We also learned that Alaska is from the Aleut word meaning "great land." And that was certainly true!

This is a trip that we won't long forget. We vowed to live the next year and the years to come as if they were the last year in our lives. We both have been tainted by losing our lifetime spouses, but we are determined not to let life pass us by. So, stay tuned, more adventures to come. And we hope each of you remember that life is short and that there are no guarantees. Don't ever forget to add some adventure into your days!



Christmas in Florida

By Annie Mulholland

Kevin and I traveled to Florida for the holidays to spend Christmas with his family. His parents currently live in a very active retirement community called, "The Villages." I say very active because these people know how to live!! They have these "squares" where they have DJs at night and bars surrounding it and people bring their chairs and drinks and hang out. Doesn't seem so bad to me!

We had such a great time with his parents and sisters relaxing, eating delicious food and driving around in golf carts. Kevin's mom also planned a day of games for us to keep the tradition of holiday games alive even while we were far from the Gillingham clan. We played corn hold, REAL shuffleboard (so fun!!) and a game with nerf guns and targets. It was so fun!

In addition to all the retirement community living, Kevin and I took a side trip to Disneyworld. It was my first time at the big park and we had a blast! We went to 3 parks: Hollywood Studios, Epcot and Magic Kingdom. I loved how at Epcot you felt like you were traveling the world. Each "country" had replicas of well-known, famous sights from the area and even the employees were actually from the places they were working in. Our favorite was going to the English pub! Magic Kingdom was also amazing. I loved seeing the castle lit up for Christmas and they even had fake snow during one of the shows. We were only in Florida for 5 days but we had a great trip and can't wait to go back!

