



In late February of 2013, Mark and I took up the sport of peacock bass fishing, which involves sweating profusely near the equator while ripping six-inch lures across an Amazon River tributary for eight hours at a stretch. This intense, unheralded sport resulted in catching a few piranhas, some other colorful little fish and some sizable peacock bass, all of which we let go. My largest fish was, of course, larger than Mark's largest, but that's hardly worth noting. More important were the two fine Texans we met, Bobby and Curt, who bailed us out with Imodium, money and pretty much anything else two unprepared boneheads might need on a fishing vacation, including the fishing lure. At left, Mark hiding

behind his "big fish."
In April we visited relatives in Georgia and

Alabamer (as pronounced on BBC News), during which time we tried our hand at a fish pond in Georgia. The fish pond was not cooperative, and such rejection sent Mark into a research frenzy--he spent the rest of the summer watching fishing shows, buying lures and setting me up for the best hour of largemouth bass fishing I've ever had--23 pounds of bass, albeit with a wimpy rod and purple and white rubber worms. In November, we ventured to an impoundment, and, using giant spinner baits, had an exciting couple of hours pulling in the largest northern pike we'd seen in quite some time. And, well, not that anyone was keeping track, but on both accounts, my largemouth bass and my northern pike were bigger than Mark's.



In August, we held our beloved Dusty, the "Angel Pup," as he flew off to heaven. Approximately 24 hours later, Mark deemed the house too quiet, got online and found a black and white puppy that was the same mix as Dusty and Little Dipper, being Ihasa-bichon. Mark's email inquiring about the black and white puppy went unanswered because Sundays are not puppy sale days, and as a result, for over 37 hours I had to listen to Mark's sad questions: "I wonder if he's still available? Can we go get him if he is?" I was quite happy, really, to get an email from Mark late Monday morning stating simply, "The pup is still there. What do you want to do?" I, of course, could think of nothing more fun than driving 9 hours to Pennsylvania to see this amazing puppy, so I left work at noon, and we stayed in a Motel 3, which is half the quality of a Motel 6. The next morning, we drove up a winding driveway and across a beautiful farm, where life was slow-paced and the only noise was gobbling from a barn filled with range-free turkeys. And the barking of puppies from a separate building.

We waited in anticipation to see the black and white pup, but when a Mennonite lady brought him out and put him in this wading pool filled with stuffed toys, he just sat there and stared at us. He didn't move. In fact, I wondered for a moment if he was really breathing. Even when we petted him he just sat there, looking at us with



big, scared eyes. So we asked if perhaps this pup had a sibling, and out came this tan and white streak of fluff that ran up to the black and white one and nudged him under the chin. Soon the two were off and tackling each other . . . and then they came up to us, tails wagging in unison. We petted them and talked to them and they didn't run off. The tan and white one had a scratch on one eye and an under-bite only a mother--and we--could love, and I looked at him and decided he needed us, and the black and white one needed him, and nine long hours later, the two motion-sick puppies we briefly named Barfy and Woozy were home.

Since August, Mark has spent most of his time



tending to

Snickers (right) and Winston. Now, I personally think Mark needs help with this given the pups have destroyed two rolls of toilet paper, six of Dusty's old toys, 15 dog bones, one contour bathroom rug, one sock, and a baseball cap (unless putting one's hair in a buns is in style, in which case the hole at the top is perfect). They also yanked up some carpeting (which we admit does need to be replaced), and ripped the zipper off a new \$30 bed, which was followed by pulling out the insides of the bed to make a neat pile of white fluff on the floor. My personal favorite, though, is the hole in the door frame around our bedroom door, which we think was their way of telling us they do not like being locked up in the back bedroom area when we are not home. At left, Winston is posing by their handiwork.

While Mark was letting the puppies destroy our house I spent just about every waking hour promoting my book, *Something Furry Underfoot*, which is my humorous, touch-

ing memoir about pets. Since August, I've become a Facebook fiend, Twitter Tweeter, and social networker on pet and book-related social networking sites. I've done radio interviews on Dream4More, A Kind Voice and Talkin' Pets, a guest post on The Pet Blog Lady's site, a press release, and a world-wide virtual book tour. My book was featured on several book blogging sites, and The Lansing State Journal did a nice feature of my book. My nephew, Collin, developed two videos, one about Bumpkin, the Domestic Duck and another showing little video clips and photos of lots of different pets. Both videos are on YouTube but more readily found at amylpeterson.com/videos.



Our other news for 2013 was taking in a battered, wild mouse, which we caught in a live trap and released, only to find him in our barbecue grill. When we found him in the barbecue a second time, we decided he needed a permanent home inside our house, safe from predators. We named him Smokey Joe (above). Check out his torn ear and super short tail.



Here's to hoping your 2014 is filled with adventures and puppies. Or whatever else floats your boat and catches fish.

