

# *David & Rhonda Johnson's 28<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary*

Longbow 01/22-28/2009

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This is our fourth time to stay in Prim, Arkansas on our wedding anniversary. Each time we have lengthened our stay by a few more days. This year we scheduled a full seven days to celebrate our 28<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

We check "problem", "worry" and "concern" at the gate, as we leave the asphalt and turn down through the winding pasture roads that lead into the canyon. There will be no urgent calls from family, friends, the kids or work to answer. In fact there will be no one for miles around. This time of the year there are no hunters or hikers to stumble across. There are no shopping malls or attractions to go see. Most of the near-by lake businesses (cafes, shops, etc) are closed this time of year. There are no near-by restaurants or grocery stores; you bring all your supplies in with you. The nearest Wal-Mart is about an hours drive away in Heber Springs. The weather is likely to be cold and wet this time of year. Sometimes there is ice, sleet and snow. There is absolutely no outside communication (no phone lines, no cellular service, no TV, little or no radio, nothing at all). If there is a death in our family someone will have to call and leave word with the cabin owner and he will come down into the canyon and give us the message. The cabin has running water and electricity, which is a pretty neat trick considering how remote the area is. It is definitely not a place for people who want or need to be entertained, busy or occupied. It is a place to rest, a place to be quite and a place to be still. It is a place to listen to God and your heart. It is a place to focus on your spouse and your relationship. It is time to step back and reflect. It is a place where schedules and commitments do not exist. It is our time alone, our time to reaffirm a covenant to each other and our time to remember all those reasons why we love each other. There are clocks in the cabin. But, as-soon-as the last bag hits the floor I unplug every one of them; no schedules or agendas allowed here.

We've settled in on the Bushmaster cabin as our cabin of choice. The cabin, the canyon, the hiking, the setting and even the cold suits us. The forecast for Prim was rain for a few days when we left Houston. A light snow and the sound of silence can be deafening here this time of year. Just out side the big picture windows an occasional bird, squirrel or chipmunk can be seen dancing over the rocks. A blanket of dry leaves covers most everything. We found the raccoons (bandito's) are still here and looking for free meal each night. We always bring a



small sack of dry dog food just for them. The second night, after we went to bed, we had a big clumsy possum looking for food on the porch.

Saturday, on our way back to the cabin from a two hour hike, a deer being chased by a bobcat ran past us on the other side of the stream. It was an intense chase until the bobcat spotted us. He cooled his jets mid-stride and ducked for cover. We lost him as he slinked away up into the over-hanging rocks.

Monday morning it was cloudy and cold. We figured the rain was moving in for a few days as forecasted. At 10:00 we headed out to hike due north of the cabin. There is a highway a few miles north of us (as the crow flies). We can not hear the traffic from it and there is a mountain between us and it. We ascended up the canyon wall and heard Ben calling from below. He warned of a major ice storm due to hit that afternoon. We thanked him and headed on northward to enjoy what might be our last chance to hike. On the way back it started to get misty and drizzled a little. We got back to the cabin and started packing things up. Ice was forming on the walkways and porch outside as we loaded the Durango. We moved up out of the canyon and onto a high ridge cabin called Bois D'Arc. It would be much easier to hike from there to Ben's house if we had to. The cabins are all electric and if we loose power we have to leave (no heat or water). Driving will most likely not be an option in these hills with even a light sheet of ice. From here, it would take us two-three hours to hike to Ben's house with ice on the ground. As we settled in at Bois D'Arc the ice, sleet and snow continued to come down. Ben stopped by to check on us and was glad we had decided to leave the canyon. The cabins are mostly empty this time of the year.

Tuesday morning we awoke to a winter wonderland. There was about half an inch of ice on everything. The cabin was surprisingly warm this morning. It has huge picture widows that make it hard to heat a place like this. It looks like we are iced in for at least another day or two. If the wintery mix starts coming down again we may be stuck here for the rest of the week. I found some walking sticks out side the back door. They will be a big help if we have to hike out of here. The day was progressing well until the power went off at 1:00. With no heat we would have to leave. The road out was iced over and we'd have to check it before deciding if we could drive on it. It was a good chance that we'd be hiking it out of here. It's about four miles to Ben's house from here. We got everything squared away and ready to hike it out. We would have to leave at 3:00 to get to Ben's before it got dark. At 2:30 the power came back on. After a short prayer of thanks and celebration, we went walking up the road. It was raining. We found a tree down across the road. Limbs are



popping and crashing down all around the cabin. I moved the Durango out from under a big tree top that was bent high over it and we settled in for the night.

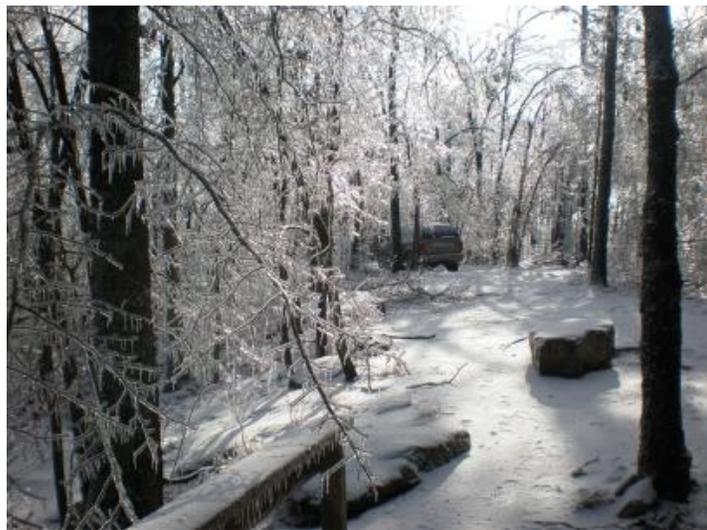
Ben had recommended that we listen to FM106.1 for weather updates through the evening. We found the radio station and listened as they took call after call of people all around us without power. We had an Arkansas map and it was nice to see where folks that called into the radio station were located. The lights would wink every 20-30 minutes. We turned the heat up and got the cabin as warm as we could. At 8pm we decided to turn in for the night. As we were climbing into the bed the lights went out and did not come back on. We climbed into bed with all the blankets we had on it. Rhonda was soon fast asleep. I lay awake all night listening to the gun shot like reports as limbs and trees broke under the heavy layer of ice. One or two small ice covered limbs fell on the house. But thankfully they did no damage.



The next morning we stayed under the warm covers as-long-as we could. We finally got up and put on all the clothes we could. Sitting on the couch in our snow gear it occurred to us that it was almost as cold in the cabin as it was outside. We decided to go for a hike up the road to see if we could get a signal on Rhonda's cell phone. There were several trees down on the road. The Durango was going no where until the trees were

cut and moved. About three-quarters of a mile from the cabin Rhonda got a signal and we called our family to let them know we had survived.

We hiked another two miles down into the canyon to see how the cabins (Longbow and Bushmaster) faired. The power lines were down on the road half way down the canyon road. There were trees down every where. We saw some eagles along the way. A coyote was staring back at us from the end of a long step grade and soon slipped off into the woods after he spotted us. The power to the canyon was going to be out for a while. Other than some limbs on



the ground and a few trees down, the canyon cabins faired well. The streams were running full throttle. The ice sickles were about twice as long as they had been just a day before. Ben and a neighbor came down on a mule (big ATV). They had finished cutting all the trees off of the roads and gave us a ride back to the Bois D' Arc cabin. On the way back we had to stop and cut a tree out of the road that had fallen since they came down into the canyon. While the road out was cleared of trees we decided that we should leave. Not knowing when the power lines might get fixed, we were looking at spending another night in a cold cabin with no water. We packed the Durango and headed out. It took a while to get the inch thick sheet of ice and sleet off of the windshield (people in Houston don't know what an ice scraper looks like).

We carried the trash and towels from the cabin up to Ben's house before leaving. Since our stay was cut short by a day Ben said he'd give us a day or two free next year.

We were headed for Norman, OK to visit family. It is normally just a six hour drive. But, I-40 was in pretty bad shape. There were long stretches where ice plows had not touched. It took us eleven hours to make the drive. We spent two hours and moved only about half a mile at one point. The truckers were constantly getting stuck on the hills. But we finally arrived at our destination at 2:00 AM.

We arrived safely home in Porter, Texas Friday at 11:00 PM.

Over all it was a great vacation despite the unforeseen weather problems. We are already looking forward to going back to Longbow again next year.

~~~ Until Next Year ~~~