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The Witte Times *Happy Holidays*

News You Can Use – To Wrap Your Fish

December 2001

Right behind the %^\$@! Post Office in DeWitt, Michigan

Our Gal Allie

It does not seem possible that Allison is nine years old. It was, after all, only last week that I drove from Grand Rapids at speeds slightly in excess of the legal limit for the opportunity to hold her on my arm for the first time.

Well, maybe it wasn't last week.

Allison has become a voracious reader in the last couple years. She has followed in her brother's footsteps and become an avid Calvin and Hobbes fan. Fortunately she seems not to have adopted Calvin as a role model.

She still loves to do crafts, but has added a passion for horses to her interests this year. She does great horse drawings and her horse knowledge is encyclopedic. You might even say she has a lot of horse sense, but you probably avoid bad jokes like the plague. Unlike me.

In third grade Allie is learning her multiplication and division facts. She is very good about practicing them with mom and dad.

Allie has taken responsibility for her

own garden of perennials, takes care of feeding and watering the cat, has taken up sewing and does her homework faithfully every night. This summer she went out and got a job helping at the day care she attended last week (figuratively speaking).

Anyone who knows me knows that this must be Joy's daughter.



He has a great coach and is learning a lot.

Never the quietest kid, Jake turned up the volume when he started band. He is playing baritone and enjoying it. I like to pick up his instrument and blat on it every now and then, too.

Jake reads a lot for recreation. He still likes to draw and comes up with some pretty interesting renderings.

Jake: Call Me "Mr. Activity"

The Jakester has a full plate in his tenth year.

They start giving real grades on schoolwork in fifth grade at Lansing Christian. Jake has found that the bar has been raised this year and is having a challenging time at school.

It is a good thing that he is such a smart kid.

Jake has more than just schoolwork to keep him busy. He continues to be active in soccer, playing both in the AYSO league and on Lansing Christian's indoor team. New for this year is the LCS basketball team.



There seems to be a military theme running through most of his pictures, but then, boys will be boys.

One thing I enjoy about Jake at this age is that we can have some fairly deep discussions. At the beginning of the summer I started work on a deck project for a friend and told Jake that I would pay him for helping. I also told



him that if he could save \$100 of his earnings and put it toward college, I would match it. He has been saving just about every penny he gets.

Come to think of it, Jake must be Joy's kid as well.

Growing Brighter with Caitlin

Caty is finding that the pace has turned up in her fourth year. She had to make an adjustment earlier this year when our Nanny of eight and a half years, Janice Nose, decided that it was time to get back into teaching.

Caty misses Nanny, and is going to day care three mornings a week, which means getting up and out the door early. After day care she goes to pre-school, so her days are very full.

Caitlin is such a sweet girl, with hugs and kisses for mom and dad all the time. Like the other kids (okay, and dad) she likes to play computer games. She has been drawing quite a bit, and she likes to write, even though she is not very sure what all the letters are or how to spell very many words.

She is also starting to have opinions of her own about many things, which can make for some



interesting situations. On the other hand, her temper is quick to leave, and she is good at accepting consequences for the most part. Now if this were true of my clients....¹

¹ Of course, if you, dear reader, are one of said clients, I am not referring to you, but those others whose work I do because I have to earn a living.

Caty's sunny spirit shows through in her constant singing and dancing. She is also becoming more interested in arts and crafts (the activity, not the architectural style) and playing dress-up. She has graduated from the crib to a bunk bed. And as you can see from the pictures, she is still the prettiest little pre-schooler a daddy could ever want.

Joy's, too.



He is playing soccer, too, and is passing from the stage where the sky, bugs and passing cars compete with the

soccer ball for attention on an even footing.

He continues to be quite the computer whiz, and like all our kids he loves to draw.

Seth has a gentle heart. He was bickering with Caty in the car today, and when I reminded them that they should be nice to each other, without any hesitation he said, "I love you, Caty." Then the two of them held hands.

Like any boy, Seth has his destructive side. At Thanksgiving we were visiting Joy's family in Hudsonville. Seth had fallen on a cache of cheaply made, broken Matchbox-like cars. With permission from Granny Janny, he got a hammer and started busting them up on the garage floor. Then Pop-pop came along and saw what was going on. He gave Seth a small sledgehammer, and Seth gleefully did his best to reduce those cars to their constituent elements.

Now, that's my boy.

Waist-Gunner Seth

Whenever we go on a family outing in the station wagon, all the kids check in on the "intercom" as if our Custom Cruiser were a WW II Flying Fortress. This is the report on that crewman known as "waist-gunner Seth."

Seth started first grade this year and has the same teacher Allie had, Mrs. Noble. Mrs. Noble told us at the parent-teacher conference that our

kids seem to be street smart, although I think she was telling us that they have common sense. Or maybe horse sense.

Anyway, at six Seth is turning out yeoman work in first grade. I am very impressed with his penmanship, which I know is much better than mine was at that age (sorry, Mom).

Shameless Flattery

Now we come to my favorite part of this annual ritual, in which I get to flaunt how lucky I got in the marriage game.

After 8 1/2 years, Joy soldiers on at the Worker's Comp Appellate Commission, from whence she judges the quick from the malingering. There have been some fascinating developments in Comp law this year. We aren't going to talk about them here.

This fall she had a worker's comp conference in Portland, Maine, and I accompanied her there. We added Portland to the list of places we could move to if we became independently wealthy and no longer cared to be near our family or friends.

This is Joy's sixth year serving as a picture lady at Lansing Christian, this year in Jake's class again. She gets any better at teaching art, she's gonna have to go pro.

She does a great job getting the kids back and forth from school, making arrangements to get the kids to friends' houses, practice or whatever is coming up next. I was going to get her a Cray supercomputer for Christmas to track all of the events she has to manage, but she prefers to carry on with the paper calendar on the wall.

This fall Joy and her mom had a garage sale. I say, about time. Give back to the system. Anyway, they raked in a ton of cash. To all you suckers out there that bought our junk, we have plenty more where that came from. See you next spring.

We have been debating about moving because the federal government built a post office not thirty feet over the property line on the vacant

property behind us that was zoned for single family homes, and then lit it adequately to ensure that bin Laden could not sneak up in the night and steal a right-hand drive postal van or a

Linda Tripp commemorative 3¢ stamp. But we're not bitter, oh no, not us. So anyway, Joy looks at house plan books a lot lately. No final decisions yet, but if we move, we want a big enough lot that the next post office built near us will have to belong to us.



Norm World

In which we explore the adventures of Child No. 5 in our little clan.

After a year's hiatus I am back racing. The picture you see on this page shows my friend Mike Puerner at the helm of my '93 Firebird at Waterford Hills.



The new thing this year is building decks. I have been helping my buddy Eric Doster build a deck on his house. It is a simple deck with two levels nine feet in the air. Progress is slow, and will continue next year.

Not to be undone, I started building a deck at our house. Ours is closer to ground level, but has several curved edges on the outside, so it has challenges of its own. My friend Jeff Guill has been of great help on that project.

The decks have been a great excuse to buy

tools.

One new tool that is not, strictly speaking, related to deck building is a Canon digital SLR camera body. I am sold on this device hook, line and sinker. Most of the photos in this newsletter came from the D30.

I got in touch with an old high school friend this year, Roger Weidyk, who it turns out also became a photo buff since we last talked. I still like him even if he does buy Nikon gear.

I got my first taste of sailboat racing on John Naber's Catalina 30 this summer. We set a blistering pace across Lake Michigan (read: all but becalmed the whole way). Mike Puerner and I drove back from Milwaukee to meet other commitments instead of racing back, so of course the crew had great winds on the return trip. I am now charging John money to stay off his crew.

This spring we took a family vacation to the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio. Isn't it great to let dad choose the destination? We spent a lot of time in the pool at the Holiday Inn, so

everyone was happy.

And when I am not doing these things or being with the family, I work.

And Now, A Word from Our Sponsors

For those of you who are joining our subscriber list for the first time, this is the part of the newsletter where I try to save all our extended family members the trouble of writing a newsletter. Of course, my coverage may not be as extensive as they'd like it to be.

My sister Cate and her boyfriend Dennis Kornoely are expecting a baby boy in January. Dennis wanted to name him Obi-Wan Kornoely. I am rooting for Beowulf, a personal favorite. They are nearly done resuscitating the "House of Pain."



My brother Rich and his wife Sharon had their second baby this fall, a young fellow named Charles. Rich is now working at Smurfit Stone Container in Tennessee, but the job is a couple hours from Summertown, so they are in the process of relocating.

My parents have another polebarn now, and the tractor count is at three.



With all these new kids, they have been busy making new roads in Witte's Woods, since each child and grandchild gets a road.

Joy's sister Leanne and her husband Chris did an extensive remodel of their kitchen this fall. I haven't seen it yet but understand that it was quite the project. John and Lanae bought a big house with a beautiful in-ground pool. Keith finished his remodeling projects and even though he just turned 40 he still looks much younger than me. Gunzai hosted us at her house in Lafayette again this summer, and is now also getting paid to take pictures and paint. Kevin and his wife Marie have moved from Houston to Los Angeles. They drove a rental van and a mini-van the whole way with

their five small children, and despite Kevin's ill-advised decision to start the rental truck on fire, made the trip with family and belongings intact.

Joy's father

continues to serve as an interim pastor at a CRC

church in Holland. This church is planning on merging with another church, so I am guessing he will not be with this congregation by this time next year. My mother-in-law is doing a great job of spoiling my kids every

time they go to Hudsonville.

While not a member of the family genetically speaking, Alina Martell has become indispensable to our family this year. Alina took over for Nanny during the summer break and since then has been working full time in my office as my secretary, paralegal, office manager, and responsible adult supervisor.

Also continuing with honorary family membership status is Jeff Guill, our carpenter, remodeler and Good Joe. Jeff has been doing great work at my new building and we sure do appreciate having him around.

On April 20, 1944, Judy Garland recorded her version of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." At the time that recording was made, World War II raged across every hemisphere. You can hear the sadness of those war-torn days in her voice as she bravely predicts that "Next year all our troubles will be miles away."



The troubles this country faced in those days, with so many fighting and dying in forgotten corners of the earth, cause the worries of our time, serious though they may be, to pale in comparison. Yet in the midst of war the like of which has not been seen before or since, Judy Garland sang, "Someday soon we all will be together...."

Have yourself a merry little Christmas now.

—The Wittes

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