



Santa was going to retire but last year I watched my 401(k) turn into a 101(k), so I'm still in the business of bringing you brats a bunch of worthless junk. Ho. Ho. Ho. Go get your own batteries.

THE WITTE TIMES



MOSTLY ACCURATE NEWS

December 2002 (hopefully...)

DeWitt, Michigan, for now



It's 5:56 in the morning on Saturday, December 21st. The house is quiet. Although it's dark outside, I can see fresh snow covering the yard. In spite of the warm temperatures and rain of the last few days, it looks as though we will have a white Christmas in DeWitt.

I still have most of my Christmas shopping to do and I suppose it's time to get started on **THE WITTE TIMES** before I have to change its name to **THE WITTE OLD TIMES**. Thanks for your patience.

JAKE HOLDING UP ADMIRABLY UNDER ASSAULT BY SIXTH GRADE TEACHERS

I can't believe eleven years have gone by since my little boy was born. So much has changed. Eleven years ago, George

Bush was president, we were at war with Iraq....

Well, uh, never mind.

Anyway, Jake's a sixth grader now, which in the Lansing Christian scheme of things puts him in middle school. Last spring the school invited parents to a special meeting at which the sixth grade staff explained how difficult sixth grade was going to be. Very intimidating.



more than a healthy child would about the workload. He loves his Language Arts class, especially when he gets to do creative writing. He's getting excellent grades. He even seems to enjoy choir. Will wonders never cease?

Jake continues to play soccer and basketball. The soccer team did very well, the basketball team is not doing as well, but Jake enjoys his teammates and the game.

Our eldest has grown up so much in the last year. Last week he had a choir concert and a band concert. To see him up there, tall and handsome with one of Dad's ties on, playing his baritone...golly, I just got all choked up, y'know?

I can't wait to see what the next eleven years brings.

CAITLIN CONQUERS KINDERGARTEN

I wrote that headline because I liked the way it sounded, but it's not as though she is taking hostages or anything.

We played our cards close to the vest and gave them no warning about Jake. Threaten us, will you? Take this!

Despite the scary stories, Jake's doing great. He's doing his best work ever in school and not complaining any

Our favorite five-year-old graduated from Sharon Rice's preschool this spring and started every-other-day kindergarten at LCS this fall, so now all of the kids are in school. Caty loves her teacher, Mrs. Person, and loves school. She is really picking up reading well, which is good if she wants to fit in with this family.

Caitlin has a very musical streak. She loves to sing, dance, and direct the music being played in the car. She went to a dance class this year with Allie and had a great time.

This year our friend Jeff Guill has been staying with us and he has two Maltese dogs, Sugar and Spice. For those who like me know nothing about dogs, these creatures are white puffs of fur smaller than our cat. Caitlin loves them to death, and apparently the feeling is mutual. (Not that anyone has actually died, you understand.)



Caitlin loves to be with her Mom (and who could blame her?) and Joy has been enjoying the extra time she has with her before Caty becomes a full-time student next year. Caty's cheery smile lights up the room and she gives the most wonderful hugs. We're cherishing these years.

SETH OF ARTS AND LETTERS

Handsome Seth is a second grader now. He is doing wonderful work. His papers come back neat, complete, and well done. He is reading well and does a good job in math.

One of the things I am enjoying most about Seth, though, is his drawing. I see him doing perspectives in

sketches, something I don't think I did until much later in life. I think he also has a real mechanical/spatial streak in him. I was amazed at how fast he picked up the rules for chess.

We have a huge collection of Lego, and while all the kids enjoy it (when they're not fighting over *that special part*), Seth is a Zen master of the art.

Seth played AYSO soccer last fall and made tremendous improvement over the season. I really like the coaches his team has this year, such an important thing.

One of the things I love about Seth is his humble obedience. He is the quietest of our children (that's not saying much, I know) and so it is easy to overlook him, but he rarely complains and when asked to do something usually jumps right to it with a cheerful "Yessir!"

What an excellent son.

DADDY'S GIRL ALLISON

My beautiful Allison is a fourth grader now. Tall and thin with flashing bright eyes and a mischievous smile, that's my girl.

Allie has Mrs. Noble, who she had in first grade. She loved Mrs. Noble's class, so she was very glad to have her again this year.



Allison's passions are horses, art and reading. These things can be combined. For example: read a book about horses, and then cut it up to make a horse out of the book.

She brought a painting home from school that could have been a Monet. (Of course, I'm not as impressed as Joy with the Impressionists.)

Allison doesn't read books, she

breathes them. She checks out two dozen library books weekly (mostly *Hardy Boys*). When Joy and the kids stocked up for Christmas vacation, the librarian looked at the stacks of books and just shook his head.

Perhaps the high point of Allison's year was in the spring when she was cast

in the high school production of *The Music Man* as Mayor Shinn's daughter (poetic since I played the mayor in that play in high school). She



thrived on it. Late night practices, too little sleep, hours of extra time at school...but she absolutely *glowed* and did a fabulous job in the play. I only took 207 pictures. Seriously.

She calls Jeff's dog Spice "The Liv-



ing Lint," beams when she smiles and has perfected the tackle hug. How can you not love this girl?

MY JOY

I'm sure that some of you get tired of hearing this year in and year out, but every year of being married to Joy is better than the last. I am such a fortunate man.



Joy was re-appointed by Governor Engler to a final one-year term at the Worker's Compensation Appellate Commission. She is concerned about her employment after the Commission, but we are both thankful for the nine years she has enjoyed in this position. I've offered her a job at my office when she is done with the state. She is considering my offer but negotiating for better terms. I'm hoping not to get stuck with the laundry.

Joy has been in the midst of the hunt for a new house for the last few years, and it intensified this spring when we made an offer on a house south of Eaton Rapids. Fortunately

for Jake, someone else outbid us (the house had eight acres of mowed lawn).

We have now been considering the alternative of building and she has looked through mountains of house plan books. We have lately taken to designing house plans of our own on the computer. After all this work, we are also considering the option of staying put, so who knows?

Joy is now on the leadership team of our Sunday School class, and is again doing Picture Lady, this year in Allison's class. A wonderful wife, a



wonderful mom, and really cute to boot...no wonder I boast every year.

BREAKING NEWS FROM THE DESK OF KAPTAIN KAOS

I turned 40 this year. Yee haw. Joy threw a great surprise party for me attended by an amazing number of gloaters. I got a lot of swell gifts, and some of them weren't even gags! Then I promptly lost the cards and so I couldn't send thank you's, so if you came, thanks, and sorry I'm such a bonehead.

My seventh year of solo law practice was...interesting. This was a challenging year

but I think in the end it was a good one for me, business-wise. I enjoy being a landlord in addition to my law practice.

Our friend Jeff and I finished the deck I started last year. It came out great. Next spring we plan on doing the landscaping around it.

Most of my summer was spent in the pole barn working on my Corvair. I got it back from being painted the second time only to have it drop a valve seat. So this summer Jeff and I took the motor out, sent parts of it all over the country, and worked our tails off beautifying the engine and its compartment. We got the car back together in time to drive it a bit before the snow kicked in. If you care, you're welcome to read the whole sordid story at the website listed at the end of this letter. Please forgive me for putting two pictures of the car in the newsletter, but I couldn't resist including one of the finished motor here.

I am really in love with my Canon





the Custom Cruiser and headed for Tennessee. We spent a couple pleasant days with my brother Rich's family and then wended our way on the back roads across the state to the Great Smoky Mountains National



D-30, the camera I used to take these pictures. I've shot over 9,000 frames in the last year, and can't see myself going back to film. Great gadget for King Gadget Head.

Last fall I took my bike downtown and for a few weeks I went for rides on the Riverwalk during my lunch hour. What a beautiful hidden secret Lansing has! I hope I can resume this enjoyable break when good weather returns.

FAMILY FUN FACTS

I thought this year I would dispense with the blow by blow for our extended families, but rest assured there are no tragedies to report. One notable addition was my sister Cate's new son, Liam Kornoely. That's Liam, the cute guy below. He's a January baby, and gave me a great smile on a visit to a park in May.

In place of the detailed report on the rest of the family, I thought I would use this space to talk about some of the things we did as a family this year.

This spring break we loaded up



Park. We spent several days in that area enjoying the mountain vistas, waterfalls, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the hotel swimming pools. The picture below left was taken on the North Carolina side of the mountains near Fontana Dam, and the one of our family on the first page was taken just inside the park near Cherokee, N.C.



For the Fourth of July we visited my sister-in-law Gay Ellen. Jeff came along and she put us to work on some projects around the house, but the fun part was the water park. The picture of Joy at top left makes this the first *Witte Times* swimsuit edition. Copies should fly off the newsstand now.

We have been very fortunate to have our friend Jeff Guill living with us for most of this year. Jeff is a carpenter,

handyman, and all around good Joe. It's been a genuine pleasure to have him and his barking and oinking dogs here.

Jeff's the handsome chap at the center of this page.

This fall I sold my pickup (sob) and bought a Suburban and a 25' travel trailer from my friend John Naber. We made a few camping trips to my folks' place up north and are looking forward to doing more camping in the spring.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our family and friends!

—The Wittes

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