



What's red and white and black all over? Me, entering a house through the chimney. I love sliding down chimneys because it soots me. I have a fear of getting stuck: it's called Santa Claus-trophobia.

THE WITTE TIMES

YEAH, WHATEVER.



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SOME DEAD END IN LANSING, MICHIGAN



A FEW QUICK WORDS BEFORE THE WORLD ENDS

As all of you well know, I am in fact Mayan and so I have to get the newsletter out and mailed before the 21st if I want to have any hope of anyone actually reading it.

As years-to-end-the-planet-in go, this one wasn't too bad, as far as our house was concerned. I really can't speak for the rest of humanity, at least not with any sort of mandate.

But enough of the clever introduction, let's get on with the traditional annual recap. In an effort to be fair to the kids, last year I created a spreadsheet to see that the rotation of who goes first is equitable, and found that I had royally screwed it up at some point. In an effort to get things back on track I just opened that spreadsheet and I am completely baffled. This will take a while to sort out, so please be patient while I try to understand what I was doing last year.

Ok, I am back. I give up. That thing is ridiculous. Let's just go.

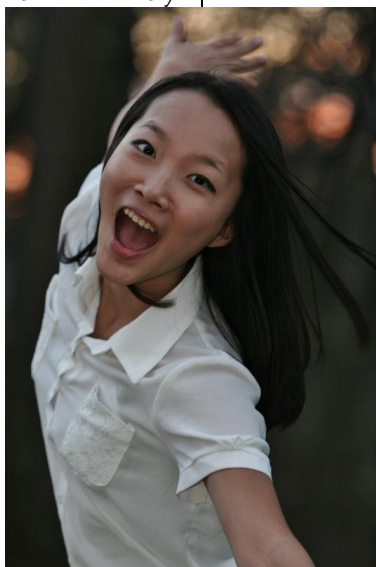
WHEN ONE EXCHANGE STUDENT JUST ISN'T ENOUGH

Our more loyal readers (and those who deal with our crew on a regular basis) may recall that we welcomed Guannan (Jack) Chen, an exchange student from China, into our home last year.

Either we weren't entirely satisfied with Jack, or couldn't get enough of the exchange student experience. Either way, in late January, we were joined by SeungHee (Cindy) Park, a graceful young lady from South Korea. Cindy was pretty shy when she first moved in with us, but wasted no time in asserting her authority by ripping the door handle off my ancient Suburban.¹

Since joining our clan, SeungHee has definitely drunk the Witte Kool-Aid. She is always willing to join a card game of Witte Rules Hand and Foot, has become masterful at the art of the insult and is constantly wrestling with Seth, just like everyone else (he needs a lot of percussive maintenance).

The other kids love SeungHee because she does dishes without being told, so that usually means she has half the job done before we start yelling at the other lazy slobs to get up and give her a hand.



¹ Ok, I have a confession to make. I was actually the one who tore the door handle off, and then I blamed Cindy, much to her horror. I have learned from our politicians, though, that if you repeat a lie long enough, it begins to become the truth. Actually, she tore *two* door handles off the truck.

SeungHee returned to Korea for the summer but apparently the brain-washing held and she returned to live with us this fall. She's now a senior at Lansing Christian and is pretty much crushing school, with lots of A's and an NHS membership to prove she's really smart in addition to being as cute as a bug. (What in the world does that phrase mean, anyway? We should get the German guy on YouTube who doesn't understand "shooting fish in a barrel" to explain it.) Last year she played varsity tennis and this year she is in LCS's top "Chorale" choir, so she's also very talented.

She is talking about attending any of a number of Big Ten colleges next year. We're rooting for MSU because I still need more Spartans and because we hope she'll be close to her American family for years to come.

SETH'S TURN AS A SENIOR

Seth grew up, grew a beard, and became a senior. I remember looking at him as a little kid and trying to imagine him as an adult. Still working on that one because he's still the same lovable kid inside.

This is Seth's third year on the LCS/Okemos/Williamston FIRST Robotics team working in the animation unit. If you would like to see last year's animation, it's on YouTube at <http://tinyurl.com/d4cmq79>.

Seth is still doing a ton of work in Sketch-Up, a 3-D drawing program. The picture of the race car below is one of his



latest Sketch-Up renderings, enhanced using Paint.net. You could peel the body off that car and find a six-cylinder radial engine inside that Seth built up in Sketch-Up. The pencil drawing of an old truck is another example of his work completed this fall.



As of this writing Seth has not decided where to attend college. I think he has narrowed it down to the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point (where Allie attends), MSU or Lansing Community College. CCS would be very challenging but could lead to a career in automotive design; Point has an excellent art program as Allie can attest; we need another Spartan in the family; LCC is an option should he decide he'd rather spend another year in Lansing. I'll tell you next year what happened.



Seth and I had a nice little adventure earlier this fall. We decided to replace our ancient Suburban with another ancient Suburban of the same year, but from Texas, without the rust. So Seth and I flew to Texas, closed on the truck at 3:00 a.m. (our flight was delayed) and drove it back to Michigan, stopping for the night at brother Rich's house. It was a great weekend, and a wonderful way to spend some quality time with my son before we send him off to college. That day is coming too soon.

ALLISON OF ARTS AND LETTERS

Since I'm putting artwork in the newsletter this year, I thought I should include some examples of Allison's work, shown at the bottom of the page. Allie is in her

second year at UWSP and is really loving college.

After her first year, Allie was in the top five students in her college. She also landed a job working technical staff for the UWSP Program Services, which provides sound and lighting support for events around campus.

Of course, this wasn't enough for Allie. She became involved as staff for an event called "Daisho Con," an anime and gaming convention hosted in the Wisconsin Dells for a weekend each year and attended by about 1,700 nerdy types. Last year she was security for the event; this year she was responsible for overall operations during the event. It was a ton of work but she really enjoyed the experience and is looking forward to next year.

We were fortunate to have Allie home last summer. Allie is clearly going places. I am just glad that one of them is Lansing.

CONSTRUCTION DUDE

This last year is the first that we really didn't have Jake at home much. He has been working for Countryside Greenhouse in Allendale and worked there over the summer.

His summer job was pretty rigorous. Countryside decided to construct a seven-acre retail greenhouse and Jake worked as part of the construction crew all summer and fall. He spent a lot of time working on scissor lifts installing the overhead components for the greenhouse. There are a surprising number of complex systems up there, ranging from mechanisms to open roof panels, to irrigation systems, lighting systems, cable systems for rotating hanging plants, and fans. Imagine installing all of that under a beating summer sun in, essentially, a clear plastic box filled with white concrete and bright metal. I would say he earned his pay this summer.



Unsurprisingly, he seemed pretty enthusiastic about the start of school this fall. He's still at Calvin College for now and doing very well. He's come a long, long way academically in the last couple of years. We're very proud of him.

Because of work we saw much less of Jake than we're used to but we did get to take a long weekend with him to attend a Corvair convention in Plymouth, Michigan. It was good to spend time together as a family. We also had him all to ourselves for Thanksgiving, which, for the first time, we spent entirely at home. Jake and I went window shopping for guns and worked together with Seth to detail one of the Auroras. It was just nice, quality family time leaving us very eager for our family Christmas vacation.





KEEPING UP WITH CAITLIN

Caitlin started her freshman year this fall at Lansing Christian. We're now officially finished with middle school. Like virtually all parents, Joy and I can't believe how fast the years have gone. And yet, I'm reminded every time I look at my Muggie that the years have been well-spent.

Where to begin? Caitlin keeps herself so busy. She was a cheerleader in the spring, she was on the swimming and diving team this fall, she is now on the bowling team and doing Science Olympiad and says that she wants to play indoor soccer and join the ski club this winter.

All the while she has continued to work on her music. Here are links to a couple of her piano pieces. The first was a performance at the middle school talent show in the spring:

<http://tinyurl.com/bld3o3z>

The second was recorded in our home last summer:

<http://tinyurl.com/cyeykcy>

We are in the process of recording enough material for a second CD which I hope to complete before too long. If you're interested in her first CD, *Believing*, drop me a note and let me know.

Caty is enjoying high school. She has been doing well in her classes and getting along with friends. I see in her a new maturity, confidence and an irrepressible positive attitude that I absolutely love. Caitlin loves life. She wants to try new things, learn, do and experience all that she can. I can only wonder where in life her adventurous spirit will take her.

GUANNAN STYLE

According to the spreadsheet, which I have almost figured out by now, Guannan closes out the kids' stories because he was first last year. This is his second year with us and the kid just gets funnier and funnier.

Last year he earned top honors in the sophomore class for the most outstanding math student. He's a junior now and his favorite classes are British Lit and US History. Or maybe not. We missed him over the summer but he really enjoyed the time at home and did some traveling with his mother and grandmother. He also took a two-week ACT prep class in Beijing and a TOEFL prep course (TOEFL is the English language test that foreign students must pass in order to enroll in college in the US).

Guannan bowled on the LCS team last spring. This year he is again on the Robotics Team with Seth and is also doing Science Olympiad. He occasionally threatens to eat our cats but never does despite our heartfelt encouragement.

Last year he was placed with us through

an organization called FLAG. This year he is a direct placement, which means that he is not subject to some additional restrictions FLAG places on its students. This in turn meant that this fall he had the opportunity to do some rifle target practice up in Grandma Witte's woods, something he had never done before. He was pretty good at it, which must mean that the video game practice is paying off. Guannan is planning on returning to live with us next year, so we will be very fortunate to have three years with this fine young man as part of our happy home.

JOYFUL

And now, it's time for news about my best friend. After a hiatus, Joy is back to volunteering at Hidden Treasures, the thrift store that supports Lansing Christian School. She enjoys working at the store and is glad to help.

She served as a chaperone for the junior class trip to Gettysburg this spring and on



the Senior Survival weekend at South Manitou Island this fall. Not content with that, a week or so after she got back from Senior Survival she was off to chaperone for two and a half days at the high school retreat. I think she enjoys these trips as much as the kids do. I am a little jealous but I think it's awesome that she's had the opportunity to be with the kids on these special events.

She drove to Stevens Point several times ferrying Allie back and forth to school, kinda the ultimate in soccer-mom duty ("Honey, I'll be right back, gotta run the kid to Wisconsin. I'll pick up some cheese on the way home.")



Work has been fairly uneventful this year for Joy. She still handles the bulk of our landlord/tenant hearings at courts all over mid-Michigan. She's now a seasoned veteran in this area and is an invaluable part of our firm team.

This fall we got a family membership to the Y and Joy is really taking advantage of it, swimming and running most days with Erin House, the younger mom across the street. Joy calculates it's been exactly 35 years since she's done distance swimming. I think it's wonderful that she is making time for both the friendship and the exercise. She is really enjoying it.

She says one of the most wonderful developments this year is the sheer enjoyment of being a mom, to six kids now, and not worrying whether they're going to be okay, but just savoring them as they are. They really are going to be just fine.

Yet another year stands as proof that I am, indeed, the luckiest man in the world. Sorry, guys.

LASTLY...

This will seem a bit silly, but I was tickled that I managed to get four of my toys in various calendars this year. Our '71 Sea Ray made an honorable mention in the West Marine calendar, our '65 turbo convertible Corvair Corsa made the Detroit Area Corvair Club calendar, our '65 Corvair Corsa coupe was September Corvair of the Month for the Corvair Forum, and the nicer of our two 1999 Olds Auras made the Aurora Club calendar. I

think this mainly means I have learned how to take a pretty picture of a vehicle.

Most of my news this year is car-related. We added two units to our fleet: a 2008 Saturn Aura and the aforementioned 2000 Suburban, which eventually will replace a considerably rustier 2000 Suburban. I spent lots of time tinkering with boats and cars this year, so that means I had a lot of fun.

This year it was my turn for the big 5-Oh. I had a wonderful birthday surprise when Rich drove up from Tennessee to spend the weekend with me.

We have been doing lots of work to our building in downtown Lansing, or at least I have been paying Steve Allswede to do it. We have three apartments renovated and a fourth will be done in the coming year. Right now we're gutting the reception area in my office and it's

going to be very cool when it is done.

Life hasn't gotten boring yet.

OTHER ADVENTURES

We will have had a few fun trips this year. In April, we again went to Topsail Island, which is starting to become a regular destination for us. We like it so much that we are also going down for Christmas vacation. This spring was the first time down for my sister Cate and her son Liam. My Mom and Joy's sister Gay Ellen came along and we met the Ostrand-ers there. For Christmas, pretty much the

whole Witte clan is going. Cate's husband Dennis has promised us some gourmet cooking and we are bringing the ping pong table and tons of cards, so we're guaranteed a good time.

Dennis' sister, Mindi, passed away this summer after a long battle with cancer. She was a great mom and beloved by her

family. Her family is in our prayers.

We made the trip to the North American International Auto Show in January, which is where Jack's picture was taken. This spring we took a long weekend and visited the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio. I thought it was awesome and the womenfolk tolerated it passing well. We also visited the Chrysler Museum, which is closing at the end of this year.

As usual, we had our July gathering at Lily Lake with the Ostrand-ers and the Kornoelys. We started out with a fun-filled visit to Muskegon State Park. Rich brought his boat up and he and I had a great time playing with watercraft.

So that's it. Busted spreadsheet and all, I think I've said my piece for 2012. Hopefully you had time to read this before the world ends. If not, then I will just wish you a Merry Chri

—THE WITTES

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