



Well, golly, I have no idea what to say this year. I have been up in this corner so doggone long that my brain has turned into a fried peanut. Isn't it MRS. CLAUS' turn yet? Fer Pete's sake.

The Witte Times



Another year gone and nothing done yet.

December 2006

DeWitt, Michigan...still



something interesting besides simply picking a couple of new fonts. But nooooo, here I am again, with the same flea-bitten dog and pony show. I tried to get the kids to write the articles, each writing about one of their siblings, but let's be realistic. They are only going to get poetic about one another when they aren't living in the same house any more.

seat. So far, no fatalities.

Actually, he's doing a great job. I took him out in a parking lot one night and tried to teach him how to drive a stick, and instead taught him how to do burn-outs in my Firebird. One might question my parenting techniques.

In other Jake-breaking news, our eldest went to Florida *twice* this year, once to visit his buddy AC who wisely moved away and once with his class to go snorkeling in the Keys. When I was in high school they threw you in the pool fully dressed and told you to swim. These kids have it too good.

Jake has a girlfriend, but don't tell his mom. She thinks I am weird (the girlfriend, not the mom). Sit and figger.

Some introductory blather before the traditional bragging about the kids begins

I have been grunting out this wretched Christmas excess for about eight years now, plus a slightly less overwrought rendition in 1995 that did not achieve nearly the overwhelming popularity that later iterations did, mostly because at the time I didn't think to make as many copies.

So you would think that after *eight years* I might show a trace of imagination, and perhaps change the format or do

Anyway, I *haven't* come up with any brilliant ideas (except perhaps a more cheeky tone), so you're stuck with the same old drivel. Hope you like it. So without further adieu

Jake successfully fails to total several motor vehicles

It took successive nagging sessions to get Jake to sign up for driver's education, but sign up he did. He just completed his last drive with his instructor yesterday, in fact, and so now it's off to the Secretary of State to attempt to get his stage one restricted operator's conditional usage permit or some such thing that we, back in the day, called a learner's permit, except that his instructor gave him a pink piece of paper that *Jake claims* gives him the right to drive as long as his mother or I are belted wild-eyed and panic-stricken in the passenger

Allison reads book. Go to beginning. Repeat.

Same thing again about Allison being the most voracious reader on the planet, but you, my constant reader, having memorized all prior editions of this tome, already are well-acquainted with this fact. Allie is the paperback vacuum cleaner, and they treat her like Norm on "Cheers" when she walks into any of the area libraries. Or would if she paid her fines.



Allie is bumping up against high school, being now an eighth-grader chompin' to move upstairs with the beeg kids at Lansing Christian. This year she became fascinated with comic book art and has been making up her own characters and illustrating them. She hasn't yet invented SUPER DAD, the guy whose laser beam stares can instantly motivate children to clean their rooms, but perhaps other people have more precocious children. However, she has come up with many remarkable drawings and interesting back-stories to go with each character. She has also been making books of drawings and poetry, and wrote one poem which her Aunt Gunzie described as "morbid." I was quite proud of her (Allie, not Gunzie).

Allison also pointed out to me just now that she got hamsters this year. We think this is treatable. Also, we got a new cat, which Allie named "Nimitz" after the treecat in the Honor Harrington novels she and I were reading.

Allie sang in a quartet at the middle school Christmas chapel this year. She really enjoys choir.



Seth-o-rama

Seth now is in sixth grade and is having a very good year. One of his teachers says he is a good analytical thinker. Calvin from Calvin & Hobbes was a good analytical thinker. I hope this isn't going to be a problem.

Seth is the Lego king. We have a huge chest of Legos, and he builds the most interesting things. He built a riding lawn mower. He learned how to drive a riding lawn mower. Coincidence? I think *not*.

Seth started band this year. He is playing percussion. I tease him about being the only member of the band who is in tune, but he seems to have a knack for beating on things, and doing such in a rhythmic fashion. Maybe I need to get him a trap set....

What am I thinking?!

Seth is an active boy, which is another way of saying that he is good friends with the guy at DOC (the glasses place) the same way that Allie is friends with the librarian. Chunks and parts fly off with happy abandon when he gets together with his friends. When they get together, they really *get together*, if you know what I mean. Lots of wrestling, yelling, shoes and glasses and rubber bands flying, all that crazy stuff. This is known as "Bison Mode" in our household.

Simply Caitlin

Caitlin is in third grade this year and doing very well. She loves her teacher and is really enjoying school.

Caty loves music and animals. It has been one of my traditions in the last couple of years to give each

of the kids vintage stereo systems as gifts (gotta love eBay) and she got hers last Christmas. It gets constant use. She likes rock 'n' roll but also loves classical music. She sings all the time, and got to sing as part of a quartet in the Christmas concert last week.

I love to listen to her play piano. She



isn't taking lessons right now, but she has such a natural ear that her improvisations simply amaze me. We need to find her another instructor.

This fall Caitlin and Allison were baptized at Trinity Church in Lansing. They got their pictures on the big screen (it's a big church), got dunked, and then we had a luncheon at the new house (more on that later). It was a big day for the girls.

Like her siblings, Caty is a great artist and writer. She writes sweet little books and illustrates them. Most of these books feature magical horses and the like, all the stuff of little girl dreams.

The Impossible Dream

Orville and Wilbur were told it would never fly but they persevered and now we blast recklessly through the sky in aluminum tubes with hardly a second thought. So it is with....

THE HOUSE.





After five (or fifteen or twenty-seven, I lost count) years of hard study, research, design, planning and work, Joy has gotten the house project under way. We broke tree in August and broke ground in September. As of this writing the deck is on, the electrician is gradually warming to the idea of maybe someday finishing that quaint task he calls “wiring” and things are moving apace. Pictures of this edifice in progress may be seen on my website at

www.wittelaw.com/personal/house

My job is to carefully study the choices that Joy presents me, pause thoughtfully, and then ask, “Which do you like better?” I listen to the answer and then say, “Honey, I really like your first choice best.”

Seriously, she has poured a lot of effort into this project and has been doing a wonderful job. We hope to be moving early next year, which makes this the last *Witte Times* from DeWitt.

Anybody wanna buy a house?



Speaking of projects, I have lost nearly 50 lbs. this year. If you find them, let me know.

In other health-related news, I had ACL surgery on my

One sad bit of news is that we had to have our cat, Kitten Little, put down this year. Joy got Kitten Little in 1986, so she was a longtime member of the family, and it seems odd not to see her around anymore.

When not keeping occupied with the house project, Joy helps me with eviction hearings and serves on the Lansing Christian School board. And she surprisingly manages to somehow stay cheery enough to greet me warmly when I come home. How do she do it?

left knee in March to fix damage that resulted from a racquetball injury in November 2005. This was really fun and I can't wait to try it again.

Of course, no *Witte Times* would be complete without some automotive related clap-trap and a car picture, so I'll tell you about dragging the family, a Suburban, a car trailer and two Corvairs to Buffalo, New York for the International Corvair Convention.

We had a pleasant visit in western New York and spent plenty of time in the hotel pool. The family took the two Vairs to Niagara Falls and saw lots of water falling. We also participated in the rally (Joy, Jake and Caitlin placed just ahead of the rest of us). One of my cars scored a second in the car display and the other a third, so I got to bring some hardware home. Nice trip.



Norm News

Renovation work continues at a...deliberate pace at my office. The façade project we started October or September of 2005 is not yet finished, but the quality of the work is superb. When completed, this will be the most accurate historic storefront restoration in downtown Lansing. I realize that the bar is not that high in Lansing, but at least we will be setting it. The picture at right shows Conn Allison, Jeff Guill and Michael Klem installing the vintage transom windows that have been fully restored.



My mother treated us to a weekend trip to see the tall ships at Bay City this sum-

Fellow Travelers

We took a number of trips this year. Shortly before

spring break I had knee surgery so we thought we would go someplace where we could just hole up and not have to walk too much. We rented a house on Topsail Island, North Carolina, which is one of the coastal islands. The house was on stilts and had three stories, so I got my share of walking anyway, but we had a great time. We got to go to Wilmington and tour the *U.S.S. North Carolina*, and spent some time on the Blue Ridge Parkway on the way home.

mer. A number of beautiful sailing vessels were there. We had a wonderful day stumping around the old town and posed for the picture on page one

The rest of the family spent a week at Lake Michigan with Joy's family at the Christian Reformed conference grounds. I had to work, but I did get to drag the camper out there and back.

Joy and the kids also spent the better part of a week at her sister Gay Ellen's place in Lafayette, Indiana. I had to work again.

The Witte family had a reunion at my mom's woods in Harrison this summer. My sister Cate, her husband Dennis and their son Liam were there. Rich and his family came up from Tennessee and numerous other Witte kin were in attendance.

There was, of course, the aforementioned Corvair convention, and a couple other Corvair shows that we attended (more minor hardware, thank you very

much), so all in all this was a big traveling year for us.

Next spring break I would like to take the kids to Washington, D.C. I think they are old enough now to handle all the walking that trip entails. Of course, plans are always subject to change and next year this time you may be reading about how we sat around the house and unpacked or something.

Anyway, I want our kids to travel as much as possible. I think family trips are one of the best parts about *being* a family.



With six of us we can't really afford to go jetting around the world, but there are plenty of interesting places within driving distance. I know the kids love it as well.

Of course, the big story next year will be moving. I think about this year and wonder how we fit in building houses and renovating

buildings. I'm sure that completing these two projects and moving all the stuff we have accumulated since 1989, when we moved here, will be positively relaxing. I will give orders while my children obediently toil.

Yeah, right. That will happen.

Merry Christmas and best holiday wishes to you and your (spouse, cat, sherpa) whatever-it-is-that-you-have.

– The Wittes

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