



This marks the TENTH ANNIVERSARY of The Witte Times, in print since 1994 (issue 2 was a little late). To celebrate a decade of claptrap, we're giving our readers...MORE CLAPTRAP!!!

The Witte Times



Here we are as in olden days

Volume 10, December 2007

Mostly in Lansing, but still a little bit left in DeWitt, Michigan



Allison: a freshman and a great girl

It's Allison's turn to get first at-bat this year. She is a freshman at LCS now. Usually when one of your kids starts high school, it's expected that you will go through

one of those "I-can't-believe-how-fast-she's-growing-up!" phases, so let's get that out of the way.

I can't believe how fast she's growing up!

Really, though, it's not how fast but how *well* she is growing up that really impresses me. Allie has always been strong-willed, which presents some real

challenges for us as parents. But the upside of that is that she always knows what she wants, and finding out what that is can be very interesting.

Allie says she basically shifts between three activities. The first is reading, as any long-time reader of this periodical knows. Second is drawing. Allison is a remarkable artist, preferring to draw comic book and anime style characters. In fact, she has developed quite an interest in comics and though she's not a collector, she has become conversant with the characters in the Marvel and DC universes.

Her third passion is writing. She has been working on a book for some time now. She frequently spends hours on the computer typing away. She took an old corporate record book I had from a long-closed company and is using the stock ledger to keep track of biographical information about her characters. She's filling the unused minute pages with illustrations of her characters. This book

For starters...

An element of timing to writing this thing has developed after nearly a decade, other than the obvious need to write it sometime in December. Some years I have started early, say December 4th, so that I could get this in the mail before Christmas. Other years it has been more of a New Years than Christmas letter. But the timing aspect that matters is more one of being in the right place at the right time. I'm an *artiste* and my muse must speak to me, you know.

The right place is usually sitting in a chair in the living room with my laptop. The right time is usually about 5:43 a.m. when I am awake, but the house is quiet. I should be asleep like everybody else, but instead I am typing....

Last night we got perhaps four inches of snow, the most we have had here so far this year. Everyone else is still asleep, and even though it's still dark, outside the living room windows of our new home I can see the snow on the ground and branches. Later it will be time to clear the drive and pack the family off to church, but now there is time to write. So that's what I think I'll do.



seems to accompany her everywhere.

Academically, Allie is doing very well. When she was in elementary school she struggled a bit with homework and studying, but somewhere along the line, she figured out how to get A's and decided that it mattered to her to do so. She's even enjoying her math class, which for one of our kids is nothing short of miraculous.

Allison doesn't much care what anyone else thinks about her. She knows what she wants to do and she is going to do it. And that's what makes her so attractive.

Seth and his perennial smile

I've really been enjoying Seth lately. He is now in seventh grade, in the middle year of middle school.

One of his latest interests is skateboarding, though that has died off a bit with winter. Note: skateboards and ice do not mix.

His passion for all things Lego

continues unabated. He searches on-line for project ideas, and has quite a few of his own. Some of the models he has created amaze me. He coaxes shapes from these limited plastic parts that I would not have believed possible. Lately he built a Huey helicopter with working sliding side doors.

I see Seth as coming into his own in school this year. He seems to be much more responsible about homework and is getting good marks.

An interest Seth and I share is a fascination with WW II aviation. Both of us think the B-17 Flying Fortress was the most interesting plane of the war.

Like his siblings, Seth is an excellent artist. His drawings are frequently humorous, and he can make even a stick figure very expressive.

There are so many reasons to like Seth but perhaps the most compelling is his perennially upbeat attitude. Even a lecture from Dad doesn't keep him down long. It's hard to be cranky coming home from work when you have someone so cheerful at home. Funny how contagious that is.

Caitlin and the royal flush

Some of the things Caitlin wants for Christmas you wouldn't expect to see on the average fourth grade girl's list. One item in particular is her own set of regulation poker chips.

We've been playing a fair amount of Texas Hold 'Em here at the Witte household in the past year, and Caitlin is a



natural. Last spring, the two of us were playing heads-up and she got a royal flush. (They say it's better to be lucky than skilled, but she's both.) Of course, Caitlin loves just about any game, be it chess, poker, Command & Conquer on the computer, or a board game. She is always a good sport, even when she is trashing her Dad.

Ten is an interesting age. Thinking back, all our kids seemed to struggle a little bit in fourth and fifth grade. It's a time when responsibility really starts to fall on a child's shoulders, and some take the burden up more readily than others. At the same time, they are old enough to start questioning their parent's wisdom. This age has a whiff of adolescence to it.

Despite all of this, school is going well for Caitlin this year. She is in Mrs. Noble's class this year, and Joanie has had all our kids, except Jake, as students (three years for Allie!); she's a family favorite and we knew Caitlin would love her too.

Caitlin is also quite the writer. She has an expressive vocabulary and a vivid imagination. I think it is wonderful that we have a family of writers and artists.

Caty is involved in more extra-curricular activities than any of her siblings. She plays soccer and basketball, does Girl Scouts and Math'o'rama. She is a happy little extrovert and we love her that way.

General Jacob and the junior year battle

This has been a challenging year for Jake. He has a number of difficult courses





this year, and he has been very busy with homework and studying.

Through it all I am very proud of my eldest son. He is at the stage of life where much of what he does has far-reaching implications and the never-ending battle has been joined in earnest. It's not always easy.

He really is turning into a young man. He is taller than me, another one of life's milestones. He still likes to have airsoft wars with his friends, and it seemed a little disconcerting recently when most of them drove themselves here. The little kids who last week were distracted by the dandelions on the soccer field are now men. It's been marvelous to watch but it is happening much too fast.

Jake is our traveling man. This spring he went on a mission trip to Guatemala for a week and had an excellent time building houses there. He also had a trip to the Florida Keys for his biology class. This fall he went on another school trip to Gettysburg. That boy sure do get around.

Jake has been talking about being a high school teacher when he graduates from



college. I find this to be an interesting idea, since my parents were both teachers and I have at times wished that I had followed their lead. I think Jake would make a great teacher, though if he changes his mind, that's alright with me. He is kind-hearted and a great communicator, with a great sense of humor. I'm sure kids would love to be in his class. I know I would.

Joy story

Of course, the biggest news in our family is that we moved to the new house over Labor Day weekend. I put this in the category of Joy's news because she did 99% of the work of getting the house built, making sure everything was up to spec, and then getting us moved.

Moving has been the dominant thing in our lives for most of the year, which probably accounts for the relatively low-key tone to this year's newsletter. (Either that, or I haven't had enough caffeine.)

I miss our place in DeWitt because of all the happy memories there, but the new house is quite beautiful, and I am sure we will fill this one with many new happy memories.

Beside all the work on getting the house finished, Joy has been very busy working on the board of trustees at Lansing

Christian School. I'm very proud of her for all the time she spends volunteering both at school and elsewhere. She's involved as picture lady at LCS for the twelfth straight year, works with the parent-teacher council, volunteers at the LCS thrift store...you get the picture.

When she is not playing general contractor or board member she is busy with the chores of keeping up with the kids and the house, in itself a full-time job. Since she has been busier handling hearings for my office, she has had her hands full this year.

One thing that seems to have become an informal Friday morning ritual is a coffee get-together with a few friends at one of their homes. I think it's a good thing for her to have some down time



with friends. Life is too short not to take advantage of these opportunities.

The hardest headline to write

I always struggle with what to write about myself. I am not sure that there's all that much newsworthy to report, but I guess there are a few high spots worth commenting on.

We went to the Corvair convention in metro Detroit this year. Even though it seemed too close to home for it to be a real adventure, we had a nice trip.

The façade project on my building is pretty much complete. It looks very nice and is probably one of the most historically accurate restorations in Lansing.

Of course, being essentially a really big kid, I did some playing with toys this year. Since the new house has a 300 ft. driveway made out of crushed limestone, I knew I wouldn't be clearing it with a snowblower, so I brought my Dad's old Massey Ferguson 50 tractor down and had it completely rebuilt. It's great fun to use it to clear the drive. I can't wait for more snow. Tractor worship: is it wrong?

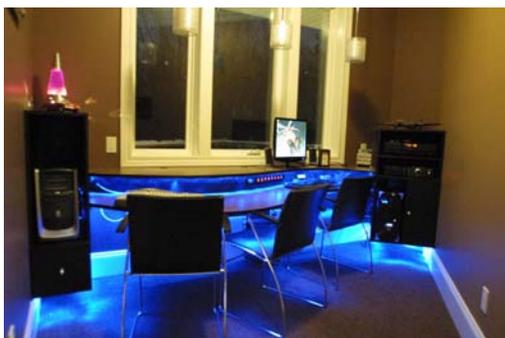


I have also decided that I am going to sell my Suburban and our camper and look for a class C motor home. To replace the Suburban as a more-or-less daily driver, I purchased a 1999 Olds Aurora. It's a really fabulous car and was very reasonably priced. I love it.

So that's the toy report.

My version of Joy's Friday morning café-klatch takes place a bit earlier, at 7:00 a.m. when my buddy Adam Kelly and I get together to talk about business, share a cup of coffee and play poker. Adam usually crushes me at cards, but it's a nice way to start Friday morning.

Jeff Guill and I just finished a project for the house. We have a triangular room off the kitchen that was designated the computer room. We just finished installing a unique counter and cabinet arrangement in the room with a curving, stacked pair of counters, two floating



cabinets, and a lot of blue LED rope lighting concealed beneath. We now have the Starship Enterprise look down.

Other news that didn't really get pigeon-holed anywhere else

The biggest item in the "other news" category is that Joy's brother Keith is getting married to a wonderful young lady, Kristi Bakker, in about two weeks. We think Keith picked a real winner.

My mother treated our family to a trip to Washington, D.C. over spring break. It was a busy trip, but we had a wonderful time. I know the kids weren't thrilled with all the

walking, but I think they will remember things like the National Cathedral, the Marine Corps Museum and riding the subway for a long time. It was just a bonus that we helped get a cranky hotel lifeguard fired.

The rest of the family spent the traditional summer week at Lake Michigan with Joy's family at the Christian Reformed conference grounds.

We got to see my brother Rich and his family a couple of times this year. They came up for the Fourth of July, which is tradition with them, and Rich and the two younger kids came up for Thanksgiving. Rich's wife Sharon has had a tough year between losing her mother and her son Dexter leaving for basic training with the Army. Fortunately, Sharon seems to always keep her spirits up, one of the reasons Rich married her, I am sure.

We adopted two kittens this year. Since we had one cat named "Nimitz," we named these two Halsey and Yamamoto. They go on maneuvers in the living room almost every morning.

So that's it for another year. For those of you who made it this far, thanks for reading. For those who did not, your mother wears army boots. From the Wittes to you, Merry Christmas and best holiday wishes.



- The Wittes

Please keep in touch and please also make a note of our new address:

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