



The Witte Times

and such good times they are



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Lansing, Michigan, the center of the known universe



Musings

I am comfortably ensconced in my chair in the living room, and it is the first Saturday of December, so it must be time to write the Christmas newsletter. 2009 has been an eventful year for our family, so there is less room for my pontifications. You luck out.



Allison elects rigging

Allie is a junior at Lansing Christian this year. She is also a junior at Haslett High School, sort of, and a student at

Lansing Community College, I guess. These things get so complicated.

She is enrolled in a special program called "SET" which stands for "Students in Entertainment Technology," which is taught at Haslett High School. She is learning how to build

sets, rig

lights and other heavy hanging objects, set up sound systems, and generally have a great time. She is earning 11 college credits at LCC for this.

SET takes the first two hours of her day, so Allie begins at Haslett and then travels to Lansing Christian for the rest of her classes, several of which are independent

study. She is having a fabulous year at school.

Allie has shown interest in theatre for a long time, and acted in and worked crew on LCS's production of "Beauty and the Beast" this spring. She played a wolf and a napkin. Seriously.

We were pleased and surprised when Allie went out for soccer this spring and played JV, especially since she had never played any sports before. She was sore and tired, but had a great time. She hopes to play this year as well if she has time.

Allie continues to show amazing

artistic talent. Recently she painted two old skateboards that Seth had, and they are fascinating. She truly has a talent. She also illustrated a book a friend wrote, *Dyslexia Wonders*, and so is now a published illustrator.

She commented to me recently that she has discovered that she enjoys work when it is something she knows how to do and she is doing it with people she likes. That's a fundamental truth that some spend a lifetime learning.

Allie is working on getting her driver's license and soon will be free to roam as



teens are wont to do. I suppose that is a good thing, but from a parent's point of view, it is the first step on the road away from home, and I will be sorry when she leaves. So in the meantime, I cherish the time I have with this wonderful young woman.





Jake: big man on campus

Jake graduated from high school this June and started at Calvin College this fall. He got glasses this year, so he now looks very intellectual, important for a guy moving in collegiate circles.

This spring Jake went on the senior trip with his class to Washington DC. He has been there before with the family, but this was a bit different as he and his friends were allowed to explore the city a bit on their own using the subways. It was a good finish to the year.

This summer he worked both for me at the office and for an interior painting contractor. It was great to have him at the office. I gave him all the grungy jobs. I love being the boss.

He seems to be settling into college life fine, though I have to admit that I miss him a ton. His girlfriend, Lindsey, lives in Jackson, so he does come home a fair number of weekends to borrow a car to go see her or his friends. It is nice to see him, but it's not the same as having him home. Still, this is the next step on the road of life. Which he is now walking on, without a car....

Jake tells me he is going through some pretty severe Firebird withdrawal. It's tough to get by without a sports car, but I think Jake is up to the task. We have to walk before we can speed excessively.

He did get a couple of chances to do some high speed driving earlier in the year. We went high-speed go-kart racing in Indiana in April, and in May we took the Firebird out to Grattan Raceway. I think he likes driving on the track as much as I do.

Caitlin moves up

Caitlin is in sixth grade and started junior high this year. We are done with ele-

mentary school (sniff), but she likes the freedom of middle school.

Caity probably has the busiest schedule of all the kids. She takes piano lessons and her composition skills are nothing short of amazing. Joy describes the songs that she writes as in the



style of George Winston, though I think she is a bit more versatile in range.

If her schedule allows, Caitlin will spend two hours a day on the piano, more if she can. She is one of those people who touches the keyboard like a fish swims through water. It is a wonderful gift, and one of the best things about coming home from work is hearing her play.

Caity is also on the sixth grade basketball team, and has joined a diving team through Okemos Public Schools. This spring she played volleyball for the first time. She loves sports and is good at them. I think she must follow after her mother, because I have never been a natu-





ral athlete.

In addition to having a gift for music, Caitlin also has a natural talent for writing. Her word choice is extensive, and her stories always creative.

Caity says she doesn't like her name (I think that isn't uncommon for her age). But it doesn't matter to me, because she will always be my Muggie.

Seth: big man on (a smaller) campus

Seth also is having a milestone year as he became a high school freshman this fall. So this year, we have two frosh.

Like his siblings before him, Seth also played JV soccer. He had a great time on the team and made some new friends.

Seth and his friend Alex love to skateboard and he has become pretty good at it. One not so good moment was when he fell earlier this year and broke both bones in his right forearm. Again. This time he had to have a plate, seven screws and a rod put in and was in a cast for awhile. In typical Seth fashion, though, he never complained

once. Next year's newsletter should include the news he had surgery to take it all back out.

Seth has always had a predilection for things mechanical. One of his favorite pastimes is a website called "Roblox," a kind of on-line Lego building site which animates what you build. We have been talking with him about the possibility of an engineering education in college and he seems enthusiastic about the possibilities.

Seth has gotten a lot taller, his voice has deepened, and suddenly he

has become a young man. He is now taller than Allison and Joy. I recently helped him shave for the first time, so I guess young adulthood is really here. Next thing you know I will have another Firebird driver on my hands. Better not sell that car.

The rest of the story

Joy's milestone was turning 40 (ok, 50, but if I had left it at 40 you would have believed me). To celebrate, we had a big



surprise party for her, and her close friend Carole Caraker flew in from Florida and stayed with us for several days. It was a wonderful gift, and the ladies had a marvelous time.

Joy continues to serve on the board of Lansing Christian School and recently joined the board of Hidden Treasures, the thrift store associated with Lansing Christian where she volunteers. She also drives kids everywhere and handles lots of landlord/tenant hearings several times a week. I don't know how she finds the time.

Her years of doing Picture Lady at school drew to a close this past spring when Caity completed elementary school. Joy began when Jake was in kindergarten



starting in 1995, 14 years ago. It is incredible how time flies.

Speaking of long term projects, Joy finished a cross-stitch sampler that she has been working on since the early nineties. Everything in it has special meaning and she is pleased to finally see it completed.

Joy and I shared a milestone as we celebrated 20 years of marriage this June. To mark the glorious occasion, we closed on refinancing our house. Am I the most romantic guy in the world, or what? I am certainly the luckiest.

As for me, I had a couple of big cases at work, including my first jury trial (it lasted almost three weeks, and I won). I started going to a personal trainer twice a week and while I



haven't lost that much weight I can say I am a much stronger and healthier overweight guy than I was before.

The year included one gearhead project, as I got my old boat running again after about 12 or so years. The picture is one Joy took in our back yard as the girls and I passed by. I've named the boat "Minimum Wage" for reasons that aren't en-



tirely clear or logical.

This spring we spent a week at Topsail Island in North Carolina. This is the second time we've rented a house there and it rocked. My brother Rich and his family also stayed with us, as did several of our kids' friends. It was a great break and we will probably do it again next year, but it may have been the last for all six of us together. In 2010, Allison will likely be on a mission trip to Guatemala for that week, and Jake's spring break will be too early to coincide with ours.

For Father's Day, we spent a night on the U.S.S. *Silversides*, a WWII submarine permanently moored in Muskegon. There was a troop of Boy Scouts on board with us. At 3 a.m. we were in the sweltering wardroom playing poker with a cigarette-smoking 14 year-old Boy Scout on a tether. It's hard to imagine a more surreal scene than that.

Joy's brother Keith and his wife Kristi had a bouncing baby boy this summer, pictured with Jake, who they named Grayson. He is adorable and my mother-in-law can't stay away from him.

Sadly, my 45-year old cousin Lisa Ostrander Boulette died suddenly of an aneurysm in mid-November. Joy and I flew to Washington State for the funeral, and to be with her family. It was a terrible tragedy and our thoughts and prayers are with her husband Mike and their three children, Brittany, Matthew and Camryn.

The week after the funeral, we drove to Tennessee for Thanksgiving weekend and had a lovely time with my brother Rich, his wife Sharon and the seven kids between us. We did plenty of eating, shopping, target practice, and slide watching to reminisce.

Parting shot

Since there wasn't much pontification on the front side, maybe it



wouldn't hurt to have just a tiny bit at the end. In letters like this you put the shiny side forward, but like every family we have our ups and downs. Pobody's nerfect. Still, I cannot help but think that I am rich beyond imagining not because of things I have, but because of the people in my life—family, friends and colleagues. How easy it is to lose sight of these blessings!

So if I can leave you with one resolution for the New Year, it is one for which I cannot take credit, but hopefully take heed: people first, things second.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

—The Witte

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