

Mike and Jane's Annual Report

December 25, 2005

Our narrative continues with Christmas Day 2004, where we continued battling zero on travel arrangements: Our flights out of Appleton were canceled again, just like in 2003. But this time there was no different way to go: *everything* out of Outagamie County Airport was grounded, including the alternate flights to Moose Jaw. Fortunately, Mike had a premonition of disaster and had not returned the rental car, so we jumped in and motored on down to Milwaukee to pester Jane's sister Katie, who had thought she was safely rid of us. Sucker. We wound up spending Christmas Dinner for 2005 at a Middle Eastern restaurant in Milwaukee called something like Shamalamadingdong (much like the previous year in Waco, being the only thing we could find open), then joined lines stretching to the outskirts of Chicago and managed finally to obtain a flight home the next day.



Our "big family excursion" for the year 2005 was a really pathetic one: we traveled all of 270 miles to San Antonio to visit Mike's sister Katie, who lives there, and the Alamo, which also lives there. This dovetailed nicely into Dave's 4th Grade Social Studies: here in Texas, they go over the Texas Revolution every couple of years, which in Catholic school results in a bit of confusion as you see novenas offered to St. Davy Crockett on a regular basis. Anyway, we did the mission tour, had "dinner with Shamu" at Sea World (although, when you get right down to it, we would just as soon have skipped the raw chunks of seal meat), and toured Natural Root Canal Caverns.

Maggie took a fair number of courses and such this summer. Some courses were potentially useful, like journalism. Others were positively ruinous: we are *still* paying off her debts from learning in Gambling class why you should *not* try to fill an inside straight. Dave occupied his summer with Chess Camp, Video Game Programming Camp, Baseball Camp, Soccer Camp ... pretty much everything other than Prison Camp, and we figure that is on the agenda as soon as he gets a driver's license. He has continued with his electric guitar lessons, and so far we have succeeded in keeping him from getting any major body parts pierced or tattooed. He now has a 200 watt amplifier, which produces the added benefits of saving us money on pest control and putting us on first name terms with the local police.

Jane also took a trip to Wisconsin in July for her high school reunion. She and her friends had a wonderful time passing notes and giggling, but she never did get to sit with the



Merry Christmas! FROM THE KOENECKES

Mike
Jane
Maggie
Dave

Maggie's Christmas Card Design

cool kids in their corner of the cafeteria.

Jane took Maggie to New York to visit her brother Joe in 2001, and this year it was Dave's turn to go. They had such a terrific time that Dave decided he wanted to live there, as does pretty much everyone who visits until they inquire about real estate prices. Naturally, more fun with airlines ensued, as their return flight was diverted by a thunderstorm to Waco, from which they were sent back via bus to DFW Airport, arriving at 1:30 a.m. with a Greyhound coupon book and several winos' phone numbers.

Early this year Jane decided that nine years of dealing with our existing kitchen was enough, seeing as how the 1950's era cabinets were mainly held together with spit and baling wire. When demolition commenced, we discovered that the "fur downs" in the kitchen were aptly named, as demolishing them revealed a skeleton of a raccoon that Maggie promptly named "Oscar" and took to school for show 'n' tell. The whole thing was fairly involved: half a wall went away and the pantry was moved into the utility room, which itself

had to be re-done. The excavations resulted in the removal of *four* separate layers of vinyl flooring, a mosaic dating from the reign of Caligula, forty-six sets of lost car keys, and Jimmy Hoffa. As of this writing, reconstruction is ongoing, and we hope to have the final trim work completed before Maggie qualifies for Medicare benefits.

In October, our house looked to be largely composed of woodworking equipment, several inches of dust, and bits of Sheetrock®, so we flew up to Pennsylvania to meet with Jane's siblings and significant others for a few days in the Poconos. Being from Texas, probably the highlight of the trip was learning about this phenomenon called *rain* they have up North. Evidently water falls right from the sky up there, as opposed to coming out of sprinkler systems like we are used to. Not only that, the leaves on trees change *colors* up there in the fall. It was really cool. Anyway, between a local cabin and Joe's nifty setup in the mountains we had a grand time, what with the pillow fights, noogies, and all.

Back in Dallas, Mike's mother bought a house in our neighborhood, then sold her house shortly thereafter. Mike's sister suggested that she could save big bucks by using her husband's landscaping employees to handle the move. Trouble was, on the big day Mike Zang had to leave around noon, taking his managerial expertise with him. This left Jane and Mike flailing away in their high school Spanish, trying to tell José and Paco in their pickup truck where to deliver the 1,289 metric tons of Mom's Stuff. ("Donde esta Susana? En la cocina.") It was all worth it, though: with the \$28.56 saved, Mike's mother was able to buy a nice planter for the patio. Once the move was completed, we discovered that the remodeling of Mike's mother's new home was a trifle more extensive than originally thought: evidently *feng shui* demanded that the entire structure needed to be rotated 37° south-southwest, and spikes needed to be installed into the laundry room to ward off demons. We figure she will be able to move in around the time Dave graduates from high school. In the interim, Mike's mother is occupying our guest room, and Mike's great uncle (age 96) and great aunt (age 90) showed up on December 16, so Maggie has been relocated to Dave's upper bunk for the duration.

Maggie has continued to play softball, though she despairs of being feared as a power hitter until she manages to hit the ball out of the infield. In Girl Scouts, we are not entirely sure why she is doing things like planting potatoes, but apparently if you do that and sell enough boxes of cookies you get a shot at the Silver Medal. (There are service projects and the like involved too, all involving potatoes. Medals are awarded on St. Patrick's day. There is a common thread here somewhere, but we have not figured it out yet.) Maggie also enjoyed a week at the Pines Summer Camp this summer, and this fall has started on Speech Team. She also sewed her own Halloween costume: she dressed as Saphira, the dragon from *Eragon*. Dave was Gandalf, sporting a cardboard sword, a cardboard staff, and a cardboard beard.

Dave has joined Maggie as an altar server at St. Paul's, though he is less than thrilled with her telling him what to do in yet another activity.



Mike is in his second ~~sentence~~ term as Grand Knight of Council 12021 of the Knights of Columbus, and looks forward to June, when his ~~parole comes through~~ worthy successor takes the reins.

We are happy to be together and are thankful for our family and friends this Christmas season. Here's to a wonderful 2006.

*Mike, Jane, Maggie
& Dave*