

MIKE & JANE'S ANNUAL REPORT

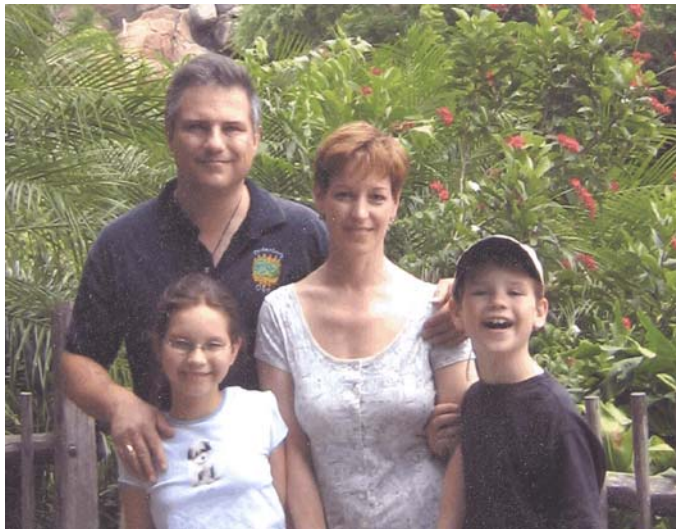
December 25, 2004

Picking up where we left off, the first thing that happened on Christmas last year was that our flight back from Appleton was cancelled. That left all of three flights leaving Outagamie County Airport that day, and two of *them* were crop dusters. Nevertheless, we somehow managed to arrive in Dallas an hour and half earlier than we were supposed to, albeit with severe cases of wind burn. This was interpreted as some sort of sign that we had not done enough traveling, so we promptly climbed into the car and drove 100 miles to Waco, where our nephew Mike was working for a few days filming newlywed Jessica Simpson. Nick and Jessica inconsiderately failed to invite the film crew to their Christmas Dinner with Silicone Relish, so we had an almost Dickensian Christmas dinner at a place called "Lupita's Taqueria" for a grand total of 1,359,000 pesos, or \$14.53.



Taken in front of our house, believe it or not.

Dave had his first go at playing basketball on a team. Let us just say that we will not be changing his name to LeBron any time soon. He also competed in the Pinewood Derby again in January, as usual fielding a car that looked really cool but did not win any races, on the theory that it is better to look good than to feel good. Or something like that. Maggie played on the St. Paul girls' softball team in the Spring, and has continued doing well with piano. She also became an altar server, under the impression that this meant she would get first crack at the Communion wine.



At the Kingdom of the Potato People

Then came Interstate Batteries's semi-annual convention, which was held in Orlando this year. That gave us the chance to bring Maggie and Dave as an excuse for us all to go to Disney World. We spent four days gamely trudging around the Universal Studios, Magic Kingdom, Animal Kingdom, Kingdom of the Potato People, MGM, and Epcot theme parks, getting in as many attractions as possible, which calculated out to about 14.36 seconds each. Fortunately, Jane's camera has a high speed shutter. She took a lot of pictures: its memory card weighed twice as much when we got back due to all the data stored on it. (Rimshot)

Mike participated in yet another Bar None in June, getting his annual fix of the Theatre, though he is beginning to give up on the idea of being discovered and moving to Hollywood, since Oliver Stone never returns his calls.

In the early summer, Maggie attended DECATS again and Dave went to Chess Camp. These were not exactly moves calculated to boost their overall popularity. We expect that next they will start attending Star Trek conventions, wearing pocket protectors, and playing Dungeons and Dragons. (Actually, Mike wished *he* could have gone to Chess Camp too. But he's *already* a geek.) Dave also spent a week making a Battle Bot and attended football camp, and Maggie went away to camp at The Pines for the first time.

After rattling around West Texas last year, naturally some sort of Grand Tour of the North was in order this year, so we set out on the road near the end of June. We were able to celebrate our 15th wedding anniversary in the very same suite we spent our wedding night: at the Appleton Holiday Inn "Select." Evidently on the very same sheets, too, which we hoped had been washed since our last visit. We visited with nearly the entire Kesler clan at Aunt Mary and Uncle Harold's cottage in Shawano. (This is pronounced "Shonno." Wisconsinites do not have much use for extra

consonants.) We also went to the family cottage, now John and Nancy's, in Waupaca ("Wokka") to celebrate the Fourth with the family, then headed east for a ferry ride across Lake Michigan. We drove up to Omena, near Traverse City, to see Mike's very hospitable cousins Ralph and Carol Towne, and visited Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park and a nifty museum of mechanical music devices, which unaccountably had not a single iPod. (We gave their Cherry Festival a miss, seeing as how we learned that the actual cherries involved were being flown in from Washington.) From there, we drove up the coast to Mackinac Island and spent a couple of days touring its fort and its 1,367 fudge shops. No



Ya think the Michiganders knew we were from Texas?

wonder the people who live there weigh an average of 335 pounds each. The highlight was pretending to be Lance Armstrong on rented tandem bicycles, riding around a trail on the shore. After Maggie and Dave fell off into Lake Huron a few times, we rode a bit slower.

Onward, onward north, over the Verranzano Narrows bridge to Sault Ste. Marie in Ontario. So the first foreign country for our two native Texans, who got within eight feet of Mexico last year, was Canada, eh? From there we went all the way down Michigan's Upper Peninsula, across Wisconsin, and in to Minnesota to visit Mike's great uncle and great aunt in St. Peter. Maggie and Dave founded the "Loiterers' Club" in the same attic Mike's mother played in as a girl, and we enjoyed a quiet couple of days before the drive back home to Texas.

Soon after we got home, we were happy to welcome Mike's sister Betsy, her husband Cary, and boys Will and Jack, who moved from Arizona right into our neighborhood. Mike helped them unload, and reflected that it is a good thing that U-Haul does not charge by the pound. We are thrilled: Maggie and Dave now go to school with their cousins, and their Aunt Betsy is also a substitute teacher at St. Paul the Apostle.

Last year Jane talked Dave into starting piano lessons by promising him that he just needed to stick with it for a year, to see if he liked it. She never imagined he would actually *call* her on this deal, so it came as a surprise when in August Dave decided to go over to electric guitar instead. He is now having a grand time twanging away on his black and white Stratocaster. The groupies are beginning to be a problem, though.

We are still involved in St. Paul Parish. Perhaps too involved. Mike got talked into being the Grand Knight for the Knights of Columbus council on the condition of never, ever having to wear one of those silly hats. Jane, too, made the mistake of letting Father Flori know what she does for a living, so now she has taken on much of the Communications for the parish. At least her newly acquired bulk mailing expertise will be a real help if she ever gets demoted to the Interstate mail room.

In November, we dutifully set out to vote, carefully weighing one set of idiots against the other, and winding up voting for the candidate who had the coolest commercials. We think our President's name is "Bud" something.



You'd scream too, with those guys along.

Although we try to focus on the positive, this year has also had some sad times, as both Mike and Jane lost their Dads this year. Some memories of Herb Kesler may be found at <http://koenecke.us/Kesler>, and of Dick Koenecke at <http://koenecke.us>. In some ways, this is going to be a holiday to just kind of "get through." We will always miss them, but are so thankful for the time we had them in our lives. And we know they will remain with us in many ways for our days to come. Whatever is going on in your life, we hope that Christmas will bring you times with the ones you love most. Cheers to lots of happiness to come in 2005!

Mike, Jane, Maggie & Dave