

The Waite Family 2004 Christmas Letter

In order to get our Christmas letter done earlier this year, we decided to write it in January 2004 instead of waiting until the end of the year. If we get anything wrong, we'll just make some minor corrections. After all, aren't our lives entirely predictable?

Margie's job: Margie loves her new job at the educational toy company where she started January 4. It is a growing and dynamic organization that really values her ideas. What a great year she had!



Update: Wow, were we ever wrong about that one. It turns out the place wasn't growing. In fact, they had layoffs going when they hired her, and in accounting alone, they had gone through 45 people in 28 positions the previous year. On her second day on the job, the boss told her not to make any suggestions until she had been there at least a year. On Day 5, she wisely ran screaming from the building after giving 30 minutes notice. The story is much longer, but

you'd never believe the other parts. She looked for a new job for a few months and decided to take the summer off to hang out with Alex and David, spending a week at a time at the cabin. This shot of the kids lounging at the cabin shows how stressful it was. She got a couple of consulting jobs to keep her busy and make some cash. In October, she took a job with her employer from several years ago, Bristol Farms, where she is the accounting manager (her actual title would require this be written in even a smaller type). It actually did turn out to be a great year!



Barry's job: Barry is still with the city of Carson doing the same thing as last year.

Update: That was certainly an easy prediction, so we're up to 50% accuracy. He did get a hefty raise that made Margie's time off surprisingly easy from a financial standpoint, and he's co-authoring a technical book due out by July 2005. It's sure to be a real page-turner, right? He thought his part was just okay until he saw how bad some of the other parts of the book

are. His massive compensation for weeks of writing and editing is six free copies of the book. Want one? Didn't think so. He learned some new chainsaw skills thanks to all the dead trees at the cabin.

School: Alex moved up to seventh grade after a very enjoyable sixth grade year while David began his final year of elementary school, finally making him one of the top dogs of the school.



Update: Hmm... This one didn't come out quite as expected. Alex despised most of sixth grade and spent many hours thinking of disasters that might befall his school, which he said was run by prisoner of war camp guards. Among the possible rule violations were using the wrong color of highlighter pen or having one's shirt untucked. Missing a single instruction on one teacher's assignments is grounds for getting a zero on the project. Forgetting to outline a map in black is one such

transgression. We're not making these up! What really made him mad was to see that he was using the same science book as David's class two grades younger -- the same book Alex had used in fourth grade. He did enjoy a trip to Yosemite in January with the school, but not as much as Barry enjoyed going along. Maybe that's because they passed out homework in Yosemite. Ugh! In spite of that, he got straight A's and continues to do so with the report card he just brought home. Meanwhile, David really did have a good year. This year, he has a new teacher whom his classmates refer to as a real babe but not so loudly that she would hear it. Last spring, he was the first member of the Waite family to have an act in the school talent show that actually had talent! As you can see in the picture with his co-star Johnny, he looked like a character out of Star Wars playing the electric guitar. His rendition of "Yoda" (to the tune of "Lola") by Weird Al Yankovich was the big hit of the show.

The dreaded minivan: Over Margie's grimaces that vans are very uncool, we finally bought one. It turned out to be very good for domestic tranquility to have the boys sitting in separate rows.

Update: Hey, we got this one right! Since Margie wasn't working, we bought a van anyway. What's the use of a line of credit if you never use it? We're doing our part to keep America in debt -- oops, we mean keep the economy running. It really was handy, and it really is handy to have the boys in separate rows. On long trips to the cabin, they no longer argue about which of them has the dog leaning against him more.



Vacation: Since we bought a van, we drove up to Seattle in August to visit Margie's family and friends. The drive was of course awful, but it's beautiful in Seattle that time of year.

Update: Do we get half credit? Since we bought a van, we drove up to Seattle in August. The drive was generally quite pleasant. We got a laptop so the boys could watch movies on the road. Gee, sounds like a write-off for Margie's accounting services. The

weather was not quite what we expected except of course that San Francisco was cold. Leaving southern Oregon in a rain storm, we came across three major accidents in the first hour of driving. In Seattle, we managed to end a lengthy drought by our arrival. It rained until the day before we left. That day, it merely sprinkled. Margie had forgotten her Seattle upbringing and packed almost exclusively shorts for herself. We went shopping for sweatshirts. The picture shows us picking blueberries with Uncle Mark

and our friend Becky. We only got 23 pounds of them. Anyone up for some antioxidants?

The household pets: Monster the dog (author of the 2001 family Christmas letter) continues to rule the roost, showing those silly cats who the boss is. David got a fish named Sparks who, of course, survived only a few weeks.

Update: Oops, missed this one too. Somehow, those cats have convinced Monster that they can do whatever they want, including taking over her bed. She does, however, get terribly upset if they get too close to her food dish, even if it's empty. By some miracle, Sparks the fish is still with us and seems to be doing well. Meanwhile, Margie desperately wants a turtle and Barry desperately doesn't. Alex is getting a bunch of crickets. Unfortunately for them, they are his science fair project for the year and are highly unlikely to gain full pet status. Watch out for the turtle.

Our Christmas letter: Since we started so early, we finished by Thanksgiving weekend.

Update: Wouldn't that have been nice? At this point we're hoping to have all our cards mailed by Christmas. Hey, if we use the date for the Russian Orthodox Church, that gives us an extra 13 days. Procrastination encourages us to be creative in our rationalizations.



So what happened with you this year? Call, write or email. We'd be happy to hear from you, especially if you have ideas for next year's Christmas letter. After all, you don't want to have the dog write it again do you?

Barry, Margie, Alex & David (that's Barry holding the camera)