

Holiday Newsletter 2004

My intent in sending this holiday newsletter is to spread as much yuletide cheer as possible with a minimum of swearing. Stress at the Ware household is running on a par with that of a financial executive team that has just been informed Elliott Spitzer is waiting in the lobby. Of course, the holiday season is notorious for high tension but we decided to really go for broke by contending with Christmas, moving, remodeling, and two infants all at once. Since mid-November I've nicknamed our family the "snapping turtles." (Fortunately, we've obtained a family discount on Prozac.) Even Janey, whose heart has been described in previous letters as Texas-sized, has not proven immune. Note the following recent exchange:

Me, speaking to Jane: "Honey, I've just bathed Nicole and Alexandra, diapered them, read them a story, put them down, cooked you dinner, and poured you a glass of wine."

Jane, searching through boxes in the bedroom: "Shut up and help me find some underpants."

This, of course, is not an accurate description of life after our November 30 move. It's actually much worse. But I promised Janey that I wouldn't write anything that would make us candidates for a reality TV show.

The move from Glenview to Long Grove has indeed been stressful but has included some major upgrades as well. For example, with Nicole turning two and Alexandra almost four, we can say "goodbye" to all the baby gates that daddy used to trip over at 5 a.m. as he



Alexandra and Nicole

was ever-so-quietly exiting the house for an early morning flight. (I think I hold the record for pre-dawn, silent temper tantrums which would erupt after banging my kneecap into one of those %\$#%&&*^ baby gates that are supposed to bring peace and safety to the household.) The night before we moved, I collected the gates from their various locations around the house, took them outside after everyone had gone to sleep, and beat them into unrecognizable scrap metal against the oak tree in our backyard.

Janey continues to bring an all-world, positive attitude to her human resource work at Baxter despite the company's struggles. I've tried to explain, patiently, to Jane that her upbeat and inspiring behavior makes my whining and complaining over trivial matters look terrible in comparison. Despite my best efforts, she refuses to change.

One area where I was able to exert some positive influence involved our kids and their values. Given my professional interest at Focus Consulting in values and behaviors, I became concerned when I realized that our kids had largely ignored their parent's values and instead embraced those of Barney, BJ, and Baby Bop. In response, Mom

and Dad decided that the kids were watching entirely too much TV. Mom set a limit: no more than one hour per day. I took a more lenient approach and argued for two hours per day. After some heated negotiations, we compromised at one hour, plus I would empty the garbage and handle payment of all the household bills.

Truly, though, we are blessed. For example, this wonderful new home was obtained in an unusual way: we fell in love with the neighborhood and placed fliers in selected mailboxes in May. The family living in this house back then responded a few weeks later, saying that they were indeed selling in the Fall. Chalk one up for being proactive. (We found out later that placing the fliers in the mailboxes is completely illegal, so I suppose we should also be grateful for not ending up behind bars!)

In closing, a note of thanks to all the clients and friends of Focus Consulting. This year's engagements took us from Sophia, Bulgaria to Auckland, New Zealand. The other day my colleague, Fran Skinner, paid me a wonderful compliment: "Jim, I appreciate you for attracting the most wonderful group of clients. Really, everyone we work with is just delightful." I couldn't agree more. Here's wishing you all a Happy New Year and great success in 2005.

And yes, we're still looking for the underpants...

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Thanksgiving 2004