

Happy Holidays from the Ware House:

Last year's newsletter ended with Janey in search of her underwear. She has since found it. I should explain to any newcomers: we moved last year at this time, which accounted for the general state of chaos and disorder that we lived in for several months. Including lost underwear. (It was about the stupidest thing we've ever done--moving during the stressful holiday season--but it wasn't our fault: we have two baby girls and were acting in a sleep-deprived state.) And, truth be told, the underwear is missing again.

(No. Uncle Frank is not wearing it...)

Apparently, we couldn't stand the peace and quiet that ensued after we finished renovating and redecorating our new house in Long Grove, so "we" (and by "we" I mean Jane, acting on her own, with no endorsement by me what-

soever) adopted a puppy. Janey, whose heart I have described as slightly larger than the state of Texas, believed that our current dog, Bucky, needed a soul-mate, so voila, we adopted his new best-friend, Jessie. We know that Jessie is his best friend because ever since we brought her home, she has clamped her jaws around Bucky's neck and held on for dear life. Bucky's otherwise idyllic existence is now marred by what appears to be a permanent neck ornament in the shape of a female German shepherd. Bucky must be delighted with Janey's choice to bring home Jessie, whose two main activities include hiding underwear and chewing his neck.

Honestly, though, here is a foolproof tip for making NEXT year's Xmas the best ever: move THIS year. Each time a negative thought surfaces in my mind, I remember what



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we were up against last year and I'm dancing a jig.

In predictable fashion, I will tell you virtually nothing about what our kids are up to. (Don't people who write Xmas letters realize that NO ONE—outside the immediate family, by which I mean Mom and Dad--cares a hoot about what their kids are doing? Apparently not since every letter we get contains stuff like this: "The twins—Buffy and Biffy—are walking now and it is SOOOOOO adorable. The proud mother and father are adapting nicely to parenthood, and we just LOVE being grandparents." So, I'll say it again: no one likes this claptrap, so stop writing it!) If you must write about your children, share a true anecdote like the following from the kid's evening bath routine:

Janey, bathing the girls: "Okay, girls, now remember: no going potty in the bathtub!"

Nicole, age 3: "I already went potty in the bathtub!"

Alexandra, age 4, looking up disgustedly, "MO-O-OM!"

This sort of real life story is a thoughtful holiday gift: it reassures the reader that they are not the ONLY ones screwing up parenting. And therefore spreads a little Yuletide joy.

On the parenting front, Jane and I took a course in it this Fall. The teacher was a wonderful Irish priest named Paddie. You guessed it: never married, never raised any offspring. Who better to teach the subject?! We learned valuable concepts like "listen carefully to your children." Unless of course you are doing something important like watching football. In this regard, we learned a

special technique called "Grunt and push." If the child doesn't understand the importance of daddy watching football, and still selfishly insists on gaining dad's attention, you make a grunting sound and move the child aside so that you don't miss any of the action. Jane might debate the fine points of this concept but I'm sure I got the gist of it right.

In fact, Jane has so much confidence in my parenting that she is going to move to a shortened work week at Baxter, presumably so she can pick up some tips from watching me.



Nicole and Alexandra: schmoozing Santa

For myself, I love the work of Focus Consulting. I have great colleagues and wonderful clients around the globe. Periodically, my colleagues and I take time out to write up the lessons we've learned from working with them. Our next book is due out in February: "High Performing Investment Teams" (Wiley, 2006)

As you read this holiday note, I am probably preparing for another interesting trip and will be out the door and headed for O'Hare soon...when I find my underwear.

Happy Holidays from Jim, Jane, Alexandra and Nicole!