

Merry Christmas 2003

Happy Holidays, everyone! I present you with the second installment of the annual Janicek Christmas newsletter.

2003 started out with the changing of the jobs. I started the new year with a new job as Webmaster for Wellness Works. Elise worked for us on a contract-basis making sales support and lead generation phone calls while she looked for another job. Early in the summer and with the help of our friend Bill, Elise accepted the job as Director of Catering for El Arroyo, a locally owned Tex-Mex restaurant. Director of Catering, in case you weren't aware, is Spanish for "You will never see your wife again because she will work 317 hours a week".

Both of our jobs have provided us with what we like to think are decent salaries. Yours truly developed a financial strategy where we can live comfortably on my income alone and save all of Elise's earnings. This strategy was designed with purchasing a house in mind. We are still able to indulge, however. Brazilian bikini waxes, raspberry essence eyelid exfoliation sessions, Wednesday night Yoga to Prevent Menstrual Cramps classes and moisturizing lip gloss are things that I honestly couldn't live without. Elise really only likes to spend her money on beer and Nascar memorabilia.

Okay Josh, what's the story on the house? Well, you just sit tight, give yourself a courtesy flush, light that scented candle behind you and I'll tell you.

The main goal of Operation Save A lot of Cash for a Decent Down Payment on a House was to save x amount of greenbacks. We did just that. In fact, we did it a lot faster than I had projected. This suddenly gave us buying power. We became very serious in our home shopping. We narrowed our search down to a price range, neighborhoods, square footage, layout and allowable chalk outlines of dead humans per neighborhood block.

In all seriousness - we have been looking at nice houses in nice neighborhoods. By nice I mean houses that we can afford, would appreciate in value and are in neighborhoods that we could take pride in driving through.

On our second outing with Della, our Realtor, we found a house that we liked. Elise and I talked it over that night, slept on the idea and made an offer less than the asking price on the house the next afternoon. Unfortunately the owners weren't budging on their price. We couldn't realistically afford the sellers' asking price. Strike one.

The following weekend Della took us to look at nine more houses. This time we found a house that we liked a lot more and the asking price was \$20,000 less than the first house we wanted to buy. We made an offer on the house that Sunday afternoon. As our luck would have it, another buyer made an offer on the same house. On Tuesday Della told us that the sellers went with the other buyers' offer as they were paying mostly with cash. I asked if throwing in a package of gummy bears and an interpretive dance would sway the sellers' decision. No dice. Strike two.

Though downtrodden, we're still looking. Not many houses are coming into the market during the holiday season. Luckily for us this downtime will allow us to save more money. As everyone has been telling us, third time is a charm. So dagnabbit if I'm not writing about *our* house in next year's newsletter, I'll build my own 1:2000 scale model out of popsicle sticks and elbow macaroni and send you all pictures.



Some of you might remember last year when I mentioned that we would like to become more physically active and involved in the community. Elise has done so in that her job requires some level of manual labor. With the help of her employees, she regularly has to load and unload her catering van for setting up and serving food for parties. There is also a high level of mouth exercises as Elise is on the phone with clients for most of the day. If you know Elise, I'm sure you can understand that this must be very difficult for her because she is not what one would call a "talker".

In an effort to stay in shape, contribute less to air pollution and wake myself up in the morning, I have been riding my bicycle 3.5 miles to and from work everyday.

In June I rejoined Unified Tae Kwon Do after nearly a nine-year hiatus. In six months I have re-learned almost everything I once knew. I was able to keep my black belt, I'm testing for my first star and will also compete in a tournament in January.

Also in June I became a mentor in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas program. After a series of interviews and background checks, I was presented with two boys from which to choose to be my little brother. I chose a 13-year old lad by the name of Harold.

Seeing how I've never leased or owned a younger sibling, this was a whole new experience for your humble narrator.

Happy New Year 2003

As many of you probably already know, I'm not what one would call an extrovert and neither is Harold. Our first meeting consisted of tilted-head glances at one another. Next there were a few guttural utterances, scratching and knuckle-dragging. We finally sniffed each other's hind sides and agreed that one another was okay.

One of our spiritually enlightening outings consisted of playing Blazer Lazer Tag where, as a team, Harold and I pummeled a team of 10-year old boys with invisible beams of light projected from futuristic photon blasters.

On a separate outing I was able to give Harold a taste of culture and exemplify the male role in contemporary politics by taking him to see *Terminator 3: The Rise of the Machines*.

These outings began to seem somewhat materialistic in my mind. I needed to become more of a role model for Harold. I needed to teach him something that he could use for the rest of his life - something that could get him out of a sticky situation. I needed to pass something down to him that would allow him to make his mark on this planet.

I dug deep into my soul. I closed my eyes as hard as I could and asked: "What profound knowledge would a good, upstanding role model of a brother provide for his little sibling?" And then it came to me. I decided to teach him how to recreate the coolest sounding fart noises with his mouth.



Elise just looked over my shoulder and said "You're making it look like you do all the humanitarian stuff." I told her she should think about hopping into the Jeep and going back to work. More money means more lip gloss, you know?

In an effort to stave off the proverbial "When are you two planning on having children?" question, Elise and I have to verbally admit that it's hard enough to remember to leave the toilet seats up so Riley and Annie can have water. That and the Texas Department of Transportation Childseat for a Motorcycle is still pending approval.

House then baby, if you must know. Personally, I would like to see, in no particular order: a house, a Harley-Davidson, an Apple iBook, a trampouline, a pony, an Ike and Tina Turner reunion tour, world peace and then a baby.

The way that it will actually happen will go something

like this: We will sign the final document when closing on our new house and spontaneous gestation will ensue.

In all seriousness, I'd really like to have a miniature version of us running around. This past year has blessed me with my first gray hairs and I have no one to blame. House then baby.

This year Elise and I will be spending Christmas with my parents in Cat Spring. We decided, before we married, that we would alternate Christmases between Cat Spring and Des Moines. For my friends and relatives in Texas, Des Moines is Iowan for "*The Moines*". We spent last Christmas at Elise's parents' house. It gets cold in Iowa during the winter - so cold that moisture in the air freezes and gently falls to the ground as something they call "snow". I didn't see a significant amount of "snow" last year but did have the pleasure of witnessing a "flurry" as we were driving through the suburbs to look at houses decorated with Christmas lights. Here all along I thought a flurry was a frozen treat that one buys at Dairy Queen during an August in Texas.

Well, I'm seeing the end of my newsletter template on the computer which can mean only one thing: It's time to end this year's newsletter. I hope it has been informative and entertaining. I must warn you though, this will be the last free one. I will be sending out Janicek Christmas Newsletter subscription reminders somewhere around May. I'm offering a one-year introductory subscription rate of only \$9.95 for the year 2004. If you send me the trampouline or can arrange for the Ike and Tina Turner reunion tour I'll put you on the lifetime free subscription list.

I'm just Joshin' - the newsletter will always be free. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and good luck to anyone else who may experience spontaneous gestation or "snow".

Elise and I love you all and, as always, you can keep up with our everyday lives at www.janicek.com.

Love Always,

Josh & Elise