

There are at least four categories of people when it comes to Christmas cards. The first don't send them, and don't care to receive them. The second group is happy receiving a card with no picture. The third group sends a picture so you can see how the family has changed over the year. The fourth group writes something and includes a picture. The fact that you are reading this puts you into the group that wants to read what has happened to us this year.

I know that most of the audience of this letter has gone through it, are about to go through it or are just laughing at us for how we are going through it each year. But on a whole, I am in the club that likes to read a little bit about what is going on in the peoples' lives that we have been lucky enough to get to know or be related to since we have been married. Our lives continue to revolve around our daughters. They are certainly the focus. Work and life seems to run around their schedules.

We have had visitors and we have visited family this year. I made several trips to Utah, business and family brought me out. As a family we had an extended trip to Utah and California in the summer. Melanie's sister, Holly, made it three out of four of her sisters that have made the trek to the east coast, and was certainly a highlight as we ran around Virginia and saw some sights. But as I have tried to reflect on what 2006 means to the Whitesides family, the truth is that it probably means different things to each one of us. When we started this year, it was hard to believe that our youngest was turning six, she is now on her way to seven and we are beginning to realize that we are no longer the parents of pre-schoolers. In fact that has been underscored throughout the year as some significant events have taken place.



This fall saw all of my brothers and sisters make it to our house, some had made it already but a family wedding pulled everyone in for a visit. In that sense it is starting to feel more and more like home



Our youngest, Isabella graduated from kindergarten. As in she has not only done a full year of school already, but she graduated, moved on to first grade and now has a loose tooth. She is growing up, and quickly. Kindergarten was an all day program, so as she transitioned into first grade this fall it was not a big jump for her. She is a great reader much like her sisters and is doing fantastic in school. She started playing softball with the encouragement of Grandpa Campbell and was one of the fastest girls running the bases.

Victoria turned eight and was baptized as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This was a big deal that was celebrated by her entire family. Her grandparents on both sides of the family were able to be here in Virginia, as well as some extended family. Victoria is a great student in the third grade and is singing and dancing

in our front room as free time permits. Victoria has done a spring and fall season of softball. She is "Miss Spunk" on the team and the coaching staff loves her. Her coach is very serious and is the parent of several baseball/softball players. He is already telling us he is planning on getting this group into the little league softball world series in Florida. I'm not sure we're that committed!



Alexandra graduated from elementary school, and is well on the way to joining the Young Women program in church. She attends Auburn Middle School, home of the Wildcats. Alexandra is an outstanding student, and is a photographer for the school newspaper. She loves middle school because of all the freedom she was automatically granted. She still has her heart set on going to BYU for college and recently had to do a report on what university she would have to attend. It was fun because she created a song as part of her project. I got to dust off the old recording unit and lay down the guitar track for the song. She has been thinking a lot about her future, and it's starting to scare us. Alexandra has become very interested in photography and she's a whiz with the computer, but everything still takes a back seat to her love of horses. She played spring and fall soccer this year. She has her mothers running stride and loves to play.

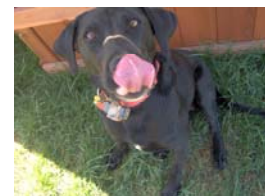


We got a wonderful new kitten and he is fluffy and loveable all the way through! We were struggling with finding a name that fits in the "ee" club, but we agreed to call him Quincy. The oddest thing about him is the fact that he thinks he is a dog, because Marcie is his influence. He will fetch if you toss him a hair band! The girls absolutely adore him and the kitten struggles to stay away from those suffocating arms that will love him to death.

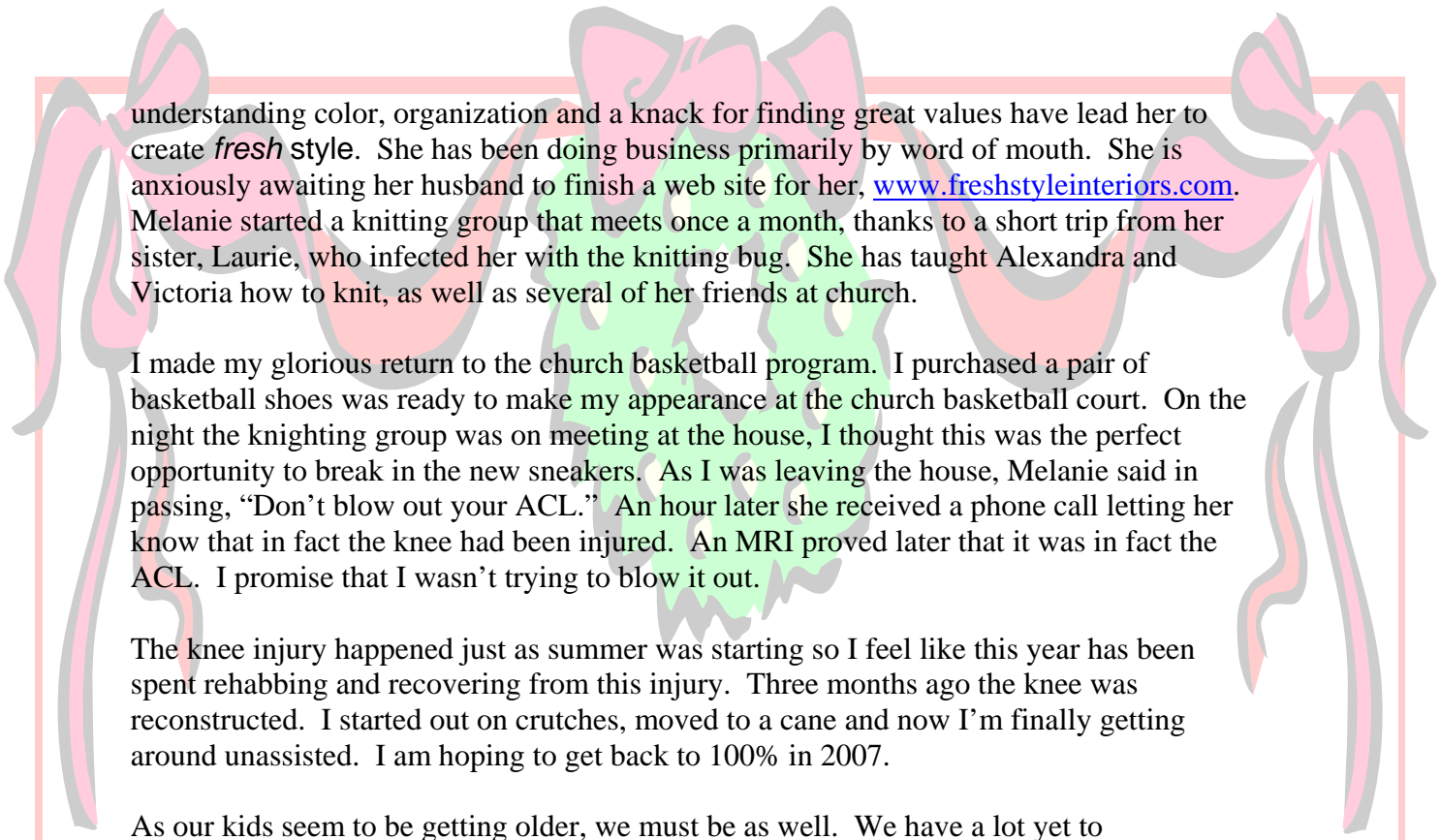


Chessie is living in a nightmare with a stinky MALE in the same house as her. There have been quite a few cat fights since Quincy arrived, but she's getting used to it. She doesn't hate Marcie near as much anymore, because she has a new enemy. ? No matter what, Chessie still thinks she's the queen of the world.

Marcie is just happy to be alive. She has become the world's first living foot warmer. She is so happy to have a playful friend like Quincy, who never hisses or growls. She sure appreciates Chessie's new attitude toward her, and she gives all her thanks to Quincy. She treats Quincy like her son, but you could almost hear him cry, "Mom! Back off!" as he struggles to get free.



You would think that having all the girls in school would give Melanie more free time. Instead, she started a business this year. Her natural talent for decorating and



understanding color, organization and a knack for finding great values have lead her to create *fresh* style. She has been doing business primarily by word of mouth. She is anxiously awaiting her husband to finish a web site for her, www.freshstyleinteriors.com. Melanie started a knitting group that meets once a month, thanks to a short trip from her sister, Laurie, who infected her with the knitting bug. She has taught Alexandra and Victoria how to knit, as well as several of her friends at church.

I made my glorious return to the church basketball program. I purchased a pair of basketball shoes was ready to make my appearance at the church basketball court. On the night the knitting group was on meeting at the house, I thought this was the perfect opportunity to break in the new sneakers. As I was leaving the house, Melanie said in passing, "Don't blow out your ACL." An hour later she received a phone call letting her know that in fact the knee had been injured. An MRI proved later that it was in fact the ACL. I promise that I wasn't trying to blow it out.

The knee injury happened just as summer was starting so I feel like this year has been spent rehabbing and recovering from this injury. Three months ago the knee was reconstructed. I started out on crutches, moved to a cane and now I'm finally getting around unassisted. I am hoping to get back to 100% in 2007.

As our kids seem to be getting older, we must be as well. We have a lot yet to accomplish, and the next decade should be an interesting one, when our youngest goes from six to sixteen. It's hard to imagine how all this happened, when it seems like yesterday that Melanie and I were hanging out in Provo performing with Tapestry Drive. It's time to put the band back together!

We are so grateful for Christmas time. Not only for a time to reflect on what has happened throughout the year, but for a chance to reflect on the birth of Jesus Christ. We are grateful for what He has done for us. Without his birth, life, death, atonement and resurrection there would be little hope. With His love and care we would be found wanting. We hope that the spirit of Christmas is found in your homes and that the magic of Christmas touches your hearts.

Keep in touch!

Love,

Jason (with the help of his girls)

