

MICHIGAN MAN NEWSLETTER

DEC. 1, 2003

Hello Again,

Boy, the months just fly on by, eh? I hope everyone had a great Thanksgiving. I still can't believe the Lions did in the Packers. On the Wednesday night before the game I played at Hoops in Auburn Hills and regular as rain the Packer faithful stopped by for their limit. (translate.... a lot) They had me convinced the game was a no brainer and Bret Favre was going to walk all over the boys in Honolulu Blue. What a shock!! I really wish I would have gotten some Wisconsin e-mail addresses.. Heh, heh, heh!!

Okay, a quick Packer joke.

Greta and Ollie were boarding the train up near Rhinelander heading south for the big game at Lambeau Field. Ollie, nimble as a whip boards the train easily. Greta, being a good size Wisconsin farmer's wife has a bit of struggle. The conductor reaches down and offers Greta hand. Hoisting her up he says, "Holy Cheese, Greta. Yoor big enuf to play with da Green Bay Packers."

She fakes an embarrassed giggle and says, "Oh no!! I only play wit Ollie's Packer." Even these are better than Lion jokes.

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If you didn't receive last month's Newsletter or it didn't open, please let me know and I'll send you another copy, opened and pasted. Please pass this Newsletter to your friends if you think they'd enjoy it. I am looking for more subscribers. (It's free, ya know!!) Again, if this is something you don't wish to receive or want it sent to a different address, let me know.

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Do you ever get the feeling the United States is losing out to the Japanese. Well, take heart. The Honda Motor Company's biannual inventiveness contest for employees produced some real winners but my favorite is the six-day underwear. The underwear has three leg holes, which allows for six days of wear without having to wash them. The wearer rotates the skivvies 120 degrees on each of the first three days, then turns them inside out and repeats the process. Gives one hope for the American automobile.

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We had a great time at the Brown Trout for the U-M , MSU tailgate party. Congratulations to the Wolverines for beating up on OSU. As far as the MSU game? Wait til the basketball season!!!

A lot of you wanted the lyrics to the fight songs so here they are:

HAIL TO THE VICTORS (REVISITED)

Whine when you lose a game you whine when you win a game
Whine, whine, you always whine. You're whining by half time
Whine about your football team, you whine about your basketball team
Hail, Hail to Michigan, the whining Wolverines

One More...circa 1995

Hail Mary! Colorado nailed ya! Chris Webber's time-out failed ya!!
Hell, Hell, the Wolverines just can't buy a break!
The Fab Five were prime time chokers. Bluuurrppp! There goes Gary Moeller
Hell, Hell, if you ask me you're better off at State

Okay, one for the cow college.

Go to school at MSU. Learn to count to ten
If you try and screw it up well you can try again
We're so dumb at MSU but we don't really care
1....2....3..4..5 Holy Cow we're half way there!!
(anon.)

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Here's the plan for the month of December...

Thursdays Dec. 4, 11, 18 Dick O'Dow's in Birmingham 9:30-1:00 (248) 642-1135
It's been a steady build up for the holidays. Birmingham is such a cool
place. Do some Christmas shopping and stop in for a Guinness.

Friday Dec. 5 Oscar's in Midland 9-12 (989) 837-8680
Oscar's is a very cool place with a good mix of professionals from Dow,
students from Northwood and rednecks from Gladwin. My kinda place.

Friday Dec. 12& 19 Hoops at Auburn Hills. 9:30-1:00. (248) 373-4744
Hey, the "What Would You Do For a Bobblehed" contest produced
some..er..ahem...very revealing results. Couldn't seem to get
bobbleheads out of my mind.

Saturday Dec. 13 Cleary's Pub in Chelsea (west of Ann Arbor on I-94) 7:00-11:00 (734)
475-1922

This is a first for me. My good friend Tommy Foster put in a good word for
me. I'm looking forward to this gig. Brand new faces...same old jokes

and songs. It's like...fresh!

Friday Dec. 26 through Tuesday Dec. 30. (traditionally known as Hell Week) Nub's Pub at Nub's Nob Ski Resort on Pleasantview Rd. in Harbor Springs. (231) 526-2131

One of the most fun crowds on earth. Skiers!! Beer!! Sprained knees and plaster casts. Windburn! Beer!! J.B.!!!! Beer!! Night Skiing!!! Ski Patrol and peanuts!! Beer!! Are you starting to get my drift? It's a great place!!

New Year's Eve. Once again I'll be at Thunder Bay Resort in Hillman. I believe they are booked up but they have other dates available throughout the year and it's great place for a corporate get away with lodging and meeting facilities right on the premises. It is truly a wonderful place with the most unique northern Michigan experience (Elk viewing sleigh rides and a gourmet feast fixed on wood cook stoves) They can be reached at 800-729-9375

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The following story originally appeared in the Straitsland Resorter a few years back. I do have a book of columns coming out some time next year. Stay tuned.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES...PANIC AND PANDEMONIUM

Christmas, 1962. If I did some research I would be more accurate as to the year but in my self-justifying mind I reckon I was only ten years old and if this particular incident happened when I was any older than that I would be too embarrassed to relate this story truthfully.

It was Christmas Eve and my parents were off at church service. We kids called it midnight Mass but I believe nine-ish would be more accurate and besides, to my recollection, Lutherans didn't celebrate "Mass."

Anyway, my aunt had been dating a rather exuberant fellow whom we called Uncle Danny. We knew he wasn't our uncle but my parents insisted on some sort of formal address to any adult that came into our ring of familiarity...so we called him our uncle. I recall he was a nice enough guy with a friendly and outgoing personality not to mention a penchant for Stroh's beer as reflected in his rotund waistline. He apparently thought the world of us kids and I suppose like any male, was trying to rack up points with my aunt any way he could and if being nice to a brood of youngsters he didn't even know helped his cause, well, like I said...he was a male.

As I stated earlier my folks were off to midnight mass, as it were and my older brother Mark was left in charge of the Ridley progeny, or as my dad would call us, the spawn.

Now as I conjure up the picture of our living room that particular winter's eve I can see the Christmas tree decked out in full holiday regalia up against the picture window, hence prohibiting a good look outside. Over the window on the front door was a molded plastic head of a Santa Claus. It was hung on a nail on the outside of the door essentially eliminating our avenue of sight. A third egress was the driveway window. It was booby trapped with a Venetian blind that didn't twist open due to...well, my dad understood the mechanics and if he didn't fix it, it didn't need fixing. It was either in the up or in the down position. The problem was that every time you pulled the string the whole ##%*#@@!! contraption would come crashing down. I think my dad nailed the blind to the trim surrounding the window so it was immovable, at least until spring when my dad worked his way around the house with screwdrivers, hammers and wrenches fixing up every little accident we kids had caused the previous eight months.

Another fly in the ointment was almost every window in the house being sprayed with fake snow to give it the real Yuletide look. While it may have been a silent and holy night, maybe even calm and bright. From where we were sitting there could've been a blizzard, a tornado, a Lunar eclipse, Playboy bunnies and Connie Killetta's Funny Car outside and we wouldn't have seen it.

So, keeping in mind our relative seclusion from the outside world, we were a civilization unto ourselves. Four well-behaved and responsible children under the watchful eye of our guardian and protector, our big brother whom our parents had entrusted the well-being, the security, the lineage and perpetuation of the family name. It all fell on Mark's shoulder's.

Mark sat in my dad's easy chair, a rocker-recliner from Sears while the girls sat next to each other on the sofa. I sprawled out on the multicolored woven rag rug that covered the previous decades' kinda-lime green wall to wall carpeting. The focal point of this American evening as you can imagine was a black and white TV with a remote control unit years ahead of it's time, that being Frankie, the youngest who sat inches away from the tube and responded to Mark's commands like an automaton. "Change the channel!" Without a word he would do so never taking his face away from the screen. We once hypothesized that when Frank was in his TV trance his face actually became a huge CBS eye with a peacock head dress. We could never quite catch the transformation one way or the other.

I hope you are starting to assimilate this picture of the Ridley household circa 1962. It was peaceful, or as peaceful as a babysitting dictatorship can be when there was a knock on the door. If our confidence could be measured on a scale of one to five, five being the boldest Mark answered with a five. "Who is it?"

I was already descending down the ladder somewhere between two and three when the answer came, "Santa Claus! Open the door!" It was after nine o'clock for Pete's sake!! Mark's voice wavered a bit "Who?" It sounded like a three point five.

The two youngest, Barbie and Frankie screamed with joy, "Yippee!!! Santa Claus!!" They were climbing up the scale but me and my sister Teresa, a year younger than myself, knew better. We looked at one another. "Santa Claus?" We were flat out at one. The knock turned into a pounding. "Open up. It's Santa Claus!!" There was some sort of impatience in his voice that we may have perceived as malice. Teresa and I started a slide down into the negative numbers on the confidence scale.

"Don't open the door!!!" We both screamed. This, of course brought Frankie and Barb to

a screeching halt in there reverie. They looked at us and joined the slide down into terror. At that particular juncture I discovered panic and pandemonium which is the exact opposite of rest and relation. For thirty six years now I have lived with a little tremor that may go off at any time into what I call P and P. I do my best to control it but it rears it's ugly head now and again.

Suddenly four young sets of legs were up running around in circles while Mark negotiated with the ax murderer through the front door. There was no way he was going to open it up and still no way to see who Santa Claus really was. I recall Frankie close behind me trying to pick up the steps and rhythm one engages in when possessed by panic and pandemonium. I'd scream, he scream. I'd jump and he'd jump. I'd run into a wall and he...was more in control of himself than I was. He even tried to help me move my Dad's rocker recliner over to the door to block the Slasher's entrance. I think we budged it about a foot then retired to more plausible plans of defense. I grabbed a steak knife out of the kitchen drawer. I handed Frankie a butter knife. Safety first, you know. The two girls sat on the sofa and cried. They may have been praying. Whatever, it was a nice thing seeing the older sister teach the younger sister the ropes when it came to completely losing it...much the same as I was doing with my younger brother.

Meanwhile, Mark never left his post. Through all the noise he kept the criminal talking and I don't think he dropped below a three on the confidence meter throughout the entire episode. But I still don't know how he heard anything with the cacophony of doom blaring all around him. Suddenly he made a bold maneuver.

He yelled, "Go the front window. I wanna see your face." Up to this point Santa Claus had remained in character and insisted he was Old St. Nick.

Mark moved to the window, tilted the tree to one side, pulled the drapes open a bit, scraped off a patch of sprayed on snow and peered out. He immediately turned to face the din. "It's Santa Claus. I'm opening the door!"

If the clamor was at a jet engine takeoff level in decibels when Santa started his onslaught it became volcanic in nature and in volume when Mark made the announcement that he was letting Santa in. I had gone over the edge and in my desperation to keep that front door closed I announced, "You open the door and I'm gonna stab myself!"

It was the first time in quite a while that there was complete silence, albeit tempered in utter disbelief. Four sets of incredulous eyes focused on me. In a family of five extroverted competitive show business hams it's good to be the center of attention now and then.

Teresa sobered the moment. "If he opens the door we're all gonna die any way so why ya gonna stab yourself, moron?" I immediately pointed the steak knife back at the door, determined in spite of my tears, to go down fighting.

Mark opened the door...in walked Santa. From head to toe he was decked out out with boots, red suit, beard, hat, the works. Teresa and I recognized Uncle Danny at once as he made the rounds through the room dispensing gifts to each of us and patting us on the head and telling us to tell our aunt that Santa had come to Evershed Street.

I would have preferred to tell the my version of the story when my aunt came around but by the time time my brothers and sisters plus my mom and dad got through relating their twisted take on the episode Mark was some sort of hero, Barb and Teresa were self sacrificing saints, Frankie moved a two hundred pound chair by himself and I, well, I would've been the only casualty had my siblings not brought me back to my senses.

Ah..Holiday memories. Panic and pandemonium.

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Well, that's about it for this month. In all sincerity, I wish for you all a blessed holiday season. Let's pray for peace and protection for our servicemen and women overseas and guidance for our leaders. And as crazy as the season gets, may you all find the "peace that passes all understanding."

God Bless!!!

This issue brought to you by Santa's Little Helpers!!