

Family



Every morning when I get up, I thank God for my family. I met my wife, Sandy, at Lakewood Town Hall's New Year's Eve Party in 1983. Her family was the family band performing that night, and she was playing the accordion.

Because there were no single girls at the party, something from within told me to ask Sandy to dance. With permission, of course, from her dad and because her dad and sister were also playing the accordion, she was able to get away for a while without disrupting a polka, schottische, or waltz.

In the interest of full disclosure, I'm now ready to release a previously well-kept secret: I, too, played the accordion for many years while I was growing-up.

At the end of the night, I said goodbye, and Sandy said, "How about going to Perkins for a sundae?" I often tell people that Sandy asked me on the first date. What I haven't told people, until now, is that I asked her for the first dance, and we have been dancing for 26 years.



On October 8, 1983, Sandy and I were married. Yes, that is true. I met Sandy on New Year's Eve of 1983, and after knowing her for nine months and 8 days, we were married and have been married ever since. Our first child was born eight short years later on March 26, 1991.

1983 was a very busy year for both of us. The economy was still struggling from the Jimmy Carter recession. Sandy was a baker and cake decorator, and she could not find work in the Twin Cities Area. We solved the problem in the traditional all-American way; we started our own bakery in Coon Rapids. Eventually, we hired two employees. I would bake cakes before going to work and clean the bakery, pots and pans, when I got home from work.

In 1987, we built our first home in Elk River with a lot of help from my dad and brother-in-law. My mom drove my dad down from Duluth for many weekends. I have been called, "a Jack of all trades."



One day when I came home from work, Sandy told me that she wanted to sell the cake shop and go back to school. So, after seven years of running a small business, we sold the cake shop and Sandy went back to school. I passed the CPA exam that same year.

Shortly after we sold the cake shop, Sandy became pregnant with our first child and Krysti was born on March 26, 1991. You could say that we were very busy trying to get our feet on the ground from 1983 to 1991.

While Sandy was going to school, I found myself playing another role. This time I was called "Mr. Mom." I worked full-time and

raised a little girl while Sandy studied to become a medical doctor. After eight years of schooling and a three-year residency in St. Cloud, Sandy became a practicing physician in St. Louis Park. During that time we had our second child, Kayti, who was born on March 16, 1997.

Krysti



My eldest daughter, Krysti (18), has a passion for being on stage. She started dancing at age three and has studied at seventeen different dance studios around the Twin Cities metro area and Detroit.

She earned the opportunity to perform with the Radio City Rockettes, *Christmas Spectacular*, in 2001 and 2002 when the troupe was on tour in Minneapolis and Seattle, respectively. She followed her passion throughout high school by performing in all of the musicals that Minnetonka High School (MHS) and Minnetonka Theatre produced. During that time, she was given the opportunity to perform in Edinburgh, Scotland at the

Edinburgh Fringe Festival with MHS.

During her senior year, Krysti performed at Chanhassen Dinner Theatre as Alice in *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. She is pursuing an elementary education degree since she loves teaching kids as much as she loves performing on the stage. You can

imagine the pride my family feels as Krysti continues her education and growth. Krysti is my campaign manager and web designer. To visit Krysti's website, click [here](#).

Kayti

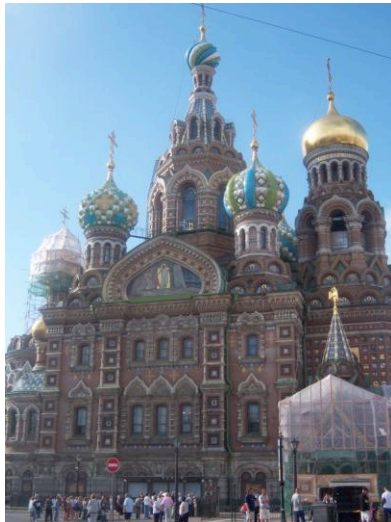


Yes, it is true. Female overachievers surround me. My youngest daughter, Kayti (12) is an accomplished pianist. She also plays the guitar and flute and sings. This was Kayti's third year in *Scrooge: A Musical* at the Minnetonka Theatre. She is also studying Spanish and American Sign Language. Kayti's full name is Kateriina Jo Wiita. Yes, you see two "ii" in her first name. Double vowels are common in Finnish names. Kayti was born on March 16. For those of Finnish decent, you will recognize that day as St. Urho's Day. St. Urho is the patron saint that drove the

grasshoppers out of ancient Finland and saved the grape vineyards. That obviously happened during the Medieval Warm Period (MWP) for climate change enthusiasts.

Family Vacation

Our family took a cruise to the Baltic this summer. We left the Port of Copenhagen and stopped in Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Poland, Germany, and back to Denmark. Neither my wife nor I were prepared for what we were going to see in Russia.



Church of Our Savior on Spilled Blood

As we sailed from Helsinki to St. Petersburg, we listened to a speaker talk about Peter the Great, the Romanov Family, and the Palaces and Russian Orthodox Church. One story that I will never forget is the Church of Our Savior on Spilled Blood.

At the end of his speech, he said that you would either love St. Petersburg or you will hate St. Petersburg. My wife and I looked at each other and we said, "What did he mean by that?" He had just spent two-hour glorifying St. Petersburg. Why would he have made such a statement?

Even though I had heard about the relationship between the nobility and the church, I had either forgotten about the relationship, or I dismissed the relationship. Sandy and I started to realize what the founding fathers and immigrants were running from. The

relationship between the church and the nobility was stomach turning. Every Czar had to build a bigger church for their patron saint, and then the church would lift them to sainthood. I now know why we have Freedom of Religion, and that is “of”, not “from.”

In Russia, you have to take a Princess Tour if you do not have a tourist visa. If you have a tourist visa, you would have to stay with a government certified tour guide.



Peterhof Palace

Our first Princess Tour in Russia was to Peterhof Palace near St. Petersburg. On our bus ride there, I first noticed the poor craftsmanship on the new construction. I then noticed that the old buildings were dirty. They appeared to be covered with pollution. I noticed that the flags were stained with the same pollution. The streets were wet, but it did not rain that night. There were no senior citizens.

The scaffolding that was being used would never pass OSHA inspection. The parks were not mowed, and hence, no one was in the parks. People were working in ditches with shovels and nylon bags. There were no mini excavators or mini loaders like a Bobcat.

As we traveled to Peterhof, I started smelling pollution. I ask Sandy if she could smell it. She said yes, and sure enough, we saw a power plant in the distance.

At Peterhof, I saw a palace leafed in gold and other riches. I started to realize what the Czars did to the people. They accumulated all of this wealth by force and contributed nothing to society except larger and larger churches to their patron saints.

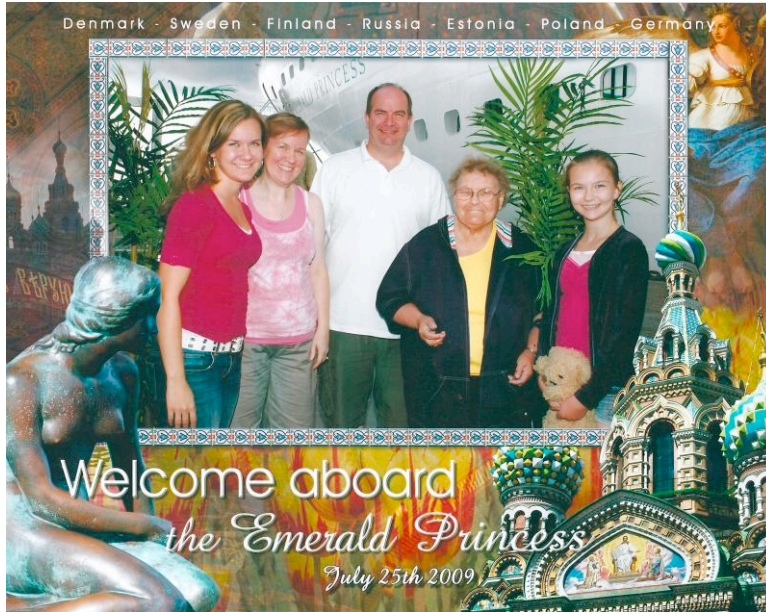
I saw my first senior citizen. She was a little old lady who was sweeping the street with a homemade broom of straw.

It became very clear, big government takes away the craftsman’s incentive to do good work, creates dangerous working conditions, destroys the environment, and removes senior citizens. Where did they go? I did not find out until the next morning. But, the streets are clean.

The next morning, I woke-up early and had breakfast by myself. The buffet area was already full, but I found an empty table for four. I sat down and started to eat.

An older couple asked me if they could join me. I said, “Yes.”

The old man had been born in Lithuania and fled his homeland when the Soviets invaded. He told me how the Soviets gave his family an ultimatum to leave his country or die. So, the family fled to America, and he grew up in Chicago. He was an engineer, and he was not able to visit his homeland until after the Iron Curtain fell. Even though the Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, to him the Iron Curtain did not fall in Lithuania until 1991.



I told him about our tour to Peterhof and the little old lady sweeping the street. I asked him where were all of the senior citizens?

He said that all of the senior citizens live 15 miles outside of St. Petersburg. They get a pension, but it is not enough to live in the city or visit the city. He said that the senior citizens sweep the streets with homemade brooms made of branches. That explains why the little old lady was sweeping the street with a homemade broom of straw.

I told him that the city appeared to be dirty, but the streets were clean. He said that they hose down the streets each night. Well, that explains why the streets were wet when there was no rain.

Although my perceptions seem endless, the take home message for America is: if you want to protect the environment, you have to limit the size of government. If you want good working conditions, you have to limit the size of government. If you want to have the best health care system in the world, you have to limit the size of government.

When government makes too many promises, it will not be able to deliver. As a result, the government will have to cut services and everything suffers, including the environment.

Our next "port of call" was Tallinn, Estonia. Tallinn has an Old Town (upper and lower) section and a greater Tallinn section, and my family was able to visit both. Our bus tour was of the greater Tallinn area with a stop at the Old Town. What became very obvious was the prosperous atmosphere of Tallinn compared to St. Petersburg, Russia. I realized while in Estonia that the Iron Curtain still exists, but it moved from Eastern Europe to the border of Russia.

We were able to explore the medieval Old Town area on foot. The lower town is a quaint medieval village; it was like walking into a Disney classic movie. The medieval charm of the Old Town survived the bombing raids of the Soviets during World War II.

Tallinn is a gateway between Europe and Russia, and, hence, became a historic battleground for many to conquer.

The Danish Kingdom and the Teutonic Knights forced Christianity upon the local people. The Germans and the Protestant Reformation converted the population to Lutheran. Sweden ruled Tallinn in the mid 15th century, and eventually surrendered the city to Imperial Russia in the early 17th century. In the early 19th century, the German Empire ruled, there was a war of independence, and Soviet Russia acknowledged the independence. During World War II, the Soviet Union occupied the area; then Nazi Germany occupied the area, and eventually the area was annexed into the Soviet Union. In August 1991, Estonia got their independence from the U.S.S.R.



Tallinn, Estonia (Lower Old Town)

I was facing very violent world history. I do not know if most Americans understand how fragile and precious our independence and freedoms are. It became very obvious that we must protect them for future generations, and we must teach our children to love what has been entrusted to us by our founding fathers.

Our next “port of call” was Gdansk, Poland (Home of the Solidarity Movement). Sandy has a knack of always picking the most interesting tour. This time she chose the “Journey to Freedom.”



The Polish people are very proud people and they have a lot to be proud of. They do not want the world to forget what they suffered during the Soviet occupation. We visited a couple of museums and they all had a common theme. From their point of view, it was the Solidarity Movement and Pope John Paul II that brought down the Soviet Union.

I agree, they were major players in the fall of the U.S.S.R. It's also important to consider President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) at the Reykjavik Summit, Margaret (*Iron Lady*) Thatcher, Charlie Wilson's (CIA) War in Afghanistan, and the Saudi Royal Family flooding the world market with cheap oil. But, I was not in Iceland, England, Afghanistan, the Middle East, or the USA. I was in Poland, so I listened to what they said, and I was glad that I did.

In the U.S., it is not widely understood that Solidarity was an anti-Communist trade union that wanted a free market economy and opposed a government-controlled economy. What appears to confuse Americans is that American trade unions appear to support the exact opposite position. American trade unions want more government-control over the economy. If that gets you confused, you are not alone.



During World War II, Gdansk was completely destroyed. Today, it has been completely restored. They rebuilt the old buildings from historical pictures from before the war. It is amazing to see what the Poles have done to erase WW II, and it is equally amazing how they are dedicated to historical awareness.

Today's Poland is a shrine to fighting and surviving government oppression. The

further we let our country slide, the harder it will be to take it back.



Our next day was a train ride to Berlin, Germany, where on June 12, 1987, Reagan said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall."

Tear down this wall. (WSJ)

When Sandy asked me what I thought about a European family vacation, I told her that I would not go to Europe without stopping at Berlin. I had little interest in Europe except for Brandenburg Gate, the Berlin Wall, and Checkpoint Charlie, and yes I know that the original Checkpoint Charlie is in a Berlin suburb museum. But, even a replica is a significant icon of freedom to me. Those of the Cold War generation will fully understand.



Brandenburg Gate

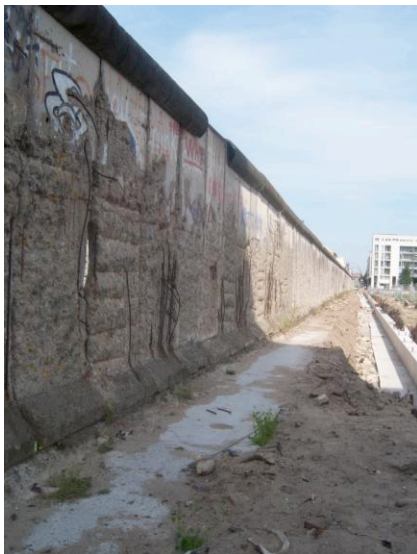


East Side



West Side

I was completely wrong about the European family vacation and Sandy's instincts were right. It was the best family vacation yet. The trip provided a stark awakening to American exceptionalism.



Berlin Wall

The family took a train from the Baltic Sea to Berlin. Sandy had our day well planned. There was so much more to see than just *my* interests. I forgot about the Burning of the Books, Humboldt University of Berlin (where Albert Einstein taught), and Charlottenburger Chaussee (17th June Street) where Hitler paraded his troops. Again, I found myself facing very violent world history.

On the train to Berlin, I noticed that the countryside still had not recovered from the Soviet repression. I did not know what to expect in Berlin. When the wall came down on November 9, 1989, a large part of East Berlin was still in ruins. It had been 20 years, and I could only image what Berlin would look like.

I was pleasantly surprised. Berlin is a beautiful city. The restoration is simply remarkable; a unique blend of old and new architecture, which erased the scars of war and preserved history. You have to see it to believe it. I saw modern architectural designs and engineering that amplified the historical characteristics of the past; it was so uniquely German.

Our family first visited Berlin's highlights on foot. I stood in front of Brandenburg Gate and tried to think about what it was like when President Reagan gave his famous speech. I looked at the memorials to the individuals who lost their lives trying to escape to freedom and wondered what made them try to escape. I walked the wall and wondered what it was like living behind the wall. I saw Checkpoint Charlie and wondered what the soldiers were thinking when Soviet and American tanks were facing each other.



Checkpoint Charlie

Later, the family took a coach bus tour. The tour guide was a young native Berliner. She was so proud of her city. Was this a characteristic of tour guides or was there something more to Europeans? I still do not know the answer, but the Swedish, Estonian, Polish, and Berlin tour guides were remarkably knowledgeable and proud of their respective countries and heritage.

Berlin did not let me down and I would like to visit the city again.

Next time I would take more Euros because they didn't take Visa or American dollars. They were completely European.

Finally, I want to remind everyone that President Reagan gave all of us a future with his commitment to limited government and capitalism. I did not realize it at the time. I did not appreciate it at the time. I just lived in his dream for the past twenty years. And, I want to go "Back to the Future."

The last day of the European family vacation took us on a bus tour to Brussels, Belgium. Brussels is a beautiful city, which avoided the wrath of World War II and is the *de facto* capital city of the European Union.

From this family vacation, I had carefully chosen venues of historical significance. Two such locations in Brussels were unforgettable.

On the first day of the vacation, my mother-in-law, Dian (the truncated spelling is correct) tripped and broke her arm. Sandy adjusted our tours to accommodate the unfortunate event. While sightseeing Brussels, Dian got tired. Sandy and the girls were full of tourist energy, so I told them to go take pictures and I would sit with Dian on the steps of this old building in the square of old Brussels. So, off they went.



the words, "Working Class Kids," and on the lower half were the words, "Against Fascism." In the center of the patch were two hammers. I pointed this patch out to Dian.



I kind of knew what was in front of me, but I did not know what all of the excitement was with the plaque. Eventually, one of the kids sat down on the steps next to me. I asked him what all of the excitement was about. Well, he didn't speak English, so he called his friend over who had the backpack with the patch. I asked him what all of the excitement was about, and he told me.

I was sitting on the steps of the pub where Karl Marx wrote *The Communist Manifesto*. My suspicion was confirmed. These kids were Communists and proud of it. I regret not asking where they were from. I wish I knew.

Often, I think, if it wasn't for Dian's broken arm and the Communist kids, I would have never been sitting on those steps and I might have left without knowing that this building was the genesis of Stalin's philosophy which killed five times more people than Hitler's fascism. What an eye-opening event.

The second memorable event in Brussels, Belgium, includes a Canadian couple on our bus tour. Imagine this. We have been off the cruise ship for two days. We have been sightseeing in Copenhagen and Amsterdam before taking a bus tour to Brussels. And, to our surprise, we met a Canadian couple that was on the same Princess cruise ship on the Baltic Sea. And, now we were all sitting on benches in a park in Brussels waiting for our tour bus to arrive so that we could go back to Amsterdam.

I asked the couple what part of the Baltic Cruise they enjoyed most. I was expecting them to say the quaint medieval village in Tallinn, Estonia. I was surprised when he said Peterhof Palace. But, it wasn't just Peterhof that surprised me. It was what he said next. He said, "As American Capitalists you must have loved Peterhof." I said, "What?" He said, "Yes, you must have been able to relate with all of the wealth that was accumulated from around the world."

My jaw must have hit the ground. I was completely surprised by the comment.

I said, "How can you equate "Free Market" Capitalism to a Czar (Peter the Great) who forced peasants to fill in a swamp (the spoils of a war with the King of Sweden), with limestone hauled in baskets carried on their backs, so that he could have a warm water port (St. Petersburg) for his Navy?"



A long flight back to America

"The Czars contributed nothing to society and accumulated wealth by force. All they did was build palaces and religious shrines to their patron saints before being elevated to sainthood."

"Peterhof Palace was not Bill Gates' Mansion. Bill Gates voluntarily sold a valuable product (Microsoft) to free individuals. He made my job and life easier. This is the ultimate form of public service."

I just shook my head, and he just stared at me. No more was said.

A Socialist Canadian getting a "Free Market" civics lesson from an American Capitalists in Brussels, Belgium. How else would you want to conclude a European family vacation?

The time for government accountability has come.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wiita, CPA