

The National Expirer

News of 2013 from George & Julie Halitzka

Halitzkas try to become normal

“Seriously? They’re more likely to win Powerball,” says eye-rolling friend

The Halitzkas have long maintained that the people around them were strange. But in 2013, they finally realized the truth: “We’re the weirdos,” George admitted.

It dawned on him one day as he drove home from performing a school assembly in his superhero costume. He watched dull-eyed employees leaving an office, and realized that most people weren’t freelance artists like him. “They have *jobs*,” he whispered in awe.

A few days later, Julie watched the lights in her neighborhood go dark while she worked on her laptop after midnight. “Maybe normal people don’t stay up till 4:00 am,” Julie said thoughtfully. “But if they don’t research genealogy all night, what do they do for *fun*?”

The Halitzkas realized that they needed help, and made an appointment with Certified Normalcy Coaches John and Mary Smith. As a former football player and cheerleader who attended a Big Ten college and now work in sales, John and Mary were uniquely equipped to help the Halitzkas overcome their weirdness.

“Remember high school, when everybody said you were socially-awkward losers?” smiled John, leaning on a cabinet filled with dusty sports trophies. “Well, you still are—adults are just too polite to tell you.

“I’ve seen your living room,” he added. “It’s full of books without pictures in them. And your TV doesn’t even get cable.”

“So tell us how to be more like you,” George said eagerly.

“You’ve taken the first step: admitting you have a problem,” Mary said. “Now, let’s talk about work. You need to find a *real* job, George. Remind me what you do in your ‘business?’”

“Educational theatre, and I really enjoy—”

“You’re supposed to *hate* your job,” Mary said, rolling her eyes. “Two-thirds of Americans are disengaged from their work, which makes it *normal*.”

“Well, I guess I could become a cubicle-dwelling wage slave,” George said reluctantly.

Mary turned to Julie. “Okay, about your hobby: Who researches dead people for *fun*?”

“Genealogy isn’t normal?” Julie asked sadly.

“Right up there with living in your parents’ basement and collecting comic books.”



George and Julie demonstrate their weirdness with Halloween costumes. (They’re dressed as the pet names they have for each other—Bear and Honeybee.)

“But this doesn’t make sense!” Julie said. “I thought ‘normal’ was about finding meaningful work, and living in community, and following Jesus—”

“Jesus would be spinning in his grave if he knew about you two!” John said. “George, which team do you root for?”

“Is ‘team’ what normal people call a theatre company?” George whispered to his wife.

“I mean the University of Louisville or the University of Kentucky!” John exploded. “Who’re your favorite ballers, the Cards or the Cats?”

“Ummm . . . I like Jesus Culture,” Julie said tentatively. John and Mary just stared. “You know, the worship band?”

“They’re a lost cause,” Mary said sadly. “You can take the geeks out of high school, but . . .”

“We *really* want to be normal,” Julie pleaded. “Please, give us one more chance!”

John sighed. “Well . . . do you use social media?”

“How would that help?” Mary said impatiently. “Without adorable children and

high-powered careers, they don’t have anything to be obnoxious about.”

“Sure they do! Anybody can infuriate their friends with mindless political rants,” John crowed. “You wanna be normal? Post a status about how the godless liberal elites will have to pry your AK-47 from your cold dead fingers, or how bleeding-heart democrats are destroying America by funding food stamps. Then explain why Obama is the Antichrist—”

“Um, I don’t think so,” said Mary. “Tell ‘em liberal government is our only salvation. The GOP’s a bunch of heartless plutocrats, and Tea Partiers are racist brain-damaged rednecks—”

“Tea Partiers are *what*?” John said through clenched teeth. He launched himself at Mary’s jugular, knocking over his trophy case. Meanwhile, Mary’s stream of invective condemned John to a well-known fiery destination.

As the Smiths tumbled on the floor, George and Julie made a hasty exit. “Is it just me, or is normal the new weird?” Julie muttered. ■



Julie begins working with control freak “I’m resisting the urge to kill George (for now),” she says

George had a business problem. “I wanted to schedule after-school drama clubs in more locations,” he explained, “but there was no room on my calendar.”

That’s why George decided to take drastic action. Julie walked into her husband’s office one night to see him attempting to slice himself in half with the paper cutter.

“I assumed George was suicidal,” Julie said. “But then I realized he was just trying to be in two schools at the same time.”

Julie suggested hiring other teaching artists in lieu of self-mutilation. “Kids won’t respect a teacher with half a body,” she explained, gently prying the paper cutter from George’s hands.

A severe case of Control Freak Syndrome (CFS) has long made George reluctant to let anyone else work with his business. Still, he agreed to try Julie’s suggestion and seek drama club instructors.

Meanwhile, Julie cut back to part-time status in her job at Maryhurst. That gave her time to coach and mentor the instructors as they began teaching in schools. But one problem remained: Julie didn’t realize the extent of George’s CFS until she worked with him.

“I’m not controlling, I just know how to do everything,” George insisted. “I can teach classes, discipline students, direct plays—”

“But so can I,” Julie insisted, “and so can our teaching artists!”

“Yeah, right. Just do exactly what I tell you,” George said testily.

Julie rolled her eyes, then set out to prove that George was being stupid (a surprisingly easy endeavor). She implemented online registration for drama clubs, and created a web page where teaching artists could report student progress. Meanwhile, three new instructors did excellent work with six drama clubs.

“Um, when I said I could do ‘everything,’ what I obviously meant was, ‘everything except the stuff Julie and the teaching artists do,’” George said, choking down a slice of humble pie that was thoughtfully provided by his wife.

It remains to be seen whether George’s CFS is truly in remission. Meanwhile, Julie has hidden the paper cutter for safety. ■

2013: The Year of the Boring Stuff

The older George and Julie get, the more things stay the same. They’ve run out of degrees to attain, promotions to earn, and white-collar crimes to commit. So until the FBI catches up with them, there isn’t much to tell.

January/ February

George directs *The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon*, a full-length comedy, at Bellarmine University.

After enduring two months of rehearsals with George, the cast somehow delivers a strong performance. *Left: The Brothers Grimm cast.*



March

Julie and George celebrate six years of marriage with a day trip to Madison, Indiana. George realizes how lucky he was to marry Julie . . . and how big of a sucker she was to marry him. *Below right: Julie strikes a pose in downtown Madison.*

April

Drama by George launches MovieMakers, a new drama club format that allows kids to perform in a short film.



George enjoys the creative challenge of writing screenplays and directing his young actors for the camera. (Visit www.dramabygeorge.com/gallery to watch the films.)

May

For the first time since she married George, Julie is able to buy furniture. Her new desk won’t fit in the trunk, so it rides home on the roof of her car. *Bottom left: The desk’s mode of transportation.*

June

Julie works on the redesign of St. John United Methodist Church’s website. Check it out at www.stjohnprospect.com.

July

Julie now has three different bosses (and one of them is her husband!). Her newest gig involves coaching Drama by George’s teaching artists as the Drama Clubs Supervisor. She continues to lead worship at St. John United Methodist Church and care for troubled teen girls at Maryhurst.

August

George’s parents come to Louisville for a few days. Among other things, they join George and Julie for a visit to the Kentucky Science Center. *Bottom right: George and his Dad in front of the Science Center’s parabolic reflector.*



September/ October

Julie makes her semiannual Jeans-Shopping Pilgrimage to Goodwill. The proud bargain hunter brings home almost three hundred dollars’ worth of clothes for \$25.

November

The cast of *Be the Hero*, Drama by George’s bullying prevention play, gives their 45th performance at the Kentucky Convention Center! The play has been impacting kids across the region since fall 2012.



December

Julie writes five new songs in seven days. Listen to the rough cuts at www.soundcloud.com/julie-halitzka. (George’s favorite is “The Heart’s Fortress.”)