"Calculator Joke"

Katie Francis
katiefayfrancis@aggiemail.usu.edu

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Joke

Informant:

My sister, Elizabeth Claire Francis, is 13 years old and in seventh grade at Mt. Logan Middle School in Logan, Utah. She always goes by her middle name. Claire has lived in Logan all her life and has three older siblings: Daniel (18), Myself (23) and Michael (26) as well as a sister-in-law, Shereen Nielsen Francis (26). Claire is very intelligent and has a 4.0 GPA at Mt. Logan. She sings and performs in lots of local choirs and theater companies and loves caring for her pet teacup chihuahua, Lilly. She has been raised in a loving Mormon household by her mother Melody Marie Whitelock Francis (49) and her father William Arthur Francis (51) who have been married for 28 years. Her family is very spunky, loud, and silly. The kitchen, where this joke is told, is the center of activity in our home, and is a place where we encourage people to share their thoughts, opinions, and funny stories. Claire is very quiet and loving and humble as an individual, and puts up with her crazy family with great patience.

Context:

At the time Claire shared this joke, I had been deep in conversation with my mother Melody as we sat around her kitchen table in her home in Logan on a Tuesday evening. My mother was finishing her dinner and Claire was also seated at the table, working on her homework. Our cat Jane and our dogs Lilly and Jack were running around the kitchen. My dad, Will (51) was in and out of the room running errands around the house until he popped into the kitchen and interrupted our conversation to tell a joke about math books. Because my dad is a middle school teacher, I asked if that was a joke he had been told by one of his students, which prompted Claire to tell a joke she had heard circulated in her math class at school.

The text is verbatim, transcribed from a digital recording.

Text:

Katie: Wait how does that joke go again? [Katie laughs in spite of herself]

Claire: Cal - uh, Calculator, Why can’t you calcunow? [short pause] Like, so, instead of a calculater, yyy-you replace it with a ‘now.’

Katie: Ohhhh and who tells you that one?
Claire: It's just, Mr. Chridge - Mr. Christensen he’s my math teacher he has, really bad, uh, jokes and puns, on his walls.

[big pause]

Katie: [laughs] That's funny.

Claire: Yeah.

Texture: Claire is telling this joke knowing I’ve been sitting at the table interviewing our mom about another folklore account. And then my dad jumped in to share a joke in the hopes that I would include his comments as well. And so Claire jumped on the opportunity to share something she knew as well.

Claire shared the joke very meekly, almost bashfully, and her speech is somewhat disjointed in her eagerness to tell me what she knows. It’s clear she finds the joke itself only slightly amusing. I can tell she actually thinks it’s quite lame. But at the same time, she speaks with an air of confidence and pride. She is excited to have her big sister’s attention and to be participating in a college level activity.