

Dear Family:

FIRST, A FIFTH GRADE GEOGRAPHY lesson: St. Lucia is one of the Windward Islands of the Lesser Antilles of the West Indies (which name is an everlasting tribute to Columbus's confusion). Most people simply refer to all the islands collectively as "the Caribbean," which basically functions as a Hawaii-like destination for Eastern North Americans and Western Europeans. (We'd probably all just as soon go to Hawaii if not for its horribly inconvenient location.) Crystal and I chose St. Lucia for our quick four-night 10th anniversary getaway because it's generally considered to be among the lushest (i.e., Hawaii-like) Caribbean islands, with rain forests, waterfalls, mountains, and an active volcano to complement its calm, picturesque beaches.



Four nights was just long enough to get a flavor for what the island had to offer and to teach us that we are capable of missing our daughters, after all. (We appreciate Grandma Christine's willingness to come live in our house during our absence and allow us to learn that.) I won't bore you here with the all the details. Suffice it to say that we spent basically the equivalent of one day lying on the beach and one day exploring the interior of the island, hiking the rainforest, swimming in waterfalls, etc. *Note: Remind us sometime to tell you the story of what had to be the world's worst "road" and our run-in with the hiking-guide-cum-pot-farmer dude puffing on a doobie the size of two cigars.* Another day was spent mostly on a large catamaran cruising up and down the Caribbean side of the island. The "day-sail" ported long enough for us to explore a cocoa plantation and to drive into the volcano. (It's a big, smelly volcano.) Later, we stopped for some very cool snorkeling that was like swimming in an aquarium.

It still amazes me that the colors we saw actually exist in nature. Naturally, all this happened after the average boat passenger had consumed at least a pitcher of rum punch, so it's a miracle no one drowned. Okay that's three days I can account for. I guess we spent the rest of the time eating. (We did a lot of that.) Anyway, it's a beautiful place. We recommend it. Next stop, Grand Cayman.

Two paragraphs. A tolerable travelogue. How convenient that fast and testimony meeting is later this morning. All I need now is a couple mundane details about my job and I'll be set.



OH YEAH, MY JOB. MY NEW EMPLOYER (SEE LAST MONTH'S LETTER) has temporarily assigned me back to Fannie Mae where I'm basically doing the same work with the same people I worked with before I left. Naturally (paying homage to the David Farnsworth model) I'm costing

them somewhat more as a consultant than I was as an employee—a fact that is not lost on old work buddies, who are now "clients" and, for some reason, always expect me to pick up the check at lunch. (I usually don't.) It's fair to say that these aren't exactly the "new opportunities" I left Fannie Mae to pursue, but I don't expect it to go on much longer.

WORK SEEMS MUCH EASIER NOW THAT SEMINARY IS OVER. I WRAPPED up my last class the Friday before Memorial Day—exactly 23½ hours before boarding the plane to St. Lucia (via Puerto Rico)—and graduation is tomorrow night. Looking back on it, it occurs to me that I could have filled each of the last nine of these letters with seminary anecdotes alone. I will never cease to be amazed by my class's ability to remember the most obscure details, while completely forgetting the "big stuff."

One representative anecdote that you might have to be a seminary teacher to find funny: We finished the Old Testament, as one would expect, with Malachi's prophecy of Elijah's return. To introduce the subject, I asked whether anyone remembered anything about the prophet Elijah. It had been several months since we studied the Books of the Kings (home to all the good Elijah stories), but I was hoping someone would be able to come up with something about Mount Carmel, or prophets of Baal, or fire from heaven, or a starving widow, or a chariot of fire into heaven, or sealing power, or even his prominent absence at Passover Seders...*Anything.* Instead I got, "Wasn't he that dude who died falling off his chair?" The student, of course, was confusing "Elijah" with "Eli" who, you may recall, was the nice priest/lousy father who met that demise upon learning that the Philistines had carried away the Ark of the Covenant. I'd like to hear from anyone who doesn't remember anything about Elijah, but could have come up with that little tidbit about Eli. Anyway, that pretty much sums up the last 9 months of my life. And it looks like I'll be teaching again next year, though no final decision has been made. Stay tuned.

Either way, I'm no longer the family's only teacher. Crystal has been called to teach relief society, and has been excitedly delving into the treasure trove of stories (public and less well-known) about her great-great-grandfather-in-law. (She needs to work on her centerpieces, though.)

I THINK EVERYBODY WHO KNOWS SONJA BARSKY ALREADY KNOWS that she had her baby (a girl—Alana Virginia) a couple of weeks ago. For logistical reasons, the blessing took place yesterday morning (Saturday) in their home, allowing Sonja's father to "act as voice" (one of the awkward phrases we use to describe the guy who actually pronounces the blessing). It was a very nice occasion. One interesting nuance: Troy, Sonja's husband, is Jewish and thus did not stand in the circle. But Elder Hicar, a missionary serving in our ward who was born in Israel and converted from Orthodox Judaism (to the consternation of his parents to whom he is now dead) did. It kind of felt (to me, anyway) like the elder was representing the father.

SWIM TEAM HAS BEGUN FOR HANNAH AGAIN. ALL THREE GIRLS ARE looking forward to summer. Hope it's a good one for you.

Love,
T, C, H, L & S

100 HANNES STREET
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20901