

the Famlet monthly

July 3, 2013

Volume 16, Number 6

Dear Family,

The good news is that I'm no longer traveling back and forth to Texas every week. The bad news is that I no longer have six hours of reliable airplane time and who knows how many more hours of quiet hotel room time every week to write high council talks, prepare high priest group lessons, and take care of any number of other personal things, including this letter. I don't miss the travel, but I'd apparently grown accustomed to all the quiet time alone. My only travel this month was a two-day trip to Des Moines—a long enough flight to get my high priests lesson knocked out (I only teach once every six weeks or so) but not much else. And so when I looked at the calendar on Sunday and realized that a full month had passed and I had nothing to write, I did what I think any reasonable person in my position would do. I asked my children to bail me out. It took a few days and more than a few reminders, but here's what I got.

Grace's succinctness in writing stands in sharp contrast to her verbosity in speech. If I'd asked her to speak extemporaneously into a recorder about the events surrounding the end of the school year, she'd still be talking. But this is all she cared to write:

What I did this month. This month I finished second grade and I started my next year of summer swim team. This is my third year. There was also spirit week at school. I loved what happened this year.

Sophie's account of fifth-grade promotion is more poignant:

This month summer vacation started, causing school to end. This made me upset but also very excited to go to middle school. I was mostly upset because two of my best friends are going to Eastern [Middle School] while I go to Silver Spring International. Two nights before the last day of school, I had my elementary school graduation. We practiced for three days during school, which got me worried because the boy I sat next to cursed about every 30 seconds. On the night of graduation, when we started everything was working. I didn't hear any cursing. Then, the teachers started announcing the "Silver" and "Gold" awards. I waited to hear my name called, hoping I got the award, but I heard name after name until "Allyson Zdravac" was called, and I hadn't heard my name once. My eyes teared up, but I forced myself not to cry. Then our chorus director came up and gave us the signal to stand and sing. I couldn't help it. I started crying which made my voice crack. That is when the boy next to me started cursing. That made me cry harder. Finally, we received our awards for graduating and left the stage. I found mom and dad and told them everything. All my friends had received the award, and knowing it was signed by the president didn't help my feelings. When I was leaving, my friend Kaylie came to me and had a picture with me. Then I left feeling the tiniest bit better.

When Hannah and Lucy received their "Gold" awards at the end of elementary school, I thought they were a nice way of recognizing high achievement, even though the criteria seem kind of mushy since it's not like they hand out actual grades in elementary school. Having witnessed Sophie's grief—two weeks later, even—at not having received one, I now think the awards are the stupidest things ever conceived of (other than

public-sector labor unions, obviously, which are much stupider), and I would lead a crusade to have them banned—if only I weren't so lazy.

Lucy's report of the end of her middle school career is characteristically Lucy:

In a few words, here is my reaction to the completion of one of the most difficult middle school programs in the United States: THANK ALL THAT IS HOLY IN THE FLIPPING NAME OF CHEETOS DMIGOSH I AM SO GLAD TO BE DONE WITH THIS CRAP.

Now, here is my reaction in a few more words: It was, at risk of sounding cliché, a long, hard road. A really long, really hard road. But I did make a lot of friends. Sure, I lost a few things along the way (such as my dignity, my sanity...) but the benefits—new friends, new experiences—far outweigh the losses. I hope.

I will admit that I cried at promotion. A little. Okay, a lot. I would've cried more if my friend had decided to include me in her speech, but because she intended to say, "we will never forget comforting Lucy during her various emotional breakdowns," she (independently) decided against it.

Bottom line: I'll miss my friends, but like hell I'm gonna miss middle school. *evil smiley face*

I am unfamiliar with the data on which Lucy is basing the assertion about her middle school program relative to others in the country, but I believe it was hard, and I share in her gratitude that it is over.

If you find it hard to believe that **Hannah** is about to be a senior in high school, well, so do we:

When I think about this month, it feels like nothing has happened. Summer is a time for lethargic laziness and one does not disrupt that precious order by doing things—it simply isn't done!

Those feelings aside, I guess the world keeps on turning regardless of my lackadaisical notions. School ended, which actually isn't very exciting since the whole point is that nothing important is happening anymore, but I guess I prefer it to school starting so I'll mention it. It's been mentioned.

Lifeguarding is quite possibly the best summer job, at least for me. I spend two-thirds of my time sitting in the office trying to find some way to entertain myself and spend the other third sitting in a chair, counting heads and making sure they're all alive and well. This experience has also fostered my newfound suspicions of lifeguards. They sit there staring at people, most of whom are really unaware of the attention! For my first week I felt like I was doing something wrong because in any other situation that's just not socially acceptable and yet I'm getting paid for it. But if it makes any of you feel any better, I'm no longer uncomfortable with staring at people intently for extended periods of time.

Girls camp was fun of course and I enjoyed my first year as youth camp leader. The group I worked with had nine girls, including Lucy. I guess I've garnered enough respect over the years that they found it appropriate to at least pretend to take me seriously, so I'd call that a solid success right there. I may have begun a friendship-bracelet-making cult that had already rippled through most of the camp by the end of the week, but I'm sure we'll all survive the storm of friendly love that is bound to ensue.

Hannah and Lucy both had a good time at Young Women camp, as did Crystal, who spent the week there as a leader. I enjoyed my 24 hours there, too.

Hope all is well with you. Love, Tim *et al*





Smith Island Cake!
Making Maryland's official state dessert with the Eskelsens is a last-day-of-school rite that goes back many years for us.

Sadly, this year will be the last, as the Eskelsens are moving to Germany.



You'll need to read Sophie's account of elementary school promotion for these pictures to make any sense.





Left: Lucy gets dirty on the first night of Young Women's Camp.



Right: Hannah uncouthly stares at people from the life-guard chair



Crystal and Emily (adults in the back) and their 12-year-old "First Years" at YW Camp (the two older girls—one at each end—are YCLs)