

the Famlet monthly

August 9, 2015

Volume 18, Number 7

Dear Family,

Regular readers of this letter are already aware that I am never going to be a candidate for anybody's Father of the Year award. I don't even know if there is such a thing, but if there were, I wouldn't get it. I have tendencies toward impatience and selfishness and I let my children watch too much TV.

Whatever that means. I have no idea what the commonly accepted threshold for screen time is these days, but I'm fairly certain it's somewhere south of what I am inclined to permit. It's like that time Crystal got pulled over for doing 80 in a 55 and the police officer politely asked her what she thought the speed limit was—the kind of question that can only be answered a) untruthfully or b) sarcastically. My default setting is to opt for (b) which has almost gotten me into trouble on at least two occasions (that I can remember) with impolite TSA agents. I find most TSA agents perfectly pleasant; in the unusual cases where they aren't, I have a hard time biting my tongue. Last month I kindly suggested to a particularly rude agent that she was probably capable of doing her job without being a jackass about it. For some reason that didn't really seem to help.

Whenever I see men who look to be about my age in the pool locker room struggling to shower and dress children who are far younger than mine, rather than wistfully hearkening back to the good old days when my children were not old enough to negotiate a locker room on their own, my heart invariably swells with gratitude that those days are behind me, and I'm pretty sure those guys are better dads than I ever was.

But whatever my shortcomings, I believe my daughters have made and continue to make me a better person.

Or at least a slightly less impatient driver. A couple of weeks ago, while driving to Ocean City for a day at the beach, I was annoyed by the large number of other drivers on the road attempting to do the same thing. We had left the house at 7:00 in the morning. In the past we have left about an hour earlier than that to beat some of the traffic, but, for whatever reason, we left a little later this time. It's not as though I feel somehow superior to people who choose not to drag their lazy selves out of bed early in the morning to do things (well, actually, I do feel superior to those people, but that's another character flaw I am working on improving) but I find it annoying to share the road with large numbers of them, and sometimes I mutter unkind things about people whose approach to driving impedes my progress, and indeed, the progress of all humankind.

On this particular day I was about a half-hour into my usual string of insults about other drivers (in referring to them I typically rotate through four nouns: 1) "moron," 2) "idiot," 3) one found in the second paragraph of this letter, 4) a two-word Anglicization of the surname of the author of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, also found in [Mosiah 12:5](#)) when someone pointed out to me that Grace had pulled her blanket over her head and was crying. I asked her what was wrong and she told me I was being mean and it was scaring her.

That made me feel bad. I told her I wasn't upset at her, but that did not seem to help. I don't think I complained about other drivers for the rest of that trip, and I am trying to get better.

Sometimes I revert back to my old ways, but whenever I think of Grace's crying, it makes me resolve to be a kinder, more patient person. Without children I doubt whether I would have any particular motivation to do so.

At least not until Google perfects the driverless car.

In other family news, Crystal spent a week in Juneau, Alaska, attending the wedding of her sister, Elizabeth. She had a nice time and returned with an unending list of superlatives about how beautiful Alaska is. It was a wedding, and therefore, many, many, many, many pictures of everything are floating around the Internet somewhere, but I don't think I actually have any. If I find one I'll attach it to the letter. It was a steampunk-themed wedding. I had never heard of steampunk before, but I think I might now be a fan. Crystal spent many hours in June making her steampunk dress with the help of a professional costume designer in our ward, and I think she looked pretty good. As for Alaska, I still have never been there and still have no plans to go. I am sure it is lovely, but I also hold to my notion that people ultimately gravitate to where they want to live. If sparsely populated areas were truly as desirable as some people make them out to be, then more people would move there and they would cease to be sparsely populated. This is Econ 101. Places where few people live obviously appeal to some people, but, by definition, not to the average person. And one thing I have learned about myself over the years is that I am fairly average.

Speaking of places where nobody lives, I visited a potential client in Bloomington, Illinois, this month. I emerged from the small airport terminal at 10:00 p.m. and, unable to find a cab, I asked the parking shuttle driver where the taxis lined up. He looked at me like I was crazy and told me I would have to phone for one. Then he asked me where I was staying. I told him the Courtyard. He told me I should call them and have them send their shuttle. So I called them. They told me they didn't have a shuttle. I walked back to the parking shuttle guy to ask if he could recommend a cab company for me to call.

"Didn't you call the Courtyard?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. "They said they don't have a shuttle."

"Well I'm pretty sure you got some bad information," he told me.

From that point on I felt like I was talking to Cosmo Kramer from *Seinfeld*, but I did manage to get a phone number from him for a cab company. I called it and waited on hold for several minutes before walking back into the terminal, approaching the Hertz counter, and renting a car. Once that transaction was complete, still on hold with the cab company, I hung up on them and drove to the Courtyard, where I did not see a shuttle.

I imagine the people there think it's a wonderful place to live. And they might be right. I'll never know.

Sophie was paid \$75 by the University of Maryland to play video games for a few hours (part of a longitudinal child development study she has been in since birth) and then got paid \$8 an hour that afternoon to help Rick Kemper polish harps, which she would have happily done for free. Nice work if you can get it.

We hope you enjoy your work. Love, Us.





CLICK THE IMAGE TO WATCH THE VIDEO of Hannah's last summer swim league race (50m butterfly at Divisionals).



CLICK THE IMAGE TO WATCH THE VIDEO of Lucy, Sophie and Grace "performing" Katniss's song at the swim team's annual lip sync night. Credit Studio C. (Swim team is sort of a way of life in the summer.)



Hannah, Grace, and Sophie (and many, many other people) wait for the July 4th fireworks to start over the National Mall.



Crystal and her dad in full steampunk at Elizabeth's wedding.