

the Famlet monthly

September 27, 2015

Volume 18, Number 9

Dear Family,

On my flight to Birmingham last week, one of the flight attendants repeatedly referred to the lavatory over the p.a. system as the “lavratory.” You’d think flight attendants would know that word since they say it so often. Several days have passed and it’s still driving me nuts. I am hoping that writing this short paragraph will help me get over it.

Sophie made me proud on Friday.

With the weather turning less humid and more fall-like, she has resumed riding her bike to school, a distance of a little over four miles each way. Her other option is the school bus, which is so crowded some days that some students need to sit *on the floor*. How this can happen in an affluent school district with an annual operating budget of \$2.39 billion (it’s true, I just [looked it up](#)) is beyond my ability to comprehend.

But even if her bus had available seating, Sophie would just as soon ride her bike. She knows to be careful and often repeats the mantra I taught her: “Drivers hate pedestrians; pedestrians hate drivers; everybody hates cyclists.” This is true even in Washington, D.C., which appears on just about everybody’s list of [bike-friendly places](#).

On Friday Sophie had just turned off of the Sligo Creek trail to make her way up the short, uphill path that leads to her school. She encountered two pedestrians (a student and a man) and gave the customary warning, “on your left.” Most pedestrians understand this as a signal to move to the right, thus making room for the passing cyclist on the left. Some people instinctively move to the *left* upon hearing this, which is annoying but understandable.

And then there are the idiots who either don’t move at all or just aimlessly drift in no particular direction. After hearing the warning, the student promptly moved off the path, but the man did not move in any helpful way, and Sophie had no choice but to buzz him on the right. Startled, he told her she should be careful, to which Sophie replied, “I’m trying, sir,” and then, out of earshot (and this is the part of the story that makes me proud) she muttered: *Moron!*

That’s my girl! That’s my sweet little Beehive class president (as of today). She totally got that from me. The only thing that would have made it better is if she’d said it so the guy could hear it.

Sophie’s recent enjoyment of time spent playing Wiffle ball with Alex and some of her other cousins prompted her to join her school’s softball team, where she is now the catcher. Their first game is Tuesday, at home against White Oak Middle School if you’d like to come.

A couple of weekends ago we ventured back out to Deep Creek Lake in western Maryland for Crystal’s and my third go at the SavageMan 30.0 triathlon. We both posted personal worst times in the event, though Crystal still managed to finish second in her category. (If she cares to, I will leave it to her to tell you what that category is and how many total finishers it had.) I blame my poor time on crashing on the first mile of the bike course, followed by a loose aerobar that I had to stop

and tighten on mile 10, followed by a minor wheel issue at the bottom of the final climb (see nearby elevation chart) that took several minutes to sort out. I was so demoralized by my bike misadventures that my heart was not in it for the run—10 km over hilly terrain—which I lollygagged.

So not a great race, but we enjoyed our otherwise relaxing weekend in Deep Creek, a lovely place despite a dearth of decent places to eat. The highest-rated restaurant on Yelp was the McDonald’s. Don’t misunderstand me—I love McDonald’s. The only thing I like more than a Quarter Pounder w/Cheese for lunch is two of them. With a six-piece McNuggets on the side. And maybe a shake. So while I personally would have no qualms giving McDonald’s a high Yelp rating, it is difficult for me to imagine the same of most Yelp raters—like the one who downgraded the nice suite where we stayed on account of the brand of coffeepot and the presence of laminate countertops in the kitchenette: “How much could it cost to pit [sic] in 6 inches of granite,” the pretentious Yelp reviewer wrote. It isn’t that I wish any particular harm to come upon this Yelper....well, that’s not exactly true. I hope she stands up too quickly and smacks her head against the underside of a solid mahogany kitchen cabinet door she forgot was open. Maybe she’ll wish it were laminate.

In other health news, Grace was to have undergone an adenoidectomy on Tuesday. The appointment had to be postponed, however, on account of her new case of strep throat. The procedure, it is hoped, will alleviate her long and recurring fits of coughing and congestion. Because medicine is a racket, however, we’ll still be expected to pay for it even if the desired outcome is not achieved. As you might expect, the prospect of surgery has not been sitting well with Grace, who can find a cause for anxiety on a sunny day with no homework. (During her last piano lesson, she complained, “I want to get this work of the Devil done.”) For a while she had a hard time remembering the name of her afflicted body part and repeatedly asked what “those things” were called. Then, one day when she was writing something (I don’t remember what) she asked me, “Dad, how do you spell adenoids.” It has become her go-to thing to fret about whenever she feels that it’s time to fret, which is often. I hope they reschedule soon.

September 28th, 2015

I left this last bit of space open to report on Hannah’s mission call, which she received today. It arrived this morning, but, owing to some silly tradition mandating that friends and family gather, in person as well as through elaborate chains of Skype, FaceTime, and I don’t know what else, to witness the *opening of an envelope* (this nonsense did not accompany the opening of either of her parents’ mission calls—though the opening of her father’s mission call was preceded by its own set of shenanigans) she did not open it until a few minutes past 4:00 p.m. MDT. One of her roommates (all five of Hannah’s roommates are returned missionaries) made cookies for the occasion. I spent most of the afternoon at the office wishing she would just open the damn thing and text me what it says. But she held off, keeping the unopened envelope in her bag as she went to classes. And after all the waiting we finally learned: **Arizona Phoenix Mission**. English. Report to Provo MTC on **30 December**. We continue to be proud of and love her. We love you, too. Tim.





FaceTime session screen grab — Hannah about to open her mission call (Grace and Sophie in the selfie box).

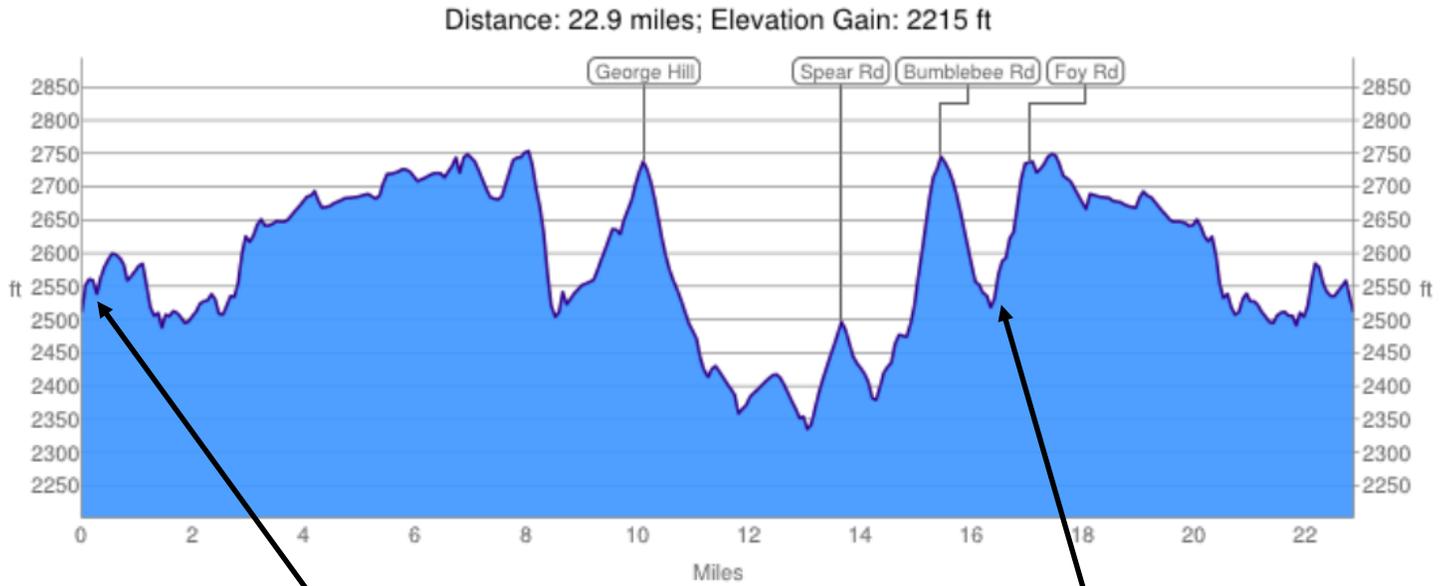


Crystal and Jen on a downtown bike ride.



Crystal's downtown bike rides always include a stop at Georgetown Cupcake. (Mine sometimes do, too, but my rides usually end before Georgetown Cupcake opens.)

Elevation chart of the Savageman 30.0 triathlon bike course. The run was no day at the beach, either. (The swim was flat.)



Crashed here

Wheel problem here



Garmin record of where I went off the road and crashed. Fortunately it was a grassy hill and I missed all the rocks and trees. (I may have said a few bad words on the way down.)