

# THE FAMLET

MONTHLY



## Dear Family,

Invisalign has changed my life, and not in a good way. At least not yet.

For nearly two decades a parade of dentists have taken turns telling me that I need to see somebody about correcting my bite. And for nearly two decades I have ignored this counsel. I wore braces from 7th to 11th grade, and I had no interest in going through that again, consequences be damned. (Having bankrolled orthodontia for each of my four daughters, I didn't have any particular interest in going through *that* again, either.)

The years of dodging ended last month when Dr. Toussaint Crawford, my dentist of the past six years whom I've come to admire and respect (and not just because he has a truly fabulous name) and writer of at least one of the orthodontic referrals I had ignored over the years, finally cornered me and told me, not in so many words, that I was being a moron for not getting this fixed. Perhaps not coincidentally, he also told me his office was now offering Invisalign. And so for the low, low price of just \$5,500, I could get my bite fixed (and fix the crowding in my lower teeth that the hygienist gives me grief about every six months) using the "clear alternative to braces."

I believe Dr. Crawford to be a good dentist, but I know for sure he's a good salesman. And so I now find myself wearing these stupid clear, plastic Invisalign "trays" on my upper and lower teeth for 22 hours a day, removing them only to eat and brush. Even though I admittedly



*Above: Lucy gets a hug from her Uncle Grant (in Dutch oven mitts) at Big Meadows campground during our annual Memorial Day trip to Shenandoah Nat'l Park.*

*Below: Sophie and her Ambassador certificate*



do not have much of a social life, this really is cramping my style.

Eating is a chore. One of the supposed advantages of Invisalign over braces is that you can eat anything—you just have to remove the trays. The downside, which, because I'm a moron, did not occur to me until I actually started wearing the trays, is that I have to remove them any time I want to eat *anything*. (And then theoretically brush my teeth before replacing them—but let's face it, that doesn't always happen.) Removing the trays is not difficult, but I have not yet figured out how to do it inconspicuously, which means I generally have to find a bathroom or casually stick my head underneath the table, my desk or wherever I happen to be sitting. The fact that I tend to be more of a grazer than a scheduled meal-eater makes things even more complicated for me.

Invisalign is also messing with my triathlon habit, which frequently requires eating while cycling and running. May traditionally marks the beginning of my annual assault of mediocrity on our [local triathlon circuit](#). On successive Saturdays this month I “competed” in the Kinetic Half (a half-iron-distance event around Lake Anna, Va.) and the General Smallwood International (an Olympic-distance event beginning in a murky inlet on the Maryland side of the Potomac River south of D.C. popular with bass fishermen—a number of whom expressed dissatisfaction with having their favorite angling spot overtaken by a triathlon swim course, which consequently had to be patrolled/protected by volunteers from the Charles County Sheriff's Office). I put *competed* in scare quotes because not many people would consider my results (8<sup>th</sup> out of 18 45-to-49-year-old men at Kinetic and 9<sup>th</sup> out of 29 in my age group at Smallwood) to be especially competitive.

My practical inability to eat was a more significant factor during the Kinetic Half, which this year took me 5 hours and 49 minutes (two minutes slower than last year—I have two detailed pages of excuses for this chronicled in a letter to Hannah, if you want to ask her for a copy). [Energy gels](#) are the only “food” I have figured out how to eat without removing the trays, and they are generally sufficient to fuel me around a triathlon course. Trouble was, I discovered the night before the race that I only had enough gels on hand for the bike leg of the race. I didn't have enough for the run. No problem, I thought. These races always have



*Above: Me and Grace at Hawksbill Summit, Shenandoah National Park.*

*Below: Lucy, Abby, and Sophie at Hawksbill Summit*



*More of our group at Hawksbill Summit*



aid stations every mile on the run course stocked with all kinds of food, usually including gels.

By now you know where this is going. I hit the run course having exhausted my supply of gels, as planned, only to discover that, although the aid stations were all stocked with enough Coke, Gatorade, oranges, bananas, chips, and cookies to provision an entire Little League season, there was nothing I could eat—no gels at all. I was tempted to ditch my Invisalign trays on the side of the road so I could eat something. But I ultimately concluded that I'd have gotten really mad if one of my daughters did that, and so I subsisted on nothing but Gatorade for the first nine miles of the run and Coke for the last four, all the while waiting patiently to hit the wall. But, for reasons I can't understand, the wall never really materialized, and I actually posted the sixth fastest run leg in my age group, which is really good for me. I had to pee the entire time, and I think that helped.

I'm now six weeks into my 19-week Invisalign regimen, with a new, more painful tray every Friday. At the end of this, I am told all of my orthodontic issues will be resolved. I have a hard time believing that, but I really *want* it to be true, and whether it works or not, you better believe I'll be telling you about it. Incidentally, it took me a little over three weeks to lose my Invisalign case. (I left it in my room at the Birmingham Marriott.) So I guess that's one more thing I can't get angry at my daughters about when they do it.

Invisalign also complicates camping for reasons I'm sure you can imagine. As has now become our tradition, we spent Memorial Day weekend at Shenandoah National Park. Joining us there this year were Grant's family (they've been our partners in this since we started doing it four years ago), Andrew's family, Grandma, Grandpa, and Uncle Pete, and the Strattons—a family in our ward that includes several of my favorite people.

Highlights of this year's trip included a short hike to Hawksbill Summit (see accompanying photos) and Aunt Jen's presentation of Lucy's "senior quilt." Jen started the senior quilt tradition in anticipation of Hannah's high school graduation and departure from the nest. The idea is for each member of the extended family to help tie a quilt that the graduating senior takes to college (or wherever) as a reminder that she is tied to a large, faraway family who loves her. Hannah took her



*Above: Grandpa and Uncle Pete – Hawksbill Summit*

*Below: Aunt Jen presents Lucy with her "Senior Quilt" (a family tradition) at Big Meadows campground – Shenandoah NP.*



*I emerge from Lake Anna following the swim leg of the Kinetic Half*



quilt to BYU and I seem to recall having seen pictures of it in her missionary apartment.

Where Lucy will ultimately take her quilt has yet to be determined. Despite the last day of school still being a few weeks off, Lucy is through with classes and her graduation from RICA is this coming Friday. (She may also elect to attend Northwood's graduation next week, but not if she loves me.) Her reaching this milestone is a tribute to her mother and the tireless efforts of a veritable army of special educators and mental health professionals. We pay a lot for public education here in Montgomery County, but the return on investment for us has been considerable, and we are grateful for how the system has treated Lucy and us.

Memorial Day also brought the end of Crystal's first year teaching Seminary. If I had to guess, I would say that she finished the year slightly more annoyed with the Apostle Paul than she began it, but that might be an oversimplification on my part. The last day of class brought with it a string of kind gestures from students and parents, including flowers, cards, and various treats. Rick Kemper washed, vacuumed, and detailed our van. It is possible that this was meant as a thank you for teaching Seminary, but Rick does so many unsolicited, nice things for us for no particular reason, it's hard to say for sure.

As sometimes happens when May 28<sup>th</sup> falls on Memorial Day weekend, Crystal and I celebrated our 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary camping with a large group of family and friends at Shenandoah. Crystal slept alone in a tent while I slept out with the bears, 25 feet away, in my beloved hammock. It was very romantic.

When I asked Crystal the other day what it was she was reading on her iPad, she replied without looking up, "Book." When I pressed for a more specific answer, she rolled her eyes, told me the book's title, and proceeded to give a detailed accounting of what it was about. Ten seconds into her explanation, I regretted asking the question, since I didn't really care. Crystal knew this from the start, which is why she had given the one-word answer to begin with. And I'm pretty sure her long-winded response to my follow-up question was just her clever way of conveying to me that she knows me better than I do.



*Above: Mile 1 of the bike: Kinetic Half*

*Below: Mile 10 of the run: Kinetic Half*



It's comforting to live with someone like that. I love her. And if you're reading this, chances are I'm quite fond of you, too.

Love,

Tim