

THE FAMLET

MONTHLY



Dear Family,

This month's exciting news—on the off chance you missed our [press release](#)—was my small firm's big move from our old drab digs in Tysons Corner to a shiny new office in Rosslyn!

There was also the small matter of Hannah's return home following the completion of her 18 months and 18 days of service in the Arizona Phoenix Mission of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. One might argue that opening with any news other than that constitutes burying the lede. Indeed, it is simply wonderful to have her around. And certainly the things she did in Arizona matter more—and will continue to matter more a month from now, a year from now, and a thousand years from now—than anything I am likely to do in Rosslyn. But the timing of Hannah's return has been known for quite some time, and major changes to my commute count as pretty significant news in my world. Besides, I'm the person in charge of this here letter, and so Rosslyn's what we're going with first.

I have resided in Maryland for approximately 62.2638 percent of my life (you can probably go ahead and round that off to an even 62.26 percent) but I've never had a job here. I've worked at a couple of places in D.C., but I've spent most of my career commuting from Silver Spring to Tysons Corner, Virginia. Why? Well, that's complicated. Part of it has to do with liking where we live, a lot of it has to do with our aversion to moving, and the rest of it has to do with my being an idiot.



Above: Hannah, Lucy, Crystal, and Grace atop the Rosslyn office building that now houses RiskSpan HQ – 22 Jul 2017

Below: Washington Monument and Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials viewed from the office



I don't have much good to say about Tysons Corner. It blends the traffic congestion of an urban center with the locational and sidewalks-to-nowhere inconvenience of suburbia—thus somehow managing to capture the worst of both worlds. There were days when I could cover the 21-mile commute just about as fast on my bike as in a car, but getting there by bike was no day at the beach either, though I still managed to do it once a week or so.

And so I was intrigued late last year when my boss began sharing with me her plans for moving our firm's headquarters to a more upscale space in Rosslyn.

Technically part of Arlington, Va., Rosslyn is where you are when you cross the Potomac from D.C. via either the Francis Scott Key Bridge or the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. Once you cross either of those bridges you're about three blocks from our office, which offers beautiful, panoramic views of Washington and the monuments (see accompanying pictures). We're a couple of blocks from the Iwo Jima Memorial (formally the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, but nobody calls it that), a couple of blocks from the parking garage where Deep Throat secretly shared information with Bob Woodward during Watergate, a couple of blocks from the nearest Chipotle, and a couple of blocks from the original location of the Newseum, where former (fictional) President Josiah Bartlet gets shot at the end of the season 1 cliffhanger finale of *The West Wing*.

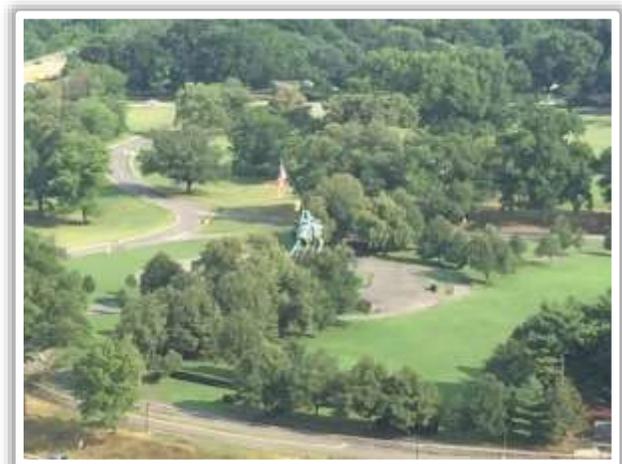
[Incidentally, regardless of your level of satisfaction with the current occupant of the Oval Office, may I once again recommend the first four seasons of *The West Wing*. Seasons 5 through 7 are garbage, but for a nearly 20-year-old drama series based to some extent on then-current events, it's remarkable how well the first four seasons hold up.]

By bike, the Rosslyn office is six miles closer to our house than the Tysons office was. And to date, I have not commuted to the new office any other way. More expensive parking in Rosslyn may have something to do this, but by cutting through Rock Creek Park and Georgetown before crossing Key Bridge, I can cover the nearly 15 miles on my bike in less than 50 minutes. It's hard to imagine being able to get there faster (on a weekday) by any other means. My office is now considerably closer to the offices of two of my brothers than our houses are. Maybe we can get together for lunch sometime. Guys?



Above: The girls—a couple of blocks from the office.

Below: The same memorial – from the office.



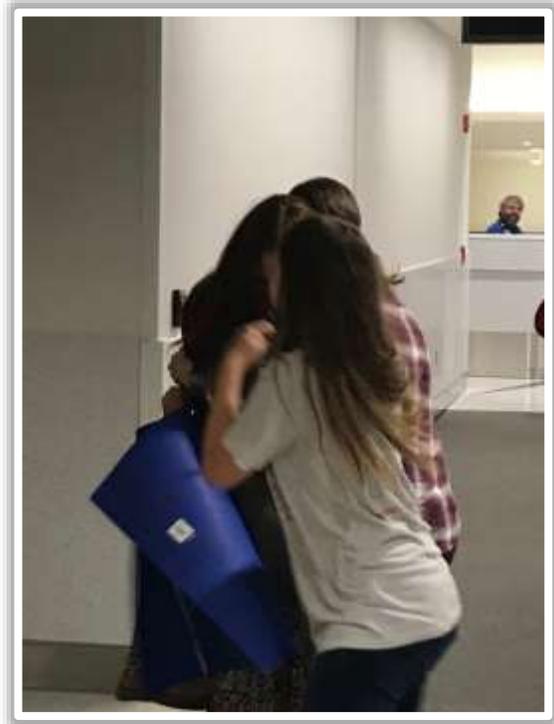
Okay, back to Hannah.

I wrote that the timing of Hannah's return had been known to us for some time, but that is not precisely true. Her *itinerary* was known to us, but itineraries are merely forecasts, and some airlines are better forecasters than others. Notwithstanding the existence of three daily *nonstop* flights between Phoenix and BWI on reliable Southwest Airlines, whoever booked Hannah's travel opted for a legacy carrier—one whose name happens to be an acronym for "Doesn't Ever Leave The Airport"—even though it meant connecting through Detroit. Consequently, we couldn't be sure when (or even if) she would actually arrive. Her scheduled arrival time was 7:10 p.m., but her flight from Phoenix to Detroit was (predictably) delayed, causing her to miss the connection. She caught a later flight and finally got into BWI a little before midnight.

The five of us were joined at the airport by Hannah's local grandparents, her cousin Abby (possibly the next Willis missionary), and close friends Emma and Madelyn. Waiting for Hannah to emerge from the secure area of the terminal evoked feelings—not unlike watching her vanish into it 19 months ago today—that have been experienced by countless people but are difficult to describe to those who have not.

Our theology holds that certain temple rites enable family relationships to persist beyond death. The next time someone asks me what happens in that big building on the Beltway, I might just say that temples exist for the sole purpose of linking the entire human family—living and dead—to one another and to God. It seems like that might work better than the convoluted answers I usually give. And it has the added benefit of being true. I mention this because waiting for Hannah to come around that corner caused me to wonder whether this was what Heaven is like—waiting to be reunited with loved ones we haven't been able to see or touch in a very long time. I hope so.

The airport reunion went on for some time—probably longer than it should have because the six of us still had to drive from the airport to the home of the stake president. We found him there at a little before 1:00 a.m., still dressed in his suit. He formally released Hannah as a missionary, thus enabling her to resume normal life (get up whenever she wants, watch TV, swim, socialize with boys, etc., etc.). He then asked Crystal to remove Hannah's missionary name tag. The whole experience involved some crying—in part



18 July 2017

Above: Grace and Lucy tackle Hannah while TSA photobomber smiles.

Below: Six of us together again.



because I guess it was a tender moment, but also possibly because we were all so @#\$% exhausted. We might just as easily have been giggling.

That was twelve days ago, and in some ways the reality of Hannah's return is still sinking in. I'll probably get used to it just in time for her to go back to BYU in a month, but it's shaping up to be an enjoyable month.

Six days after returning home, Hannah joined her mother and all of her sisters at Young Women's camp at Pocomoke River State Park on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The sudden and unexpected departure of the camp director (for a job across the country) thrust Crystal back into that role for the (approximately) 73rd consecutive year. Crystal's one condition for taking the job again was that Hannah be allowed to come along and help. She did—mostly in the kitchen. That left me home alone, which was sad for me. But I was able to join everybody out there for the last 40 or so hours of camp, the final 22 of which were filled with some of the most torrential rainfall I have ever experienced. It's a wonder no one drowned. I suspect Hannah may have endured more rain in 18 hours at camp than she did in 18 months in Arizona. With the help of a rain fly (and the E-Z Up canopy I thought to bring from home at the last minute) I managed to stay dry in my hammock as a small lake formed underneath me. Camping—sometimes I just don't get it.

I mentioned the temple earlier. Earlier this week Grace, who turned 12 in March, got to go inside for the first time. I wasn't able to make it, and neither was Crystal. And so when Grace got home I asked her to write about how she felt. Some of you might be interested in what she wrote:

This is Grace and I loved everything about the temple! I loved getting into the white jumpsuits needing to put the white scrunchy in my hair. I loved getting the names from the desk before going to the font to do the baptism. The water was warm. Then, I hopped into the shower changed out of the jumpsuit before drying my hair a little bit. I loved that too. I loved using the keys to get my clothes in and out of the lockers. It was all just so intimidating knowing that I was in the Lord's house. Then there was the confirmation part which made me beam with happiness the entire time because I felt so important. I also loved going to Mariann Higgins who gave me a towel to dry my hair entirely, before we watched the boys do the baptisms while reading the Book of Mormon and the New Era.



BWI Hourly Garage – Sometime after midnight on the night of 18-19 July 2017



It was also great when we did the temple recommend interview. At the end before we got ice cream, Sister Higgins asked me why I was smiling so much during the baptisms. I said it was because being in the temple just made me so happy, and I felt so important. Brother Ovalles told me that a lot of the people who I got baptized for were from the 1700s which means they were waiting for a long time. That made me feel so happy!

If you lost count, that was six instances of the word *loved* and three instances of forms of the word *happy*. We have many reasons to be happy and hope you do, too.