

THE FAMLET MONTHLY



Dear Family,

In an effort to be transparent, the first wedding photographer Crystal spoke to in Philadelphia felt it necessary to point out that he was not a member of our faith and consequently would not be able to get inside the temple to take pictures of the ceremony. Crystal assured him that this was not a deal-breaker, but she ended up going with someone else anyway.

I don't know whether the guy she ultimately hired plays for our team or not, but he was friendly, and I think the pictures turned out nicely. They were, however, all outdoor shots.

Because most of you were not able to observe Hannah and JT Embley's wedding on May 4th (and because no photos of it exist), I thought I'd try my hand at a word picture. If it's all right with you, I wish to address the next several paragraphs to Hannah's three sisters, as they were among those waiting outside.

Lucy, Sophie, and Grace: Because I am not a gifted painter of word pictures, it might help if you looked at the nearby photograph of a temple sealing room. In what almost certainly amounts to some sort of copyright violation, I lifted this photo from a [Church webpage](#) about temples. As coincidence would have it, the sealing room shown on this page happens to be the very room in which Hannah and JT were married.

Owing to my exalted status as father of the bride, I was accorded the privilege of sitting in one of the few chairs in the room with arms. You see those three



Hannah and JT — May 4th, 2018.

chairs by the window? I sat in the one on the right, and JT's dad sat in the one on the left. We were the designated witnesses. The chair in the middle was for Grandpa, who performed the ceremony, but he never sat in it. At a little past 11:00 a.m., guests silently filed in from a waiting room and sat in the (armless) chairs along the walls with the mirrors. Hannah and JT entered the room last and sat next to each other, between their mothers, on a piece of furniture at the opposite end of the room from where I was. (You can't see that part of the room in the picture.)

With the exception of Grandpa, Hannah, and JT, all of us were dressed in ordinary Sunday attire (the same clothes we wore for the pictures outside). Because Grandpa was officiating, he wore a white suit—the kind you've seen other male temple workers wear. Hannah and JT wore ceremonial clothing that we wear when participating in temple ordinances. (Hannah wore her wedding dress underneath these special clothes.) Everyone was quiet.

The door was closed, and Grandpa broke the silence. He stood between the altar and the place where Hannah and JT (and their moms) were sitting and directed his remarks to them. This arrangement provided JT's dad and me a splendid view of Grandpa's back and made us the furthest people in the room from him. He spoke softly, as people do in the temple, and I may not have heard every single thing he said. But it doesn't really matter—he wasn't speaking to me.

He spoke briefly about the miracle that is the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple—of how it was approved and erected with virtually no local community resistance. (New temples frequently face opposition from various groups for various reasons.) He mentioned that the temple's supporters included the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia, whose only request was that Moroni's trumpet not be higher than the cross atop the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul across the street. (Grandpa said the Church complied with this request, though it isn't obvious to my eye which thing is higher.)

Following his introductory remarks, Grandpa asked JT to escort Hannah to the altar in the middle of the room, where they knelt across from one another. Your mom has observed how fitting it is that we kneel at an altar to be married. Altars are where Old Testament prophets offered sacrifices to God. Mom points out



Above: The sealing room where Hannah and JT were married.

Below: Hannah, JT, Hannah's sisters and Hannah's parents.



that when a man and woman kneel across an altar they are covenanting not only with each other, but also with God, and the marriage that they build together becomes an offering to Him.

Grandpa then moved to the end of the room where I was sitting and stood in front of the empty chair between JT's dad and me. This did not improve my view of him, but it allowed me to hear him better. He asked JT and Hannah to hold hands across the altar and performed the ceremony that married them. The words of this ceremony are always the same, and I've heard them many times. Someday you will hear them, and I hope you will find them as beautiful as I do.

And then it was over. I didn't check my watch, but we probably weren't in the room for more than 20 minutes. Hannah, JT, and Grandpa changed out of their special clothes, while the rest of us joined you outside and waited for them to come out. You know how the rest of the day went.

The rest of the day was tiring and hectic. Following what felt like an 11-hour photography session in the hot sun outside the temple, Hannah and JT drove off somewhere (I had no interest in knowing where) while the rest of us drove back to Maryland and began setting up the church for the following evening's reception.

The reception would not have happened without the help of an army of volunteers directed by Aunt Jessica, her friend Merry Rowe, and others I'm doubtless forgetting. The "cultural center" in our stake center (like our stake center itself) is enormous, which makes decorating it a challenge. But it was lovely.

The centerpiece of the decorations was a 16-foot, wooden maypole donated by our old friend, neighbor, and now bishop, Rick Kemper. He started building a sailboat many years ago before ultimately deciding (with some help from his wife, Jill) that he did not really want a sailboat. And so they had a big bonfire and burned the sailboat—everything but the long wooden mast, which he apparently was keeping against the day when Crystal Willis would be looking for a maypole for her daughter's wedding reception. (The maypole fit perfectly into a cylindrical hole in the center of the "cultural center" designed for a volleyball net pole.)

(In classic Bishop Kemper fashion, he also stopped by to mow our lawn the week before the wedding and presented Crystal and me with tins of Altoids "chill



Outside the temple

pills” in the hope of preventing us—me, really—from becoming the kind of jerk he feels like he became as his daughter’s wedding approached several years ago.)

Music for the reception was provided by members of the White Oak Ward’s unofficial youth string ensemble. (We go to church with a surprising number of talented musicians.) They were very good and insisted on working for free. We struck a compromise in which I paid them next to nothing.

A second reception was held the following Thursday at JT’s parents’ house in Williamsburg. It was pleasant and we enjoyed being able to simply show up and eat someone else’s food for a change. It was terrific having so much family in town and meeting (however briefly) so many members of JT’s family. They are delightful.

Hannah and JT are now back in Provo where they both have at least two years standing between them and undergraduate degrees. They both have jobs this summer. Having completed her first year of BYU’s nursing program, Hannah had no trouble passing the Certified Nursing Assistant exam and has begun working at a nursing home. I believe JT is pulling hours at Office Depot, or someplace similar. Neither of them has any idea what they’ve just gotten themselves into, but that’s okay. I’m content with how they’ve started.

Last Friday, Sophie completed the 30 hours of classroom training required for her to get her driver’s license. She still has to complete another six hours of formal behind-the-wheel training and log a total of 60 hours (I think) of practice driving before she can take her driver’s license test sometime in early October.

Crystal has outsourced most of Sophie’s driver training to me. Sophie thinks this is because her driving makes her mom nervous, as evidenced by her propensity to grab the handle above the door with both hands and dig both feet into the front of the glove compartment, bracing for impact whenever Sophie comes within five feet of another car. (I’ve tried to reassure Sophie by explaining that her mom does a lot of these things when I drive, too.)

Watching Sophie apply the things she’s learned in driving school has reminded me what a bad driver I am. I’ve reached the point where it’s actually strange to see a driver with her hands at 10 and 2. (I seldom have more than one hand on the wheel—usually somewhere between 12 and 1.) Sophie frowns on this.



She uses her turn signals. All the time. She signals when pulling out of our driveway. (And we live on a cul-de-sac.)

And then there’s the Stop signs. She actually stops at them. Behind the line. The reason I know nobody else actually stops behind the line is because you can’t see whether there’s any cross traffic from way back there. Around here, there’s always some kind of tree or shrub in the way. Instead, I do what I believe 99.999% of other drivers do in the absence of law enforcement: look both ways while rolling across the line, and if there’s nobody coming, keep on going. I believe this is most commonly referred to as “rolling through” the Stop sign—except when someone does it on a bike, in which case angry cyclophobic motorists refer to it as “brazenly blowing through Stop signs with no regard for public safety and jeopardizing the future of the human race.”

But Sophie is a stopper and a signaler. She also prefers to observe the 55-MPH speed limit on the Capital Beltway, even when this puts her 10-15 MPH slower than the next slowest car on the road.

Perhaps someday Sophie will give in to the moral relativism that governs how the rest of us drive, but I suppose I shouldn’t be rooting for that.

Other things happened this month. Grace probably spends more time and money at Starbucks than the average Mormon, and Lucy is still a vegan. But there will be more months to fill you in on their exploits.

For now, I’ll just choose to be content with how this month turned out.

I love you.

-Tim