

Dear Family:

28 January 2001

At about the same time my Grandpa Willis was teaching me how to play chess, my Grandma Henrichsen was educating me in the fundamentals of five-card draw poker. In retrospect it occurs to me that this must have absolutely infuriated Dad, but he never undermined her – there's a good lesson there, but I'm not writing about Dad. I remember as an eight-year-old (or whatever I was) desperately trying to convince her that two pair really ought to beat three-of-a-kind. "It just doesn't make sense," I recall telling her. It's so long ago now, I won't pretend to remember the details of our conversation, but the take-home message was, "It doesn't matter that it doesn't make sense. That's just the way it is." Life's truths, despite the fact that they don't always make sense at first, are nonetheless true. One nice thing about gospel truth is how one can almost always find the sense in it; but seldom without serious reflection and a sincere attempt at implementation. I find tremendous satisfaction in this...and perhaps should be troubled that I can tie it all back to a card game – which is to say I can tie it back to Grandma. I loved spending time with her. Maybe it was because there was nothing about her not to like. Maybe it was because we enjoyed so many of the same things. Her fondness for football in general and the Redskins in particular is well documented, as was mentioned by at least two funeral speakers. In August, when conventional wisdom had it that Washington would be playing in today's big game, I told her she would have to hold out at least until today so we could watch the Redskins in the Super Bowl together. I guess when Daniel Snyder's attempt to rebuild the team turned out to be the biggest waste of a hundred million dollars since the filming of *Titanic*, she felt no need to keep our date. I think I mostly liked her so much, though, because she liked me so much – and let me know it. I wasn't a day old before she began doting on me--"You were the most beautiful baby in the nursery," she told me countless times – and she never stopped. She thought I could do everything. She thought I could be a professional pianist, that I could count cards (and could have used the proceeds from a career in Atlantic City to defray college tuition), and the list goes on. That I couldn't actually do any of these things was beside the point. She treated me like I was better than I was. She thought I was better than I was. To know that is an inspiration, and makes me want to prove her right.

Well that was a lot of ink. Other stuff this month seems even more inconsequential than usual. We attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Legacy/Testaments/Performing Arts Theater at the Washington Temple Visitor Center. There to actually cut the ribbon was the Honorable Connie Morella, who represents the Temple's neighborhood and most of my ward in the U. S. House of Representatives. A republican representing a predominantly democratic district, she was greeted very warmly by the overwhelmingly Mormon crowd. My gag reflex got its first test in a while as I listened to the various local church leaders who spoke at the event metaphorically chuck the Church's official statement of political neutrality in the nearest dumpster and blab about how great it is to have a Republican representing Montgomery County, blah, blah, blah.

I'll be celebrating my birthday with our inept Richmond client. Yep, still there. My family celebrated the event this weekend. Crystal took me to see my favorite musical political satire group, The Capitol Steps, at the Rams Head Tavern in Annapolis. They regularly perform at a club in Georgetown (significantly closer to us) but we like Annapolis (even with the 20 MPH January winds blowing in off the Chesapeake) because you don't have to pay eight bucks an hour to park. Today's Capitol Steps are noticeably raunchier than the group I fell in love with in high school--due in large measure to the X-rated Clinton presidency – but they still have some good stuff, including "How do you solve a problem like Scalia." It's a good enough birthday.

Hope everything's well in your world.

Love,
Tim, Crystal, Hannah & Lucy