

Dear Family:

28 April 2002

Since I almost always write this letter on the last Sunday of the month, it is more than a little surprising to me that I don't recall ever having to juggle it with home/visiting teaching responsibilities. But that's where we are. Crystal's visiting teachers have come and gone, I've just returned home from my rounds, and now the race is on to get as much of this done as possible before our home teachers—neither of whom owns a chain saw, making them utterly worthless to me at present—arrive at 6:00.

Obviously, the month's big news is no longer news to anyone. We are now officially a large family. Sophia Joan Willis was born on Friday April 5th at Sibley Memorial Hospital in Washington, DC. The hospital is only significant as it is the birthplace of her father and three of her uncles. Crystal was pitocin-induced into labor, just as nature intended, at around 7 am. The rest of the day passed more or less without incident, and Sophie (8 lb, 3 oz; 21½ in.) finally arrived shortly after 9 pm. The labor, I'm told, was less than pleasant, but Crystal seemed to endure it well and appears to have fully recovered. I was unexpectedly impressed with Crystal's midwives, who, unlike the OB's that caught Hannah and Lucy, spent more than eight minutes in the labor & delivery room, and, in Crystal's words, "cared about more than just my uterus." At Crystal's instruction, I officially take back everything unflattering I've ever said about midwifery. I apparently did not realize that a midwife (in this jurisdiction anyway) is not just some granola anti-doc who took a four-week course at the YMCA, but actually holds a graduate nursing degree, is licensed, can write script, etc.



Four Willis Girls in Kensington, Maryland—Hannah, Sophie, Mommy & Lucy enjoying the grounds of the so-called "Washington DC" Temple

We have enjoyed and greatly benefited from the support of friends and loved ones from near and far. Grandma Christine ran the house during the week leading up to and the week following Sophie's birth. She was joined on the weekend of the 5th by Grandpa, Pete, and all the local relatives. Peter is quite possibly the world's most excited and proud uncle. Willis relatives were eventually replaced by Kents with arrival of Aunt Liz (accompanied on her transcontinental drive from Fairbanks by her large very Alaskan-looking pooch, Baxter) and Grandma Carolyn. Both provided invaluable domestic assistance. I was particularly grateful to Liz, who was instrumental in helping me install our handsome new storm door, accentuating the beauty of our newly painted (by Crystal and Grandma Carolyn) front door. With a house as small as ours, I've concluded that it's really all about the front door. Now if I could just do something about our lawn...

The challenge du jour involves convincing Sophie that there's more to life than nursing, and that it's really okay to sleep for four consecutive hours at night. But, thankfully, she's healthy, which is all we really feel comfortable asking for at this point. More significant challenges surround the conduct of her older siblings. While Hannah appears to be benefiting from her 2½ years of big sister experience, Lucy is still adjusting to her middle-child role, and, in our completely non-professional opinion—not counting that four-week child psych class at the YMCA—seems to be intentionally misbehaving in an effort to garner Mommy's attention. Or, then again, it might just be that she's two and, as a result, developmentally incapable of obedience. She does enjoy doting on her little sister and is very protective. At church, she passionately defends Sophie against curious fellow children who dare to get too close. She typically accomplishes this by first issuing a stern warning, then summarily shoving the offending child to the ground. It is our hope that this will pass.

As many of you know, Sophie was born a little more than an hour after Emma Kent, and 12 days before Alex Willis. (Is this a Mormon family or what?) After weeks of tenuous negotiations, the three cousins will be blessed together in our ward next Sunday. This will represent a homecoming of sorts for Roland, Marci, Grant & Jen, who, as recently as a year ago, were all members of our ward. I figure after all the blessings and federally mandated new parent testimonies, we will have effectively taken over the entire meeting. This is as it should be. We look forward to seeing everybody then.

Hope this finds you well. Have a good month.

Love,
Tim