

Dear Family,

July 7, 1999

It was my intention to write this letter last week. That became an impossibility when a 15 zillion page ethics paper robbed me of all my free (as well as other types of) time. My grandfather's sudden passing on Saturday somehow made all of the trivial items with which I usually fill these letters—and which likely would have inundated this one—seem even more inconsequential.

I don't know how much sense it makes to describe the death of a 90-year-old man in poor health as sudden. Yet somehow I don't know how else to categorize it. We had eaten lunch with him the Saturday before and he seemed fine. I concede that to refer to Grandpa's condition as "fine" at any point during the past decade is to take relativism to an unprecedented level. Nevertheless, he did not look like a man seven days removed from his last breath. I frequently catch myself looking at old photographs of Grandpa differently; trying to make sense of the reality that the man in the pictures, with whom I had had so much meaningful interaction, isn't here anymore. My inexperience with death makes it difficult to reconcile things like this which, I realize, have become more easily accepted--if not commonplace--for other people.

I stand in awe of his life. Behind all the CIA-ing and other neat-sounding things lived a man who never seemed overly-impressed by himself. Following his retirement, he worked in the temple until, by my arithmetic, the year of his 83rd birthday; an extraordinary run. The last temple ordinance he performed was my own sealing shortly after he turned 85. My memory will likely always retain the image of Grandpa, barely able to walk, standing with the aid of a cane over the altar at which Crystal and I knelt. Even in his feeble condition, he still carried himself with a dignity—scarcely found among people of my generation—which commanded a sublime respect. Of the many thoughts, several long since forgotten, which raced through my mind while I looked at him as he sealed us, my amazement of his powerful presence is among those that remain with me.

He was loving. He was patient. He never complained. These themes surfaced and re-surfaced during the funeral and family conversation surrounding it. Even as his condition deteriorated and he suffered indescribable pain, he didn't grumble about it. It is likely this attribute which inspired Bill Fox's comment, "I really thought he'd live forever." Writing as one who is often impatient and habitually whines, I am inspired by his passing to abandon my natural inclinations, and be more like him.

--*imaginary segue*--

All in all, June was a happy month. Crystal's Dad, Karel and Tawny dropped in for a pleasant weekend. The stay included many fine-dining experiences and an afternoon trip to the Baltimore Inner Harbor. The line to get into the ESPNZone was prohibitively long, but the National Aquarium was accessible. Everyone had a good time and Hannah and Noah especially enjoyed the "fishies." The timing of the Kents' visit allowed them to witness part of the grand transformation of our kitchen into the beautiful nearly-finished product it is now. Some of you Bob Vila fans might be interested to know that Bob's real name is Roland Kent and that we live with him.

This was also the month of the National Shakespeare Company (or whatever it's really called) Free for All at Carter Barron Amphitheater (or whatever that place at 16th & Military is called.) This year they did a hilarious modern (c. 1950's) version of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Crystal and Coco waited in line all morning on Saturday for the tickets (while I was in class.) While the venue was no Shakespearean Globe (by Oregon/Cedar City standards), the company was first class, and it was free. We had a good time.

Of course, the highlight of the month would have to be my day at girls' camp where I had the opportunity to be part of our ward's contribution to the mandatory priesthood contingent. The failure to tell me (or the other priesthood sucker) beforehand that we were supposed to bring water pistols led to our being seriously outgunned on the lake. Our rowboat sustained repeated ramming attacks by girls in canoes blasting us with water cannons. These attacks ended when we started swamping the assaulting canoes, throwing girls in the lake and ~~stealing~~, er uh, confiscating their weapons. We're not sure if we'll be invited back next year.

We hope all is well with you. Tim, Crystal & Hannah