

Dear Family:

30 August 1999

I begin this letter, which will no doubt be composed in installments, on the day after an action-packed sacrament meeting featuring Tim Willis at the organ, a piano solo by Tim Willis, and Tim Willis as the concluding speaker. The assignments were made by different people at different times, and the music chair really ought to talk to the bishopric from time to time. Now entering my third year as Ward Mission Leader (and averaging one talk per six months since moving into the ward), there was probably little doubt in anyone's mind as to my assigned topic. The "Missionary Medley" that I played just prior to speaking likely removed what little doubt there was. When it was brought up during PEC meeting that I would be drawing so much attention to myself during sacrament meeting, I responded by informing all present that I had invited my grandma to come watch me. Everybody thought I was kidding and laughed at me ... until Grandma showed up, that is. (Note of clarification--I've been told my letters are lacking in these: Although our ward spans 2 U.S. Congressional districts, my grandmother, who lives 5 miles up Georgia Avenue, is in a different stake.)

The aforementioned meeting's prayers included pleas that the states south of us (although the watch extends as far north as Maryland) would be spared the brunt of Dennis. Interestingly, some people around here are furtively rooting for the hurricane to reach us. Their reasoning is ostensibly based on conventional wisdom, which has it that a tropical storm would pack enough of a water-wallop to relieve us of our drought conditions (as well as our imbecilic governor's daft, no-account water restrictions) in one fell swoop. This, after attempts by intelligent voters to relieve the state of the governor himself failed last November.

What little rain we've received this summer has timed itself perfectly to coincide with our outdoor activities. Two weekends ago, we attended a performance of the Magic Flute at Wolf Trap. The half-hour downpour had a dampening effect on the quality of our lawn seats. (Note of clarification: If you've never been to Wolf Trap, it has one of those venues with covered stage and seats, and uncovered lawn seating in the rear.) We were especially appreciative of the rich people in the real seats who, upon becoming cognizant of our plight, turned around, pointed, and laughed derisively. Fortunately, the rain began well before the performance. By the time the overture began, the shower had relented to a slow drizzle, and when the overture ended, so had the rain. We enjoyed the production.

The previous Saturday, while the rest of the Willis family was enjoying the Corrys' private wilderness, we went to my company's annual summer picnic. Not what I think of as a typical office picnic, this was a catered affair on the field level of RFK stadium prior to the start of a D.C. United (our local Major League Soccer team) match. Other than the stifling heat, it was kind of fun being that close to watch warm-ups and to provide for Hannah a memorable encounter with the team's mascot (she hated it.) After the picnic, we went up into the stands to watch the game. This time, the heavens opened at the midway point of the first half. In spite of the 25-minute thoroughly drenching storm, the game wasn't halted, and we had fun anyhow.

The United game bisected a pleasant visit from Crystal's mom and Pat (N of C: Pat is Crystal's stepfather.) Their week here included two day-trips into Washington. Both times, they caught up with me at work for lunch. During one of these lunches, they were successful in persuading me to take the afternoon off (and to play tour guide). That afternoon included visits to the Lincoln, Jefferson, FDR, Vietnam and Korean War Memorials, and culminated with a 2-hour visit to the Holocaust museum. In some ways their stay was reminiscent of visits from my Willis grandparents when I was child. Pat helped Roland fix the concrete front porch steps. And while we had no socks that needed mending, Grandma Carolyn was very helpful with the day care children.

The day care continues its expansion. I recently complained about our clientele bolting for less expensive childcare on base. As it happens, two of our clients had their names come up at the base this month, and are staying with us despite our higher price. This is a tribute to Crystal and Marci and their elevated standard of care, a reflection of the base's glaring lack of same, and probably owes something to parents' desires to introduce any possible element of stability into their children's increasingly complex lives.

We were happy to learn that, by all reports, the reunion was among the best ever (though I still don't see how anything could top that loft at Silver Fork in '83.) Sorry we missed it. Hope everyone's adequately decompressed.

Love,
Tim, Crystal & Hannah