

Dear Family:

6 October 1999

The biggest news of the month isn't really news any more (credit my father) but hopefully I can fill in some details with minimal repetition.

Lucy Elizabeth Willis was born yesterday. Her mother was admitted to the AntePartum ward on the preceding day to undergo a pre-inducement procedure, and was subsequently transferred to what we think is the same Labor & Delivery room in which Hannah was born. Early in the morning, the nurse thought labor was progressing so rapidly as to make inducing unnecessary. She subsequently reconsidered and began administering the Pitocin (trade name of the labor-inducing hormone oxytocin—referred to appropriately enough at Holy Cross Hospital as “holy water”—the same stuff was used to kick-start Hannah's labor.) By morning's end, Lucy was born. As is custom, the doctor offered me the opportunity to cut the umbilical cord. As has become my custom, I refused (it grosses me out) electing rather to defer to my mother who, for some reason, seemed excited to do it.

Thus ends a pregnancy which, while free of serious complications, was not without significant discomfort. My father's letter made reference to Crystal's carpal tunnel syndrome. Along with being forced to cope with severely curtailed hand use and considerable pain—a substantial disability for a child care provider--the length of the pregnancy was marked by recurring bouts with nausea, headaches, and sore throats among other things. Maybe this is all normal, though Hannah (I'm told) was notably easier. But this is all over now (except for the hopefully soon-to-be-healed carpal tunnel). Mother and daughter appear to be doing well (dad's a mess), and Lucy, unlike her sister at the same age, seems to have no inhibitions about nursing. Both could be home as early as tonight.

Now, technically this is the “September” letter and really has no business reporting events that didn't occur until October. I made an exception for Lucy's birth, but still feel compelled to include my federally mandated report on September's goings-on.

Mom, Dad & Peter braved the Labor Day weekend traffic to celebrate Mom's & Coco's birthdays with the entire local Henrichsen contingent. Their stay included a visit to Harpers Ferry, where we patiently listened to a National Park Service volunteer recite from memory the entire text of “Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About John Brown, And a Whole Lot More.” Still a pretty place, though. Interestingly enough, (or maybe not) a couple of weeks later while in Old Town Alexandria (Va.) we walked by the place where the events of John Brown's siege at Harpers Ferry were communicated to Robert E. Lee. He reportedly then made some kind of ominous observation on mounting tensions between the states (whether the statement alluded to his own imminent treachery I'm not certain.) September also included a visit by the three of us to the battlefields at Antietam. The natural beauty of the place belies the acute ugliness of what transpired there. Hannah particularly enjoyed playing with, and on, the cannons. If you count my day at girls' camp a couple of months ago (just outside Gettysburg) it was quite the Civil War summer.

Hannah was also the impetus behind our trip to the National Zoo a couple of weeks ago. She's been there a number of times, and has developed some kind of affinity for giraffes. Though her syntax leaves something to be desired, she is nonetheless capable of formulating sentence-like phrases conveying her desire to go to the zoo and see the giraffes. She is also especially fond of elephants. Fortuitous, since giraffes and elephants were about the only animals not hiding that particular day—not counting the large family of human-like mammals wearing matching t-shirts promoting the presidential candidacy of Gary Bauer (official campaign slogan: “At least we're still ahead of Hatch.”)

The post-MBA job search is on. I've interviewed with three companies: The first made an offer that I could, and subsequently did, refuse. The second made no offer—i.e. they found someone better, and the jury's still out on the third. I'm not wholly convinced I want to work for the third (a satellite company in the process of being acquired by Lockheed Martin) but I might want to if they make the right offer. I am particularly grateful at this juncture for my current job, as it affords me the luxury of being choosier than I might otherwise be. Everything's good here. Hope it is with you.