

Dear Family:

31 July 2000

Greetings from Maryland—home of Camp David, finally departed last week by Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat after spending enough time here for their kids to qualify for in-state tuition at the University of Maryland...assuming, of course, that neither of them is tight enough with any high-ranking Salt Lake Olympic Committee members to pick up one of those nifty SLOC full-ride deals.

It's been a month of homecomings. Andrew's was first. Hannah and I made the drive to Philadelphia to greet Andrew as he "de-planed" (sophisticated aviation jargon). We were joined at the airport by friends, family and local dignitaries. These included NBC-10 sports anchor Vai Sikahema (he prefers Bishop Sikahema) and his family. The actual homecoming service, however, was postponed until yesterday. This allowed Grant, Jen and Abigail to attend (see next paragraph). The service was charged with much of the same emotion characteristic of Willis-boy mission farewells & homecomings; Mom and Dad gushing about what wonderful sons they have, the congregation nodding their heads in agreement, the bishop concurring, etc. While neglecting to mention me personally, Andrew's remarks were pleasant and appropriate.

Andrew's return has overshadowed somewhat the arrival of Grant, Jen and Abigail. Not wanting to lessen the impact of their forthcoming letter, it suffices me to say here that they successfully made their journey over the mountains and across the plains in a very large moving truck with their imported mid-size sedan in tow. They moved into an apartment complex adjoining the one into which we moved after completing our crossing in a similarly colored truck 4 years ago. We empathize with some of the anxiety and unsettledness they are doubtless experiencing, and sincerely hope that their acclimation period is as brief and manageable as ours was. As the ward choir director, I'm looking forward to the new tenor.

I'm too lazy to craft a real segue here. But speaking of music, I had the unique opportunity two Sundays ago of attending a performance of "The Mighty Special Music Makers." A collection of 50 or so adults with cognitive and/or physical disabilities who play various unique percussion instruments accompanied a dozen or so non-impaired adults who play actual melodies and instruments you've actually heard of. I was invited to attend by one of the performers whom I home teach. I'm not exactly sure what her specific handicap is. She functions well enough to live alone, explain to people that she's "got a disability,"...and bang the heck out of a variety of percussion instruments when given the cue from a conductor whose patience must make Job look like Hannah when she wants, well, anything. The program, which took the listener on a musical journey around the world, claimed to pass through Japan with a rendition of the overture from the Mikado. I pointed out to the people sitting next to me (who I could tell genuinely appreciated the many witty remarks I offered throughout the concert) that the Mikado is to Japanese music what Casablanca is to North African cinema. I mention the Mikado here not only to showcase my wit, but because I'll likely never forget the Peter-esque look of sheer ecstasy on the face of the guy charged with hitting the gong when he finally got his cue. From 20 rows back, you could see him trembling with anticipation; silently pleading with the conductor to let him wail away. This all probably seems pretty inconsequential to most of you, but the resemblance to Peter actually choked me up a little. The uniqueness of the music was matched by that of the venue; a synagogue that doubled as a Presbyterian church (or the other way around I guess, depending on your persuasion.) Definitely a first for me, the sanctuary featured a banner suspended from the ceiling depicting a Torah (and a bunch of Hebrew stuff I couldn't understand) illuminated by sunlight streaming through a stained-glass window depicting a resurrected Jesus. I guess they don't get many scheduling conflicts.

On a more somber note (my first attempt at seriousness in more than a year—bear with), Crystal has temporarily reclaimed a more significant role in Kent Daycare (formerly Kent/Willis Daycare) due to Marci's recent delivery of her stillborn son. I'm not very good at sympathy, but I hope Roland and Marci feel they have ours. While it hardly seems appropriate to discuss one's own discomfort at a time such as this, it has been a very tiring month for Crystal. Crystal, being Crystal, refuses to call attention to this and is pleased to help however she can. The upside to all this (if it's right to call it that) has been the unscheduled influx of everybody's parents. Even under unfavorable circumstances, it's always nice having family around. In a similar vein, we express our sympathy to the Bingham family for the loss of their (grand)father.

Imagine a tidy sentence here that sums everything up, and have a nice month.

Love,  
Tim, Crystal, Hannah, & Lucy