

Dear Family:

30 September 2000

Greetings from Maryland (official state motto: “Gore/Lieberman in 5761.”) Yes, I have actually seen this on bumper stickers. The state motto, taken with the fact that the only Dubya bumper stickers I see in this state (aside from those mocking him as the “educashun govener”) are in the church parking lot, and my belief that Maryland hasn’t elected a Republican governor since Spiro Angew (I’m sure I’m wrong about that--Dad’ll let me know), has me planning to just sleep in on November 7. By the way, if you don’t get the 5761 bit, it’s no biggie. It only means you probably grew up in a place where public schools didn’t close for Rosh Hashanah and/or Yom Kippur. It means you’ve probably never had a good knish either. It’s the hard knock life for you.

It’s Saturday morning. In writing this, I’m mostly just killing time waiting for the dew to burn off so I can throw a second coat of paint (colonial blue) on our shutters. Crystal applied the first coat this past week while I was in Richmond. While I touch up the shutters, she will be adding a coat of “Tusk” (please don’t call it “white”) to the wrought iron (I don’t know for certain that they’re wrought iron—they’re metal of some kind) thingamabobs beneath the windows on the front of the house. After careful study and reflexion, it is now our conviction that these two colors form the only true complement to the particular shade of red brick from which our modest home is principally constructed.

Crystal’s been really successful at getting things like this done while I’ve been in Richmond. I wound up spending the entire month (and am likely to spend much or all of the next) in the Confederate capital. I live for weekends when I get to see my family (and paint shutters, mow the front yard, attempt to rescue the back yard where everything grows except grass, etc...) and occasionally find myself flipping through the channels in my hotel room burdened with feelings of homesickness reminiscent of nights laying awake in my tent as a 12-year-old scout at summer camp. Don’t misread here. This doesn’t happen often (nothing like scout camp where I was homesick every night until I was at least 14—yeah, I was a wuss) but it happens. I’m working down there for a client trying to dig itself out of some rather serious mismanagement of a government contract. The client is simultaneously retaining us to help them with their bid to win a renewal of this same contract. Assuming they win the contract (which is assuming a lot) I’d like to go on record here (not really, but you know what I mean) with my prediction that they will repeat at least 75% of the mistakes which landed them in their current predicament. It’s very ugly finance, and I don’t know why they’re re-bidding. Actually I do. It’s because government contracts of this nature carry jaw-dropping revenue potential. What bidders sometimes fail to take into account, however, is that these contracts only price so high because of their enormous downside potential. For reasons unclear to me, some people choose to ignore that second part, and there’s got to be a lesson in here somewhere.

One nice thing about Richmond is that its proximity allows Crystal, Hannah and Lucy to come down and visit periodically. They spent 3 nights there with me this month. It makes me happy to hear Hannah speak longingly of visiting “Daddy’s Hotel.” We think her feelings of attachment have more to do with the swimming pool there than anything else, but I’ll take it.

I’ve been working with the same people down there long enough now that the conversation occasionally turns to things other than work. (Imagine that.) With guys my age, these exchanges often evolve into reminiscences about college. Strangely, it never occurred to me while I was attending college that my status as a BYU alumnus would be such a conversation starter. When the first question is “Where’d you do your undergrad?” and I reply, “Brigham Young,” the response is unavoidable..... “Man you guys really [stink] this year.” (Nobody actually says “stink.”) Sometimes people ask me if I did “one of those 2-year things” (which a majority of people here believe to be a university, rather than Church, program--I get looks of bewilderment when I explain that some missionaries have attended other schools.) This actually makes sense given how much of what most people know about missions comes from ESPN announcers trying to fill the time because, with BYU trailing 73-6 in the 3rd quarter, the game’s no longer interesting.

The high point of the month (literally and metaphorically) was our family’s first camping trip with Grant and Jen in Maryland’s majestic Catoctin Mountains. To everyone’s surprise, I had a lot of fun. I enjoy the excuse it provides for eating hideously unhealthful food in the stated interest of survival. I particularly enjoyed the pancakes we had for breakfast cooked in pools of bacon grease—outside the realm of camping, these would be called “donuts.” But out in the wilderness, it’s simply a necessity to prevent stickage to the cast-iron griddle. We hiked to a pretty waterfall and enjoyed being together. I love having Grant, Jen and Abby here, and I’m really ticked that I’m going to be out of town when they (along with some other friends of ours, one of whom works for Senator Bennett—we’ve already been through the Dad stuff) come over Wednesday for the season premiere of “The West Wing.” We’re all addicted.

Hope all’s well.

Tim, Crystal, Hannah & Lucy