

Dear Family:

31 December 2000

Happy New Year. I will endeavor to complete this in time to get it on its way electronically before midnight just in case the once-dreaded "Millennium bug" has been waiting for the *real* millennium rollover to strike. This may prove difficult as I am writing the bulk of this at the end of a long day that has included playing the piano for a baptismal service and a stake choir practice, directing a ward choir practice and playing the organ for sacrament meeting – all of which served to bolster my distinguished status as the most over-rated musician in the stake.

In accordance with the counsel contained in many of your holiday cards and letters, we went ahead and had a nice Christmas. In spite of Grant's absence (chez his in-laws in the land Bountiful), the ward choir tenor section performed respectably on Christmas Eve. With that out of the way we were poised to enjoy a pleasant Christmas Eve dinner with Coco at Grandma's (which we did) before returning home for some quiet family time. We used this time to impress upon our children's minds some of the most important aspects of Christmas, i.e.:

- 1) Christmas is not about Santa.
- 2) Santa will not come if you so much as open your bedroom door before morning.

Lucy, too young to care, slept through the night. Hannah, who already has the whole selective hearing thing down, ran through the living room while Santa was still "finishing up" to ask me if he'd come yet. Notwithstanding her disobedience, we think she still got most everything she wanted. I know I did. In a gesture reminiscent of Homer Simpson's birthday gift to Marge of a bowling ball engraved with his name and drilled for his fingers, Crystal finally gave me that new butter dish I'd been eyeing for so long...

Once Hannah had finished opening all of her (and most of Lucy's) presents from her Kent and MaGee grandparents, we jumped on I-95 and battled the Christmas morning traffic (consisting of at least four other cars) all the way to Moorestown so she could score more loot from her Willis grandparents. We enjoyed a nice week there with Mom, Dad, Andrew, Matt, and Anika, and a nice day with Andra. (As you all know, she gave birth to Morgan via caesarian section on the 26th, and had not yet been discharged when we skipped town on Friday.) The frigid weather kept us pent-up for most of the week, and I (as I often do during extended visits home – especially with Andrew) ceased repressing my dominant 16-year-old mentality. It was a lot of fun. Sorry Mom.

Earlier this month, we celebrated Hannah's 4th Birthday. The December party featured such time-honored classics as pin-the-nose-on-the-reindeer and a Santa Claus piñata. Any fears I may have initially experienced surrounding the children's potential misgivings about beating Santa Claus over the head with a bat in order to obtain candy were quickly allayed as Hannah's guests took to Santa like a pack of toasted Philadelphia Eagles fans. Needless to say, Hannah got lots of stuff.

It looks like I'll be living in Richmond for another couple of weeks. I know, I know, I said just till the end of the year. Well, people lie and, needless to say, I've had about enough of the place. Pressing deadlines have forced a sequence of 14-hour days that non-Doctors have no business working. These long days coupled with the fact that I've had 20 different hotel rooms make it so I can't even remember which one I'm in some weeks – not that I have time to sleep there or anything. Fortunately, the entire hotel staff knows me, and at times employees just give it to me without my having to ask. ("Good evening Mister Willis. Do you remember your room number?" is not an uncommon greeting.)

I'm sure other stuff happened this month, but it's all obscured in the shadow of the holiday. Crystal hosted a Pampered Chef party, allowing her to obtain some pretty decent cookware at "half price" (only 200% markup). I was out of town for the event. This is unfortunate, as it undoubtedly could have been the source of some hilarious material for this letter. Oh well. All in all, it's been a fine month and season. Hope it was for you too.

Love, Tim, Crystal, Hannah & Lucy