

Dear Family:

31 March 2001

Conference weekend is here again. It's always nice, but I never seem to be able to find any kind of rhythm to get anything done. (And here I am writing this.) Adding to the chaos is the failure of our stake center's satellite system, compelling those without cable to scramble to find a different building. I guess we could've invited some people over, but Grant, Jen, Abby, and Mom are coming and, as Janelle can attest, our house just isn't that big.

The purpose of Janelle's fully tax-deductible visit to our lovely nation's capital last week was ostensibly to attend a national conference of music teachers, but we like to think she just wanted to see us. We thoroughly enjoyed catching up a little and meeting Zachary for the first time. Mother and son slept in our cold basement (as our rates were considerably more reasonable than those at the Omni Shoreham—even after the convention discount) and took the Metro downtown each day for the various seminars. Despite missing the cherry blossoms by about two days and Zach's frequent bouts with vomiting, we think/hope Janelle considers the overall visit a net positive. It certainly was for us.

In what must have been the highlight of her stay, Janelle had the very special opportunity of experiencing a production of Kenneth Cope's "Women at the Well" performed by Crystal and nine other women from our stake and an adjoining one. I was pleasantly surprised by the caliber of the sound and the quality of the overall presentation. Crystal portrayed a Nephite who witnessed the Savior's American ministry, and, based on my objective analysis, performed especially well. The entire company was uplifting and immeasurably superior to the cheese-ball commercial recording, which features what has got to be the same group of breathy mormon pop divas that just make you want to take a bat to something, yet inexplicably seem to dominate the unofficial church music industry.

Had Janelle not arrived in the middle of the night, one of the first things she might have noticed would have been a whole lot of dirt and not much grass in the back yard. While the lack of lawn is nothing new, much of the dirt is. It arrived at our house one Saturday this month in an indescribably large commercial vehicle driven by a friend from the ward. Grant, whom I drafted into service when the truck arrived, can corroborate all this and confirm that I'm not exaggerating. This truck, which barely fit in our driveway, contained a pile of dirt which, by my *conservative* estimate, measured 20 feet long, by 5 feet wide by 4 feet high. The ward friend had noted to me some time ago that we might have more luck growing grass if we were to bury the exposed surface roots of the many unsightly trees in our back yard. I did not need to mention to him that he might have more luck selling his house if he were to get rid of the unsightly mountains of dirt in his front yard. So I guess this scenario was inevitable. It was no fun though. Four missionaries ultimately showed up (in their suits) to help. As if the neighbors didn't think we're weird enough...

Hannah has begun swimming lessons; the first step in a long process of testing her maternal grandmother's genetic influence, which we hope will ultimately lead to Olympic glory and free education. Hannah currently excels at bubble blowing, kicking, and wanting to go to swimming lessons. Crystal has hammered out a quid pro quo arrangement with a woman in the ward who teaches swimming lessons, and has a daughter (closer to Crystal's age than Hannah's) who wants voice lessons. All this works great for me, as I must neither pay nor do anything.

Having just completed the first full week in my own office since August, the great Richmond experience seems to be finally over. I'm not done with the client, a Rockville-based firm, but we've done all there is to do with its Richmond partner. There were several mementos I considered swiping from the place (before ultimately chickening out). These include the mug left behind by the CFO, whose office I inherited after he got fired, bearing the message, "My job is secure...no one else wants it." Also the "Complete Idiot's Guide to Finance and Accounting" surreptitiously filed on the Accounting VP's office bookshelf, the binding facing inward, alongside several never-opened regulatory compliance manuals. (It didn't take long to figure out why we were brought in.)

While on the subject of complete idiots, I've been subpoenaed in the matter of Maryland v. Fredy DeJesus Cheguen (the drunk who rear-ended us and ran—see last month's letter for hilarious details.) I really can't see how this thing is going to trial, and naturally hope it ultimately doesn't. But I guess we'll see.

Otherwise, things are groovy.

Love,

Tim—with approving nods from Crystal, Hannah, and (to a lesser extent) Lucy