

Dear Family,

25 May 2002

We're in the car on the way up to Moorestown to visit Tim's parents. This morning's visit to the podiatrist has left me unable to drive, and I am consequently being permitted, for the first time ever, to begin the monthly family epistle. It will be very interesting to see how many of my original words remain in the letter once Tim's done with it.

We kicked the month off with the blessing extravaganza. During the month of April there were three family births right here in the Maryland/Virginia area. Since the respective parents of the other two babies were former members of our ward, they all decided that they were willing to come bless their babies in our testimony meeting on May 5th. Emma Kent and our own Sophie Willis were each one month old that day. The third blessee, Grant and Jen's Alexander Willis, while the youngest of the group, was by no means the runt. (Those who get Grant's letter will have heard that Alex is a really big boy.)

Tim delivered a beautiful and thoughtful blessing in which he managed to remember the name we had chosen together. He's never been wild about the name Sophia and leading up to the blessing there were a few joking references to the fabled renegade husbands who have become Mormon legends by whipping out an unapproved name at their baby's blessing. I pointed out that she'd still be Sophia Joan Willis to the government and that, at best, he would only succeed in creating a situation in which her name on the records of the church would be different from the name she actually uses.

After the meeting we gathered in a "rec center" (the county's term for an enclosed structure that resembles a scout camp dining hall more than anything else --Tim.) at one of our great Montgomery County parks for a lunch of salads, cold cuts, and rolls. There were between 25 and 30 people there and it was wonderful being able to enjoy their company without having to worry about fitting them all into my house, thanks to the forethought and generosity of my father-in-law who suggested we look for a place to hold this event and was willing to foot the bill.

We've been enjoying what I think of as Tim's paternity leave. Though it has not entailed any actual leave, this has nonetheless been a period of time surrounding the birth of Sophie during which Tim has been working locally and often arriving home in time for dinner. I've been very grateful to have him around and pleased that he has achieved a whole new level of helpfulness with the arrival of child number three. (It should always be thus—I wish similar experiences on wives everywhere.)

Hannah and Lucy are very sweet with their new little sister. Lucy will frequently come along while I'm nursing and beg to be allowed to hold Sophie. She's also fond of playing peek-a-boo with Sophie. I had to teach her that it's really better for her to play peek-a-boo by putting her hands over her own eyes instead of wrapping up Sophie's head in whatever blanket she happens to be lying on. Lucy's learning but I'm still pretty nervous about what could happen if I turn my back for just a second. A few minutes ago, Hannah and Lucy got into an argument over which of them was the intended target of Sophie's smiles.

Hannah is really getting ready for first grade. She's reading more and more words and writing on her own. She's also been really helpful around the house—filling Lucy's sippy cup when I'm nursing, getting toast and cereal for herself and Lucy, and calming Sophie with a pacifier and soothing voice when I can't get to her immediately.

Okay, enough real news. I, Tim, have taken over, and will now close this out with the kind of random non-informative drivel you've come to expect from this letter. It is Sunday night. We enjoyed a pleasant morning at church; one in which the girls took turns climbing on their grandmother, and I got to meet Justin Ena, recently graduated star BYU linebacker in town working out with the Eagles. It's been a fun weekend so far. Hannah and Anika have gotten along famously, and even done a reasonably good job including Lucy in the fun. Tomorrow will start early with all the grown-ups catching a 10 am showing of Star Wars. As an American, I feel I must see this movie (otherwise the terrorists will have won) even though I don't hold out much hope for it. Under most circumstances, it's difficult to get excited about a movie whose most ringing endorsement is, "It's not as bad as the last one," but, for some reason, I'm really looking forward to it. I think I'm most excited just to see Pete see it.

On the home front, our "master" shower is in. It is very nice. We have taken out most of the dead tree in the front yard, thus providing a clearer view of the four new petunia- and ivy-adorned redwood window boxes affixed to the front of the house. It does a lot for the house. Of course, at least I still recognize my house, which is more than I can say about the house I grew up in now that Mom and Dad have invested the gross national product of Turkmenistan into making it the nicest place on the court.

We're happy in our place though. Hope you're happy in yours.

Love,
Tim, Crystal, Hannah, Lucy & Sophie