

Dear Family

26 June 2002

Summer months always bring slow news cycles. At least around here they do. During much of the year we in the Eastern Time Zone grow accustomed to being the focus of the national news media. We bask in this attention and derive from it our smug sentiments of self-worth, significance, even (dare I follow this alliterative progression to its logical end?) superiority. For nine months it's what gets us out of bed in the morning. Then summer hits. Congress recesses. "The West Wing" goes into reruns. The weather grows awful. Nothing happens. People go on vacation and start ignoring us. Last year, in the absence of real news, we at least had Chandra Levy to keep the satellite trucks in town. But this year's Chandra Levy story is in Utah. Wildfires are ganging up on "real people" and on quaint little burgers with names like "Show Low" and "Durango." Combine that with former Enron employees posing for Playboy and America's quadrennial month-long soccer infatuation and how can we possibly compete? What do we have here? The Martha Stewart insider trading scandal? Please. We don't got bopkis. But you don't understand. We are shallow people, and we require attention to function. To this end am I composing this letter. To this end do I metaphorically mount my roof, flail my arms, and cry out at the top of my lungs, "Sophie just rolled over!" We are still here. Acknowledge us.

So what happened this month? Well, let's see. We had a stake conference. No visiting authority though. Even they ignore us in the summer. We've lived here for two presidential inaugurations and—coincidentally?—have had stake conferences scheduled on the weekend preceding each event. We managed to score a member of the Twelve on both those occasions. But in June we can't even scare up someone from the Fifty-fourth Quorum of the Seventy. Oh well. I guess it's worth mentioning that I directed the stake choir, which sang my arrangement of "Sweet is the Peace the Gospel Brings." It's one of my better efforts, though far from publishable. A good choir and superb accompanist made my job pretty easy.

All of us very much enjoyed Charlotte Corry's three-night visit. She was in town attending a conference of non-profit controllers [insert accountant joke here] and elected to eschew the comforts of a downtown hotel for our basement hide-a-bed. We're happy she did. She endeared herself to Hannah by participating in backyard tee-ball, and accompanied us on a Saturday morning trip to the Baltimore inner-harbor area and Aquarium. Both of these activities are favorites of the girls, who actually remembered Charlotte's name during most of her stay, but have since started referring to her longingly as "Daddy's cousin."

Hannah "graduated" from kindergarten, proudly receiving a sheepskin and a hug from her beloved teacher, Mrs. Weiss. Hers is a very prestigious kindergarten class in which nearly 100 percent of graduates go on to first grade. Hannah initially expressed displeasure upon learning that she would have to wait all summer before attending first grade, but that has waned somewhat as she has become re-acquainted with the neighborhood swim club. Swimming lessons started this week for Hannah. Lucy doesn't feel as though she needs them, seems to have retained her sense of invincibility in the water, and requires constant oversight.

Lucy is still the middle child and frequently seeks out new and inappropriate ways of getting her mother's attention. Her penchant for pushing other children over appears only to manifest itself in Crystal's presence. Babysitters and nursery attendants universally extol Lucy's sweetness and overall gentle nature when in their care. But, having (for now) rejected the options of having Crystal move out of the house or simply ignoring Lucy when she wails on other kids, we remain in search of a solution.

On the we're-eventually-going-to-have-to-sell-this-dump front, our little property at 100 Hannes Street improved slightly this month. Temporarily subscribing to Dad's and Coco's philosophy (that there exists a philosophy shared by Dad and Coco is itself notable) of "why do yourself what you can pay someone else to do?" we finally had the exterior of the house painted. Yes, I know, our house is constructed principally of brick. No, we did not have the brick painted. The painting was restricted to trim, doors, railings, soffit and fascia. Gone finally are the last remnants of the hideous yellow the previous owners apparently found so appealing. Reverting to the competing philosophy of "why pay someone else to do what you can curse and get injured doing yourself?" I spent all of last Saturday, with the assistance of Mom and Grant, erecting a ten-by-eight foot vinyl outdoor storage building (please do not crassly refer to it as a "shed") in the backyard. It's level for the most part. Hope summer treats you well.

Love,

Tim, Crystal, Hannah, Lucy & Sophie