

Dear Family:

22 February 2003

In an area where “digging out” is the standard phrase used to describe the chore necessitated by a four-inch snowfall, the task that comes in the wake of a storm that dumps over two feet of the stuff can seem nothing short of excavatory. (Okay, I just consulted my dictionary and it now would appear that “excavatory” is not a real word. But it ought to be, and it should mean “of, like, or pertaining to a full-scale archaeological excavation.”) Snow management on this scale requires a Herculean—that IS a word—effort that we around here are not accustomed to and do not care much for. That the brunt of the storm had blown through by Monday (Presidents’ Day) didn’t keep the Federal Government and most private offices (including mine) from closing on Tuesday. Things started returning to normal Wednesday—though with plowed snow choking off at least one lane in each direction on most roads, traffic was much, much worse than usual. (And it’s usually awful.) Hannah didn’t have school all week and suddenly class in July is not outside the realm of possibility.

It is typically at this point that Buffalo natives join with residents of certain Central and Mountain Time Zone states to deride and taunt us to death with endless blather about how THEIR towns get snow accumulation of this magnitude practically every week, and how they NEVER have to close schools or cancel church, blah, blah, blah. What these people ignore is that there are in fact any number of perfectly reasonable explanations for this apparent disparity. First of all, you have to take into account the um . . . well you see, you have to realize that the uh . . . Oh, just shut up. We’re looking forward to telling the grandkids all about “The Harsh Winter of Aught-Three” and no one can take that away from us.

Except terrorists. If nothing else, the record snowfall did a lot to quell (albeit temporarily) the Code Orange Terror Alert anxiety gripping our area. A general preoccupation with emergency preparedness evokes shades of Y2K as local Home Depot and Target stores struggle (futilely) to keep up with demand for flashlight batteries and bottled water, not to mention plastic sheeting and duct tape (purportedly of some value if one wishes to create a Bircher-like in-house “safe room” in the event of a poison gas attack). And although the sight of anti-aircraft artillery mounted on the back of Army Humvees strategically situated throughout the District is a little disconcerting, and riding “designated soft target” Metro trains on a daily basis gives me pause at times, we’re managing to get along. One upside, for what it’s worth, is that Crystal and I now have wills in the possession of our “trusted” attorney. We’re leaving our entire estate to the [United Negro College Fund](#). Hope that’s okay with everybody.

Keeping in the macabre vein, Hannah’s new interest in spaceships brought about by the Shuttle tragedy prompted a trip to the National Air and Space Museum a couple of Saturdays ago. Recalling last month’s unwanted adventures in driving downtown, we took Metro this time, which is always at least as much fun for the girls as the ultimate destination. Hannah and Lucy were particularly taken by the rockets, but were not overly impressed by the Apollo 11 lunar lander. (They were more impressed to learn that it went to the moon before Mommy and Daddy were EVEN BORN, which doubtless caused them to wonder why the thing wasn’t in the Natural History museum next to the dinosaur bones.) It was our first time there in several years and kind of fun. A&S Museum veterans will be saddened to learn that the campy Wright Brothers Café has been replaced by a crummy oversized McDonald’s. First terrorism, now this.

February is nearly over and Lucy is still not enrolled in preschool for next year. This is particularly troublesome around here, where a ridiculous amount of effort often goes into making sure one’s child gets into the “right” preschool. For us the “right” preschool is the one at Luther Rice Baptist Church up our street. We like it because of its location, favorable recommendations from parents we know, and the fact that it’s the only school we’ve looked at where tuition is less than BYU’s. (And it isn’t much less, which of course is more of a commentary on how reasonably priced BYU is than it is on the cost of preschool.) Crystal’s dedication, which had her sitting in the cold outside Luther Rice at 5 am one Saturday this month, was good enough to get Lucy to the top of the waiting list, but not in...yet. Should this fail, there’s also this Orthodox Jewish preschool that we kind of like (and that Lucy seemed to enjoy). It’s more expensive, but we’re told we can get a discount if we join the synagogue. The way I figure it, a \$1,100 annual synagogue membership is a heck of a lot less than we’re paying for our current religion, but I haven’t been able to get Crystal to see the light yet.

My birthday, January 30, occurred after last month’s letter went to press. If you’re among the many people who forgot about it, well, I probably missed yours, too, so no worries. Crystal, however, did not forget and took me to see Hershey Felder’s very entertaining production, “George Gershwin Alone” at Ford’s Theatre. (Happily, no one was shot.) With only 13 effective orchestra rows and a small balcony, Ford’s may just be the perfect venue for a one-man show, and really allowed Felder to engage the audience. One unique and especially fun aspect of the performance came after the rousing Rhapsody in Blue finale, when he turned up the house lights, took audience requests, and led us all in a George & Ira sing-along. Periodically, when he heard a voice he liked, he would invite its owner to stand up and solo. So that’s the story of how Crystal came to belt out 2 lines of “Summertime” all by herself from the third row of Ford’s Theatre.

Family milestone: Hannah FINALLY lost her first two teeth on Feb. 19. Contributions to the tooth fairy fund may be sent to her attention at 100 Hannes Street. Hope everything’s well with you.

Love,  
Tim, Crystal & Girls