

Dear Family,

29 March 2003

The snow on the ground yielding like a French battalion¹ to 70-degree temperatures, Hannah's eagerness to reclaim her bike from the shed, and the boy next door affixing a makeshift basketball hoop and backboard—reminiscent of 531 'C' Street—to a utility pole seven feet above our little cul-de-sac all bear witness to the onset of spring. Indeed, only the concrete remnants from our crumbling front steps linger as evidence of an unusually severe havoc-wreaking winter. To wit:

Our icy neighborhood streets were to blame for Crystal's minor collision at an intersection where slick conditions took precedence over her right-of-way. Fortunately, no one was going fast and nobody was hurt. Also, while her Le Sabre was in the shop undergoing \$2,500 in body work, the insurance company was kind enough to provide a fully-loaded Ford Expedition, an utterly reprehensible and obscene vehicle that fills two-and-a-half parking spaces, mugs the environment, and funnels money to terrorists by sucking down more fuel during a yuppie run to Fresh Fields for organic pasta than a Boeing 777 does crossing the Atlantic. Yeah. We totally want one. (Next time we've got an extra 40 G's laying around...)

We're also blaming the weather for the sparse attendance at the grand finale of the Washington, DC Temple Visitors' Center's second annual Black History Month celebration, featuring Casey Alexander, an accomplished 16-year-old singer/actor from Philadelphia (whom I accompanied on the piano) and Camille Lewis, Maryland's representative at the 2002 Miss America pageant. She spoke articulately about the importance of dedication and hard work, yada, yada, yada, did some Q&A, and spent the balance of the time getting jiggy with her violin, which she used to place first in the pageant's talent competition. (Her accompaniment was canned.) Tens, if not dozens of mostly white people braved the elements to cram into the first few rows of the 540-seat Visitors' Center theater. Both performers were great, but I can't help but feel that it will be even neater when we're able to showcase other talented African Americans who are also members of the Church.

Speaking of shortcomings in diversity, Crystal and I hobnobbed with members of the local Mormon aristocracy (think Marriotts) a couple of weekends ago at the Nineteenth Annual Gala of the Washington, DC chapter of the BYU Management Society. We elected to attend after our stake president and his wife (who have done everything except legally adopt us into their family) offered to lay out the 80 bucks for our tickets. Following an unusual "cocktail" hour (where everyone—and I mean *everyone*—was drinking some kind of fruit juice or virgin daiquiri something-or-other) and a fine dinner, we were addressed by Senator Robert F. Bennett (R-Utah), who, unlike Hatch, is a pleasure to listen to. Senator Bennett was followed by Elder John H. Groberg of the Seventy, author of *In the Eye of the Storm*, now a "major" motion picture (that I hadn't heard of). He began his remarks by explaining that he wasn't there to plug the film...and then proceeded to deliver an address built around three rather lengthy clips from it. Looks like a decent enough movie though.

We took advantage of the first warm Saturday of the year by picnicking at Gravelly Point, a park on the Virginia bank of the Potomac not more than a couple hundred yards from the north end of National Airport's main runway. In addition to providing a free show of screaming passenger jets grazing the treetops directly overhead, the point offers nice views of the city and its monuments across the river. We rushed there after hearing word that the Department of Homeland Security is on the verge of shutting down the place and similar parks around the country, fearing they pose a risk to low-flying planes from religious people with constitutionally protected shoulder-mounted missile launchers. On the way home, we stopped off at Theodore Roosevelt Island, an idyllic little wooded haven in the middle of the Potomac with walking trails and a memorial plaza to the great Rough Rider. I guess we can check that off now, though the massive and deeply embedded sliver Hannah's finger took from the wooden footbridge prevented us from getting much beyond the statues. It also made for a very traumatic drive home and rest of the day. But it's all better now.

It was a lot of fun having almost everyone (Matt's family were the only holdouts) down here for a day-early celebration of Pete's 20th birthday at Copeland's, the Cajun place that seems to have become our standard family birthday destination. It's hard to believe that two decades have passed since Dad came into my 5th grade clarinet lesson to tell me that I had a new brother. He waited for me to come home from school before telling me the rest of the story—including the part about how Peter would be a little different. I still remember seeking solitude by wrapping myself in the playroom curtains and trying to come to terms with how *my* life would be different as a result of his. I was eleven. How could I have known? How could any of us have? We love you, Pete.

We join with people everywhere in praying for a swift and positive resolution to the war in Iraq.

Love,
Tim, Crystal & Girls

¹ I apologize for jumping on the overcrowded frog-bashing bandwagon right out of the gate. (But isn't it great how it just never seems to get old?) For what it's worth, I acknowledge that this particular simile's aptness is dubious at best as it actually took several weeks for our snow to succumb. Pass the freedom fries!