

Dear Family:

26 April 2003

Our dear, sweet, adorable firstborn, feeling remorseful after having her school recess privileges temporarily curtailed for slugging a boy on the playground, recently asked that her name be officially changed from “Hannah” to “Bad Girl.”

Writing that sentence made me chuckle. But such Hannah-talk, which has become increasingly common, deeply saddens and troubles her parents, who recognize that she is, in reality, a very good girl who almost always does the right thing, but who can be absolutely brutal on herself when she knows she has misbehaved. Her fragile nature is also particularly susceptible to the harsh seriousness of her school’s “Code Red” terrorism/bad-guy-in-the-building drills, the fear of which doesn’t allow her to sleep at night until she is convinced that 1) all the doors and windows are locked and 2) I have a plan for dealing with nocturnal intruders. I’ve tried explaining to her that 1) this isn’t Salt Lake City, 2) I don’t pay unlicensed freaks under the table to work on my house—Ok. Stop it, Tim! Sorry—and 3) nefarious stuff like that just doesn’t happen around here...much. But she still worries. Often. None of this concerns me to the point where I’m going to drop a whole bunch of money on a kiddie shrink, mind you...not yet, anyway. But it bothers me enough to lead the letter with it (thus replacing my usual tired observations about the weather, the French, or what-I-just-did-two-seconds-ago around which I usually craft an intro).

Juxtapose Hannah’s delicateness with Lucy’s obstinacy and you’ve got the makings for one heck of a sitcom. (Speaking of which, I guess this marks the end of “Turn the TV Off Week.” Is there a more un-American thing to do during the first week of sweeps than tell people they can’t watch TV? We enforced it only at the school’s request with some degree of success, which is to say that Hannah generally found other things to do, whereas Lucy’s standard response involved high-decibel foot-stomping outbursts of: “No! No! No! It’s turn the TV ON week!” Vintage Lucy.) Lucy’s potty-trained-ness is facing a formidable challenge from the outdoor-friendly spring weather, which requires her to recognize the need early enough to come all the way back into the house in time to make it to the bathroom. Lately the challenge has proven a bit much for her, so much so that a “good” outcome has become one in which she drops trou and lets it go wherever she happens to be standing (backyard, woods, middle of the street, what have you). It involves some awkward squatting and I still can’t figure out how girls are able to do this.

Everything will hopefully have run its course in time for Lucy to start preschool in the fall. We are happy to report that she successfully gained admission to the “right” preschool (i.e., the one up the street that won’t bust our budget) and she sometimes even expresses an interest in going. No one is more excited and relieved than Crystal. There are still a couple of habits we’d like to wean Lucy from before putting her out for public consumption, including calling everybody and everything “poo poo head” or some derivative, and claiming that her legs are broken whenever she is asked to do anything, but we’re taking it one step at a time. She can actually be quite lovable when she chooses to.

We celebrated Sophie’s first birthday on April 5<sup>th</sup> with help from the usual suspects from Moorestown (Mom/Dad/Pete), Rockville/Derwood (Grant’s family) and the District (Coco). Sophie marked the day by taking her first steps (though some claim to have witnessed her hobbling around the night before) and she’s now walking all over the place. The party took place Saturday morning and was a nice lead-in to a full day of General Conference sessions beginning at noon.

Finally, this is the first weekend in two months that will not be at least partially consumed by rehearsals of or performances by the Washington Family Theatre Singers, a 50-or-so-voice ensemble consisting principally of members of our stake plus a handful from neighboring Seneca stake (Grant’s stake, though he somehow managed to weasel out of participating). Crystal sang while I pitched in as one of the choir’s three accompanists. We’re not the most polished group, but we were reasonably pleased with our Palm Sunday performance at the stake center following a Saturday night gig at the Temple Visitors’ Center. Our crowd, which, according to the Visitors’ Center director, was their biggest since Christmas, filled about half the theater. A week later, we provided the music for an Easter Sunday session of stake conference. The Tabernacle Choir we’re not, but we might have been the best darn stake conference choir I’ve ever heard. We contributed to a fine meeting that featured Elder Ralph Hardy, Area Authority Seventy, who made the arduous 10-mile journey from his Potomac, MD home (located in the adjoining so-called Washington, DC stake—which, trivially, is situated entirely within Maryland and covers no portion of Washington, DC). Elder Hardy delivered what amounted to a first-rate Easter sermon and I now regret any misgivings I may have had about stake conference’s ability to double as an Easter service. Anyway, we’ve basically enjoyed being part of the Singers, but will probably also enjoy at least a brief respite for now as the demanding schedule of rehearsals (to which the kids always needed to be carted along) was starting to take its toll.

Here’s to hoping your Easter dinners and/or Passover seders were up to snuff.

Love,  
Tim, Crystal & girls