

Dear Family:

May 31, 2003

With just a few precious hours remaining, the race is on to get this written, edited and distributed while it's still May and thus preserve a 55-month streak that nobody, except me, could possibly care about. Let's see if I'm up to the pressure. I've just increased the font size, making my one-page goal that much more attainable. (Adding vestigial paragraphs like this one doesn't hurt, either.)

This has been a month dedicated to Crystal's family. It began with a weekend visit from Crystal's father, Dr. Roderick S. Kent ("the Captain"), Karel (his wife), Dr. Roland S. Kent (Crystal's "little" brother), Marci (his wife) and their children: Noah (roughly Hannah's age) and Emma (born the same day as Sophie). Phew. To borrow from Dad, "This will all be on the final." The Captain and Karel had been in Pensacola, Fla. the week before to witness Roland graduate from flight school and to pin wings on his hot little Navy choker jacket. We were mostly a sideshow for everyone, as the main reason for their visit was to get Roland one last day in the temple with his wife and father before shipping off to Diego Garcia (see below) for a year. But Hannah enjoys being with Noah more than just about anything else in the world, so that was okay with us.

The following Friday and Saturday saw our stake fathers and sons campout, which I, lacking sons, attended with Hannah and Lucy. Aside from the rain (I'm pretty sure it's rained every day this month), the inability of two other Eagle Scouts and me to get a fire going (the wood was soaked all the way through—that's our story and we're sticking to it), and Lucy's need to use the toilet 87 times, it was fun enough. The next day was Mother's Day. Grant and I teamed up to put together a passable feast for our wives and called it good. No one was hurt.

Less than a week later Grandma Carolyn (Crystal's mother) was sleeping in our basement, which allowed her to do a lot of our laundry and to attend our ward "talent" show. I guess I don't mind saying here that I can't stand talent shows, and I generally make a point of not participating in them. However, as husband of the Ward Activities Committee Chairperson, I have been forced to soften that stance somewhat. I spent what seemed like half the show providing piano accompaniment for various other acts and even threw in a piano/vocal solo of my own. Cigarette lighters flickered throughout the gym (not really) during my rollicking rendition of Billy Joel's "My Life," which, admittedly, was a lot of fun to do. Mom, Dad and Pete, who were in town for Grant's graduation from Georgetown Law, showed up just in time to watch me bring the house down. It's a shame I won't be able to play the Willis reunion talent show.

Kent month culminated over Memorial Day weekend. In a family reunion model not likely to ever be replicated by my beloved Willis relatives, Roland and Crystal's three other siblings: Carrie (living in Oregon), Liz (Alaska), and Rick (with wife Mimi—Southern California) plus Grandma Carolyn and Grandpa Pat (Washington state) all traveled EAST (what a concept!). The fifteen of us fit reasonably comfortably into Roland and Marci's modest new 4,500-square-foot Suffolk, Virginia home on the banks of Bennett "Creek" – a diminutive appellation for what is actually a navigable brackish waterway that (I think) hooks into a system of larger rivers destined for the mouth of the nearby Chesapeake Bay. We exploited these rivers for a variety of traditional Kent family ski boat-related water sports after making an appearance at Roland and Marci's ward's Memorial Day picnic, which featured a 90-pound pig smothered in Carolina barbecue. I've done that now. Roland also smuggled us all into the Norfolk Naval Station to see all the cool big ships. We got up close and personal with the just-back-from-Iraq USS Harry S. Truman Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier parked a couple of stalls down from the still-floating USS Cole—both solemnly standing guard over the McDonald's across the street where we proudly scarfed down an all-American gut-busting lunch. Ostensibly, the gathering served as a send-off for Roland, who is about to spend a year as one of what can't be very many Navy doctors on Diego Garcia, a British speck of land in the middle of the Indian Ocean. But it was a nice excuse to get together with a family of very smart, very nice people (some of whom read this letter).

I've reached the bottom of the page. Mission accomplished. Hope this finds you well.

Love,  
Tim, Crystal, Hannah, Lucy & Sophie