

Dear Family:

27 June 2003

Friday night, 9:14 P.M. The girls, mercifully, appear to be sleeping. Crystal is ignoring me as she prepares her sacrament meeting talk for Sunday. Her assigned topic is “Citizenship”—ugh. And I’m bored. I’ve already flipped through all the TV channels. Nothing looks good. A handful of dirty dishes are cluttering the kitchen and dining room, but they’re not going anywhere. Times like this were made for letter writing. Crystal’s need to prepare her talk on the family computer has resulted in my relegation to the bedroom and my favorite 4½-year-old laptop, which seems to be holding together better than one might think.

The Washington Family Theatre Singers are holding together, too, and began the month by participating in an interfaith patriotic concert at the temple visitors’ center. After a pretty cool flag ceremony and an invocation offered (read) by an important-looking three-star Army general, four very different choirs took turns on the risers. Our choir went on at the end of a program that featured a non-denominational community choir (which held its own pretty well), a small local Catholic parish choir (which, surprisingly, was rather disappointing) a Jewish rabbi and a Muslim imam (both of whom chanted messages of peace) and a fully decked-out gospel choir—complete with percussion section, electric pianos and guitars, and lots of jumping up and down and arm-waving. They were kind of fun to watch even if listening to what amounted to the same three or four lines repeated over and over for 20+ minutes was about as musically interesting as a bologna sandwich. It was our choir’s intimidating chore to follow this daunting display of style over substance, but we were up to it and performed, I think, better than we ever had before. I guess what you like best depends on who you are, but it would be hard to dispute that ours was the evening’s most technically proficient ensemble. I guess that’s not really the point, though. The place was packed (thanks largely to the gospel choir’s fellow congregants) and a general feeling of goodwill prevailed. It was a good thing.

Two weeks (and two business trips to Indianapolis) later, we were up in New Jersey for Father’s Day weekend. It was an eventful couple of days that began late Friday night with the aroma of burning wood emanating from somewhere in Mom & Dad’s basement. Unable to find any smoke or identify the source of the worrisome odor, Dad called the fire department for advice. Within minutes, multiple fire trucks had roared into Walnut Court and what seemed like Moorestown’s entire fire department were scouring the house, from basement to attic, with sophisticated-looking thermal imaging equipment frantically searching for a fire. Some fire. ANY fire. The actual number of responding firefighters remains a matter of some debate. While I recall counting between seven and eight firefighters, by the time the story was being re-told to curious neighbors the next day and to other friends over the weekend, the number had grown to at least ten. Twenty years from now I’m sure we’ll all swear that there were at least 50 guys, with some rappelling off the roof, coming in through windows, knocking down walls, and so on, all responding to what turned out to be a fist-sized wicker basket used for storing ping pong balls that had momentarily caught fire after some idiot left it sitting on top of the hot water heater. The small fire obviously extinguished itself before causing any immediately noticeable damage even to the basket itself (which suffered only a few charred sticks) so it took the 8-person (or 10-person, or 50-person) crew at least an hour to find the thing and solve the mystery. Fortunately, Hannah, Lucy and Sophie slept through the entire ordeal. It would have traumatized them. Peter, on the other hand, had the time of his life. The rest of the weekend included a trip to a fun little park and zoo in Cape May for a stake picnic. We mostly enjoyed ourselves in spite of the oppressive heat. Grant—living the bachelor life with Jen and children visiting family in Utah—came up Sunday to join all of us for church and a pleasant Father’s Day dinner. Andrew was the only missing sibling.

Hannah, whose last day of school, June 20, coincided with the start of the Willis reunion in Park City (which we apologize for blowing off) already refers to herself as a second grader. She is enjoying the swim team and has earned B-meet ribbons in 25-meter backstroke and 25-meter freestyle (which, for her, strongly resembles 25-meter dog paddle). Lucy, as a result of intensive swimming lessons, is becoming more autonomous in the water (though not nearly as autonomous as she thinks she is). Sophie is just enjoying the daily trips to the pool with her sisters.

It’s been an interesting couple of weeks at work. Any sense of schadenfreude we might have felt in the wake of the accounting scandal that led to the ouster of our chief competitor’s CEO, CFO and COO quickly dissipated as the market proceeded to punish our company’s stock right along with theirs. It probably doesn’t help that our names are so similar. I thought about many of you this past Monday as I flew over the family reunion en route to Concord, CA (Bay Area) to visit a lender. The two five-hour flights combined with my inability to sleep much beyond four o’clock in the morning whenever I’m on the Left-wing Coast provided ample opportunity for me to polish off all 870 pages of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, in which many cool things (however fictional) are revealed.

It was also revealed during my time away that I have been appointed our ward’s seminary teacher. (And, if what Crystal is telling me is true, the kids from the Spanish ward will be attending my class as well. That should prove interesting.) For some reason I had recently let myself become convinced (by one of my idiotic friends) that seminary teachers were only drawn from a pool of volunteers. So much for that theory. I now join both Mom and Dad among the ranks of unpaid Church Education System staff. Are we on Old Testament this year? Maybe Mom’ll let me borrow her shofar.

Here’s to hoping your life is less complicated than mine suddenly seems right now.

Love,  
Tim