

Dear Family,

20 July 2003

I like swim team. I love to do freestyle and it is my best and my favorite stroke.

27 July 2003

Instituting a practice that may or may not stick, I asked Hannah last week to write an opening for this month's letter. I encouraged her to write more than the single sentence above, but it pretty much summed up everything that was on her mind at the time. So there you have it. More space for me, I guess.

I can testify to her fondness for swim team, which is now over (for her) for the summer. A 6-year-old forced to compete against mostly 7- and 8-year olds in the 8-and-under age division, Hannah was consigned mostly to 'B' meets, but did swim in the last 'A' meet of the season. As a rule, she got smoked by all the 8-year-olds, but held her own against some of the 7's and generally finished ahead of all the other 6-year-olds. I am obviously already in the early stages of annoying parent syndrome, meticulously analyzing the statistics of every race (backstroke and freestyle) involving my daughter. She may love to swim freestyle, but would probably do it faster if only she would turn her head to breathe instead of picking it up.

Notwithstanding all that, Hannah and Lucy had great fun showing off their mad pool skills to their paternal grandparents, cousins, and Aunt Coco during a very relaxing extended July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend in Moorestown. Amazingly, it took me almost 31½ years to figure out that weekends are far more enjoyable when I take the Monday off too. I've always been a little slow that way. The most embarrassing moment of the weekend for some came on Sunday during testimony meeting when Vai Sikahema went on for several minutes about the fabulous job Bert and Chris Willis had done raising their kids. Now, he obviously didn't know most of us as kids, and I could see lots of eyes rolling among those present who did. But, hey, when you're right, you're right. I mean, I may do a lot of stupid things, but I can't really blame any of it on my upbringing. And any good things I might do are generally the product of an attempt to emulate my father. So what can I tell you? Affirmation for Vai.

With second grade beckoning, Hannah's spelling is improving (as evidenced by the fact that her opening sentence is running unedited—were I editing, I'd have changed "stroke" to "event" since "freestyle" isn't a stroke, but that's neither here nor there). She is acutely cognizant of her spelling prowess and has now entered a sometimes annoying phase in which she spells out certain operative words in the course of everyday conversation, e.g., "I want some M-O-R-E ice cream" and "I do N-O-T want to go to bed." Lucy has picked up on this and attempts to mimic her sister through the use of random (random to me, perhaps patterned to her) letter strings: "I want some M-P-T-R-E...." Pre-school starts in a month. We're hoping that'll help sort some things out.

We hit a bump on the road to complete child indoctrination this month when Hannah expressed her doubts about the principle of universal resurrection. It would seem that she's been waiting several years now for GG<sup>1</sup> to be resurrected, and it just hasn't happened yet, so what if it's all just a crock? (I'm paraphrasing.) She continues to profess her belief in Jesus' resurrection ("because I've seen the movie") but doesn't believe it can happen for "regular people." We're now 16½ months away from what promises to be an interesting baptismal interview.

That interview will most likely be conducted by the new bishop our ward sustained last week: an African-American in the truest possible sense (he emigrated from Uganda at age 19) and a genuinely great and humble guy. I'm not usually one to get all giddy over a new bishopric installation, but I think this one's pretty cool. Now I just need to figure out whether seminary's on his radar screen, and make sure he knows that he needs to release me from all my other church responsibilities (since the outgoing bishopric, which was prematurely dissolved when our charmingly nerdish and universally beloved Army colonel/biochemist bishop was unexpectedly transferred to Texas, neglected to do so).

We join many other Washingtonians (okay fine, suburbanites, but we try to sound sophisticated) in being appalled at the fact that the capital of the free world hasn't been home to a major league baseball team in 30 years and, in protest, generally refuse to schlep the 30 miles up I-95 to associate with Balti-morons at Orioles games. Instead, a couple of weekends ago, we joined 3 other elders quorum families in a 17-mile journey around the beltway to Bowie (pronounced BOO-wee), Maryland to watch the Bowie Baysox (the Orioles' local Double-A minor league affiliate) take on the Trenton Thunder (affiliated with the hated Yankees). I don't know if I've ever had more fun at a baseball game. The small stadium provided a great wholesome family atmosphere. (Two beer limit. Foul language prohibited.) The seats are all good and close (and cheap). And the kids lasted all the way until the sixth inning, which, coincidentally, was when the downpour started. I might never go to another Orioles game. (Last Tuesday, my office had one of those always-popular corporate "team-building" activities, which included a trip to an O's day game at Camden Yards. That was admittedly fun, but doesn't count, as I did not have to pay.)

Hope you're well.

Love, Tim

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<sup>1</sup> Her great-grandmother Henrichsen; Hannah's deceased progenitor with whom she had the most regular and frequent interaction