

Dear Family,

28 September 2003

This month's big news is the inauspicious entry of General Wes "I've never run for anything before, why not this?" Clark into the presidential race. No, wait, that's not the big news. But it does intrigue me that at every political level, from the most inconsequential job—California governor—all the way up to the presidency, a complete lack of any governing experience whatsoever is for some reason viewed as an asset. I should try that at my next job interview:

Interviewer: So, what kind of experience you got?

Me: None. But I think this place is really going downhill. It's time for a change.

Interviewer: Okay, well, thanks for coming in. We'll be in touch.

Yeah, I can see myself getting that job. Actually, the real big news was the Congressional testimony given by the Chairman and CEO of the company I work for in support of proposed legislation that would move our financial regulator from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Department of Treasury. This is significant because I have two church buddies who work at Treasury and who for two months have scoffed at me whenever I've told them that we actually favor this particular measure. I now have sworn testimony to bolster my claim. It's significant for other reasons, too. But I won't get into these via e-mail.

Zzzzzzzzzzzz. Wake up! Okay, the month's most interesting news was the wrath and aftermath of Hurricane Isabel, which lashed our fair region on Thursday the 18th, resulting in a four-day weekend for me and a six-day weekend for Hannah. Everything shut down Thursday even though the brunt of the storm didn't blow through until the late night hours—long after we had lost power and turned in for the night. The premature office closures throughout the area gave Washingtonians ample time to do what Washingtonians do best: Panic. By early afternoon, there was not a drop of milk to be found at any Safeway (just a few lingering cartons of that soy crap) and the shelves bore an eerie resemblance to those of pre-Lech Walesa Poland. While watching her mother and me secure all the loose items in the backyard—we basically just threw everything in the shed, which miraculously still stands—Lucy, looking for excitement, asked if we were going to get to go "to the hurricane." I don't know if she was expecting a parade, or what. She certainly didn't get it that the much-talked-of impending hurricane was just a bit of weather. Having slept through it, she probably still doesn't.

The very lucky ones had their power back by Friday. Grant and Jen were among these lucky ones, and were kind enough to open their home to us that day. They graciously extended the invitation through the weekend. But we opted instead to flee the area altogether, seeking refuge in beautiful South Jersey, which the storm missed to the west. It was great being there. Sunday evening, after learning that schools were to be closed the next day, but that I would be expected to report to work, I alone made the drive through many still-non-functioning traffic lights to our dark house at the end of our dark street in the back of our dark neighborhood. Getting up in the dark the next morning when I only had to go to work wasn't too bad. Getting up in the dark Tuesday morning for seminary (where, appropriately, we had just finished discussing the life and times of the prophet Noah) was a bear. It would have been worse had I not been awakened by yet another violent storm that dropped an inch and a half of rain in an hour, flooding major commuter routes and knocking out power to 100,000 or so people that had just had theirs restored Sunday or Monday (and had subsequently re-stocked their refrigerators). As for us, we got it back sometime late Tuesday afternoon, our sixth day without electricity. I had made arrangements to spend the night at Grant and Jen's, but instead called Moorestown to give Crystal the all clear to come home. Instead of sleeping at Grant and Jen's, I just had dinner there, as I had the night before. I was still there when Crystal called me from the road and instructed me to pick up some milk. After visiting three grocery stores I finally found some. After throwing out a large freezer-full of meat, Crystal's become skittish about buying frozen goods and wildly enthusiastic about anything in a can.

The blackout was a long and aggravating ordeal (and local politicians are falling all over themselves to launch an investigation into Pepco—the Potomac Electric Power Company—our local utility monopoly) but the wait was actually not as long as I had anticipated. You'd have to see our neighborhood to understand why. Uprooted trees had taken down wires all over the place in our neighborhood alone. There must have been hundreds of neighborhoods that got it just as bad or worse. A surprising number of traffic lights were still out Wednesday, and some around here were in the dark until Friday. I understand they're telling some Southern Virginia residents not to expect anything until October—and they're not saying when in October. Our community likes its trees, and we have a lot of them. I guess this is the price we pay.

Well would you look at the time! Seminary's an adventure. I can't seem to string two good lessons together. I always seem to have one good one followed by a dud. Don't know what my problem is, but I'm still learning. Hannah still likes school and her new "man-teacher." I think we're going to enroll her in a Spanish class. Heaven knows one would help me in my seminary class. Lucy LOVES pre-school. Sophie loves clinging to her Mommy. And we all love you. Have a good month.

Love,
Tim