

Dear Family,

30 November 2003

For some time now, the girls have been voicing their preferences pertaining to future siblings. The long and short of it is that Hannah wants a brother and Lucy wants another sister. Lucy has proposed we resolve this impasse by simply having five of each. I am awed by her astounding sense of equity. And it is against this backdrop that we announce...

...that we enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving in Moorestown. Pete and I were the only second-generation siblings present as the three pretty-boy brothers apparently had better places to be. I look forward to letters from each of them detailing their families' holidays. Joining Pete and me at Mom and Dad's were Aunt Coco and the Fife family. (The Drum family couldn't make it, bada-bing!) It made for an intimate gathering (by Thanksgiving standards) with a kids' table consisting only of Hannah and Lucy (which drove Hannah absolutely nuts). They would have liked to have been with their cousins, but we understand. The food was good, the company was pleasant and Dallas got creamed. That's a good Thanksgiving.

We came home early enough on Saturday to start getting the house ready for Christmas. We violated two of my longest-standing decorating principles by 1) buying and erecting an artificial Christmas tree and 2) hanging tacky icicle lights from my house. I almost pulled a Clark W. Griswold off the roof on two separate occasions. But I survived.

We spent a good chunk of last Saturday with Coco hoofing around the National Mall and Tidal Basin as part of the annual Help the Homeless walkathon that my employer sponsors. Like last year, we capped off the walk by popping into the National Museum of Natural History. I mainly wanted to see the new Hall of Mammals and Hannah especially likes the dinosaur bones. Lucy screamed her way through the Hall of Mammals (she couldn't be convinced that the animals were dead), but could have spent all day in the gem exhibit. Her interest in the Hope Diamond might have attracted the attention of some security personnel.

After many attempts, we finally succeeded in getting together with Troy and Sonja Barsky for dinner this month. Sonja Barsky (née Larson or Larsen) is my second cousin and a member of our ward. She sometimes sits with us during sacrament meeting and helps us keep our kids under control (to the extent that's possible, which it often isn't). We really enjoy her and her husband. Troy, who takes his faith seriously enough to keep kosher, was admirably tolerant of our heathen kitchen. (Crystal prepared as close to a kosher meal as is possible without rabbinical supervision or kosher plates and cutlery.) Mom happened to be visiting us that night, which made for an even more satisfying evening.

You'll be excited to learn that we finally got around to having a new furnace installed this month. I was loath to relinquish our old "miracle" furnace, which was still producing heat (to the complete disbelief of every furnace purveyor we paraded in) despite being older than me. But I wasn't willing to risk having it fail during what's forecasted to be another brutal winter. That, and, based on all the sales pitches I've heard about the energy-efficiency of this baby, I fully expect Washington Gas to start sending *me* money each month.

Seminary is rolling along. Today one of my students gave a sacrament meeting talk in which he had nice things to say about seminary and about me. (What else is he going to say at church? It was still encouraging to hear.) It amazes me that I have been able to avoid business travel almost completely since Seminary began. (The only exception was a day-trip to Dallas earlier this month. The Dulles-to-Dallas-to-Dulles—try saying that five times fast—roundtrip made for an excruciatingly long day, but at least I didn't have to sleep there.) Less time away from my young charges: one more thing to be thankful for. I'm thankful for you, too.

Love,
Tim