



Dear Family:

*"I think I am finally beginning to understand [the temple ordinances]."*

DAVID O. MCKAY

More than a half-century after becoming an apostle

*"I think I am finally beginning to understand the appeal of Disney theme parks."*

TIMOTHY B. WILLIS

Nine years after becoming a father

For Christmas dinner we had baked ziti. No salad. No vegetables or side dishes of any kind. Just baked ziti. Also, in contrast to the previous month's blockbuster 30-person Thanksgiving feast, this meal was just us and Aunt Coco. But no one seemed to mind.

We spent Christmas in Kissimmee, Fla., 875 miles from home, and 6 miles from Walt Disney World. We left home at 2:30 A.M. on Christmas Eve and drove all day. We had breakfast in South Carolina (I think it was a Burger King), lunch in Georgia (at Wendy's), and rolled into Kissimmee around 5:30 P.M., half an hour before the local Wal-Mart shut down for the holiday. It was just enough time for Crystal to buy the necessary ingredients for our Christmas feast.

Christmas was quiet and relaxing. We picked up Coco at the airport and spent the day spreading out across the big house—the last of the now-defunct Choice Escapes properties. The local ward altered its meeting schedule for Christmas without telling us, so we missed church. But the girls had fun doing Christmas crafts and playing with the few Christmas toys we'd brought down. Lucy was especially happy. Baked ziti is her favorite dish.

We spent Monday at the Magic Kingdom (like Disneyland, but bigger) with Coco. Coco makes her living heading up a communications group at the National Institutes of Health. If she ever tires of this she could do very well in child advocacy. She was unwavering in her support of whatever Lucy and Sophie wanted to do, up to and including standing in line for two hours to ride Dumbo. (She also successfully campaigned against my strangling the two middle children on more than one occasion.) Hannah's more of a coaster girl and, given the opportunity, would have ridden Space Mountain all day. Unfortunately, the mere mention of the ride sent Lucy into convulsions. (She rode it once; may never again.)

Mom, Dad and Peter arrived on Tuesday and spent Wednesday and Friday with us at the Magic Kingdom and Epcot. While all three were very helpful in different ways, we were especially grateful to have Pete along, whose "special" condition enabled our group to obtain a pass permitting us to jump just about any line. (For the Disney-initiated: it was like having a FastPass to any ride at any time.)

It was a fun week that we were all sad to see end. For years I've mocked my father-in-law's passion for all things Disney. But now that I have children old enough to enjoy it, as President McKay once

remarked, "I think I am finally beginning to understand." I loved seeing the magic in the girls' eyes as the girl in the Snow White costume somehow made them feel like the only people in the world for 30 seconds. I marvel at Disney's ability to make it seem like there's something special about the day you choose to go (even as they do essentially the same thing every day). The crowds were terrible. But seeing the looks on the girls' faces somehow made it all worthwhile.

We enjoyed a visit from the aforementioned father-in-law earlier this month. He has begun a tradition of coming each December in celebration of his birthday, which he shares with Hannah. We're still digging out from under all the baked goods that invariably accompany these visits. It's a nice problem to have. On the day before her ninth birthday Hannah competed in her final swim meet as an 8-and-under. She did well.

December also saw 2005's only visit to New Jersey for us. We attended Moorestown's annual Christmas—er, I mean, Holiday—parade with Grandma and Peter and then left them with the kids to attend a Richard Bushman fireside with Grandpa. Richard Bushman is the distinguished Columbia (and erstwhile BYU) professor whose sympathetic biography, *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, was recently published by Knopf. The imprimatur endows the work with a scholarly credibility that tends to be lacking in anything published by Mormon/Utah presses. The fireside moved the book to the top of my reading list. It's a fabulous read.

Work-wise, I've become entangled in an engagement involving a large Puerto Rican lender that has already necessitated one trip to the island and is likely to result in more. While there are worse places to be in January, it makes seminary a little more complicated.

Best wishes for the new year.



Sophie never could take her eyes off the castle

Love,  
T, C, H, L, S & G

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