

Dear Family:

I got a notice in the mail this week from the Montgomery County Police Department containing alleged photographic evidence of my failure to comply with some obscure Maryland statute requiring drivers to stop at red lights. At first glance the photos—which I've attached to page 2 of this document for anyone who cares to scroll down that far—are pretty damning. Nevertheless, for reasons I get into at the bottom of page 2, I still think I'm getting railroaded.

The police photos were taken in downtown Silver Spring, which I was cutting through on my somewhat unconventional route to downtown Bethesda, where I'm now spending an average of 13 hours per day working on Fannie Mae's mammoth "Regulatory Agreements and Restatement" team. I'm one of more than 2,000 contractors employed on this never-ending project that has transformed just about every conference room and cafeteria of this once-proud place into a seemingly endless expanse of long tables, laptops and auditors. Even so, through a stroke of dumb luck I find myself assigned to a 10th-floor corner office (which I share with two other people) offering a spectacular view of the Washington Temple bursting through an otherwise unbroken sea of treetops. The view preserves my sanity. I don't know how long I'll be doing this. But it's funny to think that at this time last month the specter of multiple trips to San Juan had me concerned about missing too much seminary. Turns out I haven't had to miss any seminary; I just don't have any time to prepare lessons. (Yet here I am typing this. Go figure.)

I was able to show off my seminary room—It's got chairs, a chalkboard, and everything!—to a number of the out-of-town relatives when they all descended on our chapel for Anika's baptism two weeks ago. Matt and Andra decided it would be easier to hold the service in Maryland—home to 64 percent of the family—than to have everyone trek down to North Carolina. (Personally, I'd have said, "The hell with everybody," and made them all come down to my place anyway. But that's just me.) The baptismal service was followed by dinner in the nursery for Anika and her 37 attending relatives. We wheeled in a TV from the library and connected a makeshift antenna so we could keep tabs on the Redskins-Seahawks playoff game. The wrong team won, but having the game on enabled us to channel the spirit of Anika's great-grandma Henrichsen who, were she still with

us, might have felt genuinely conflicted between attending the baptism and watching the game.¹

Grandma also would have wanted to attend both of the girls' swim meets this month, even though winter swim meets are brutally far away and about as much fun to watch as the 102-year-old lady in front of me at Safeway who insists on moving all 65 cans of cat food from her cart to the belt one by one.² Both girls are showing very good progress, though Lucy's interest wanes at times. And while I don't see Olympic glory in either of their futures, I'm contented in the knowledge that that's probably a good thing—because those are some *really* long meets.

On the subject of swimming, we got back to the National Aquarium in Baltimore for the first time in a while this month. This time we took Joe Windley, one of my favorite seminary students. (I have six favorite seminary students. Then there's about a five-way tie for seventh.) Joe's an aquaculture buff and Hannah and Lucy hung on his every word. I remember when Lucy used to scream and run away from the shark exhibit. This time she clung to Joe and only the prospect of lunch could get her to leave.

I'm not sure how many countries there are in the world these days. But I'm pretty sure that most of them are represented in one way or another at Hannah and Lucy's school. And last night was the school's annual "International Night," which features, among other things, an enormous international potluck dinner. Now, most people who know me know my potluck policy, which is basically: "If it looks homemade I'm not touching it." This holds doubly true at an event like this—where I don't know *anyone*. So I made a beeline for the "Mexico" table, which was serving an assortment of Baja Fresh burritos (still in their wrappers). Unfortunately, the "America" table, which had featured buckets of KFC and boxes of Papa Johns pizza, was picked clean prior to my arrival. Hannah and her mother were both more adventurous than I. Both have also thrown up in the past 24 hours. I may have made a couple of converts to my policy. (But probably not.)

For the record, Sophie, who turns 4 in 10 weeks, is still not completely potty-trained. She doesn't seem to care.

We hope this finds you well.

¹ This is an exaggeration. But anyone who knew her knows what I mean.

² Note the beautiful parallelism in this sentence, which begins by longing for my own grandmother and ends by busting on somebody else's.

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

100 HANNES STREET
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND 20901



CITATION
TRAFFIC SIGNAL VIOLATION

To: TIMOTHY BERTRAM WILLIS

Please take notice that the vehicle described and pictured herein did not stop for the red traffic signal at the place, date, and time specified. Therefore, under Maryland State Law TA 21-202.1, as the registered owner(s) or lessee (six months or more) you are liable for the violation. Unless you elect to go to court, a civil penalty in the amount of \$75.00 must be paid by the due date shown on this notice.

PAYMENT OF THE PENALTY AMOUNT FOR THE VIOLATION WILL NOT RESULT IN POINTS AND CANNOT BE USED TO INCREASE YOUR INSURANCE RATES.

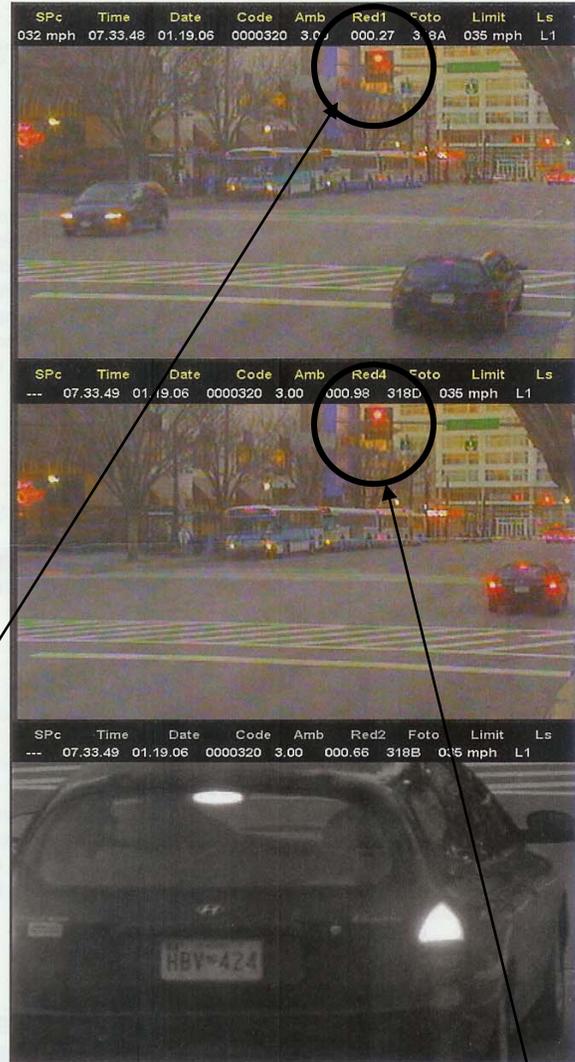
WARNING: FAILURE TO PAY THE PENALTY SHOWN, OR TO CONTEST LIABILITY DESCRIBED IN THE NEXT PARAGRAPH IS AN ADMISSION OF LIABILITY AND MAY RESULT IN THE REFUSAL OR SUSPENSION OF THE MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION.

If you wish to contest this citation, your request for a court date must be received at least five days prior to the payment due date shown below. If you appear in court, the maximum amount you can be charged is \$100 fine and court costs. Recorded images are evidence of a violation of the Maryland Law requiring that when a traffic light has turned red, a vehicle stop at the near side of an intersection at a clearly marked stop line, or if there is no clearly marked stop line, before entering any crosswalk, or if there is no crosswalk, before entering the intersection.

DATE AND TIME OF VIOLATION 1/19/06 7:33 am	LOCATION OF VIOLATION Colesville Rd & Fenton St	VEHICLE TAG MD HBV424
VIOLATION NUMBER 15-000442083	AMOUNT DUE \$75.00	DATE DUE 03/05/2006



A Public Safety Program of the
Montgomery County Department of Police
Special Operations Division
(301) 621-4371



CERTIFICATE

I am a duly authorized technician employed by the Montgomery County Department of Police. Based on inspection of the recorded images shown above, the motor vehicle was operated in violation of TA 21-202(h), as evidenced by the above images. Sworn to or Affirmed By:

Chad Byrnie ID# 15396

A Few Observations:

1. Look at what a piece of garbage I drive!
2. Notice in the first photo how there is still a hint of amber light remaining. (This is completely absent from the second photo.) The first light is the very definition of "pink."
3. I have no idea why my brake lights are on in the second photo. I'm not one of those losers who runs red lights inadvertently, then hits the brakes in the middle of the intersection and sheepishly back up behind the stop line. When I run a red light, I run it, baby! I can only conclude that I was slowing for the red at the *next* intersection.
4. Shouldn't this read: "A revenue-generating scam..." instead of "A Public Safety Program..."?

If I were a new recruit told I was headed for "Special Ops" and wound up with this assignment, I'd be mighty disappointed.