

Dear Family:

APRIL 30—This month's letter begins aboard Delta flight 570 with non-stop service from Salt Lake City to Washington-Dulles. Crystal, for reasons known only to her, has elected to watch "Cheaper By the Dozen 2" and I've more or less completed my seminary preparation for the week, so now I have a couple of hours to kill. The plan is to write until my battery dies (unfortunately, I wasted most of it writing my seminary lessons), the plane crashes, or I fall asleep.

The trip was occasioned by yesterday's wedding of Crystal's step-sister, Brenna Dunn, to Brent Fowler in the Salt Lake Temple. It was a perfect day that began (for us) with a long early-morning walk and culminated in the 3:00 sealing followed by pictures and dinner at the Lion House. I don't think anybody noticed (or would have cared) that I slipped a short air on "Though Deepening Trials" into the pre-dinner piano music—a subtle tribute to my paternal grandparents' wedding breakfast in the same building 65 years ago. It was, for me, a small pleasure in a day that was filled with much more significant ones.

So now we're heading home to relieve my mother, who graciously agreed to watch the girls this weekend. We hope she survived.

The events of this weekend capped a series of milestone-event weekends this month.

We spent last weekend at Roland and Marci's riverfront estate, where we celebrated Noah's 9th birthday and the blessing of Noah's new baby sister, Kaisa. Roland and Marci live in suburban Norfolk, Va, but we spent most of Saturday driving to and from Manteo, N.C. where Roland and his team of like-minded orthopedic surgeons (and surgeons-in-training) finished a 100-mile bike race though Southern Virginia and the North Carolina Outer Banks.

Two weekends earlier, we were in nearby Olney, Md., attending the blessing of Andrew and Jessica's newest addition, Luke. In two more weeks, or shortly thereafter, I expect we'll be in the same building to bless Grant and Jen's new son, Benjamin.

Easter Sunday was our only opportunity to attend our own ward this month. We didn't have a lot of choice since we were singing in the choir. But Crystal and I weren't in as good voice as we might have been had we not spent the previous Friday night screaming at a Billy Joel concert with our friends, the Kempers. We had terrible seats, but it was still an awesome concert. When he sang "Only the Good Die Young" (a catchy tune that encourages sexual promiscuity and features the memorable line "I'd rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints") I was mentally transported back 16 years to my senior year in high school when Bishop Glenn L. Pace (now Elder Pace), who was our visiting authority at stake conference, was staying at our house. He walked into the living room and noticed my Billy Joel anthology sitting on the piano. He asked me if it was mine. I told him it was. He looked at me disapprovingly and said, "I'd rather cry with the saints." There was doubtless more to the exchange, but the rest is lost to history. I'm embarrassed to admit that I still like the song (and you should have heard Crystal screaming when Billy started playing it for his first encore), but I still can't listen to it without being reminded of the only time I was ever told off by a general authority.

Sophie turned 4 a week earlier; a milestone we celebrated jointly with her cousin Alex's 4th birthday at a gymnastics facility in Laurel, where Alex, Sophie, their siblings, and a few friends took turns tumbling, jumping on trampolines, walking on balance beams and I forget what else. Grandma, Grandpa, Uncle Pete came down for the occasion, which made it that much nicer.



MAY 7—Well, my battery died. And it's been a very busy week, so I'm just now getting back to finishing this. Work has turned insanely busy again. I thought we'd finished reconstructing Fannie Mae's bond credit enhancement portfolio, which would have enabled me to get on with my life. But Deloitte (the auditor) last week basically told us to try again. So we're back to 60+-hour weeks. Yesterday (Saturday), it was just me and the Fannie VP in charge of the mess (me in my flip-flops, her in her sweat pants) poring through binders and boxes of bond documents trying to solve a truly ugly puzzle. I've decided that while it's kind of fun wearing flip-flops and shorts to the office, all things being equal, I'd just as soon spend my Saturdays at home.

Today was our first stake conference via satellite. We joined 40 other "East Coast stakes" (none of the speakers identified the participating stakes with more precision than this; I suspect it was principally Mid-Atlantic stakes, but I guess I can understand the Western temptation to mentally lump the entire "East Coast" into one big meaningless category) in watching President Monson and others on the big screen. In addition, we were visited in person by Elder Tingey of the Presidency of the Seventy, who came all the way from Salt Lake, and Elder Marriott, an Area Seventy, who made the 10-mile trek all the way from his home in Potomac, Md. Elder Marriott noted how much nicer it is being able to sleep in his own bed the night before visiting a stake conference than having to stay in "one of those hotels." Elders Tingey and Marriott were visiting to reorganize our stake presidency, which became necessary when our stake president accepted a call to serve as president of the Utah, Ogden Mission. (When he returns in three years, our ward will be home to three former mission presidents. I have to think that this puts our ward somewhere north of the average—even in Utah.) We lost our bishop (an exceptionally good man who is several months younger than me) to the new stake presidency; a presidency comprised entirely of men who served Spanish-speaking missions. This strikes me as an important credential for leading a stake like ours that is home to so many illegal...er, I mean, Spanish-speaking...members. I am selfishly concerned that the loss of our bishop could mean an extension to my seminary teaching career. I had been made to understand that he was inclined to find somebody to replace me after this year. But now I'm afraid his successor, whoever he may be, might have a different set of priorities, and I honestly don't know if I have a fourth year in me. I guess we'll see.

Oh, I'm also supposed to tell you that Grace is eating a lot of non-food items. She's especially fond of dirt and rocks. Hopefully you're eating better, and doing well.

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

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