

Dear Family:

It's October! Most wonderful of months for so many reasons, not the least of which is the large number of wonderful people who were born in it. (If you haven't guessed already, this letter is not being written by Tim. Note the lack of biting sarcasms in the opening sentence. Note the innocent, almost joyful tone. Note the immodest reference to my upcoming October birthday and myself as a wonderful person.) So, did anyone notice you didn't get a letter from us last month? Tim was too busy even to delegate the letter-writing to me. Even now, I'm not sure whether he's simply promoted himself to editor and I've been assigned to do it permanently or if I'll be up for renewal on a month-by-month basis. (*Editor's note: It depends on how this one turns out.*)

The month of September has been amazingly busy. Despite having children in only two schools (including preschool), I had three Back-to-School nights to attend. Making it to these events is made difficult by the fact that the bishop has been needed every night of the week for at least the last two weeks (bishopric meeting, youth interviews, PPI with stake president, bishopric training of some kind, ward temple night, youth temple baptisms, baptism of an eight-year-old in the ward). With all the goings-on this month, our next-door neighbor babysitter has gotten a real workout (*Editor: and a lot of cash*). Thank heaven for Letitia (affectionately referred to as "Ma-titia" by Sophie, who mostly has English mastered, but you know). I figure October will almost inevitably be a more laid-back month just because I won't have Back-to-School nights. Anytime I leave the kids with a sitter to go somewhere at night it will be because I want to.

In spite of his busy schedule, somehow Tim still finds time for golf. (He has a remarkably indulgent wife.) The highlight of his month came after Bob Windley (a long-time member of our ward who performed Matt and Andra's sealing, and is the father of our stake president) approached Tim and uttered the words Tim says every bishop longs to hear: "Bishop, I'd like to invite you to play as my guest at a charity golf tournament." He didn't seem to have any trouble ducking out of work for the day to go.

Everyone is settling into the new school year nicely. We had an enjoyable, low-key month in August—no more Seussical rehearsals and swim team over for the season. I enjoyed it so much that I decided not to start my kids up again at the YMCA for swimming as soon as school started. I'm really glad I didn't. Last year we felt over-scheduled at times. Lucy in particular seemed to never have time to get her homework done before it was time to run off to swim team practice. This year we're just doing piano lessons and school for now. The kids actually have time to do their homework, practice the piano, clean their rooms *and play* almost every day. It's much less stressful for me, as anyone who's ever tried to make Lucy do something (particularly quickly) can probably imagine.

Sophie is in her last year of preschool before kindergarten. She goes Tuesday through Friday and has a great teacher with many years of experience. She's loving it. Lucy is in second grade with Mrs. Greenman,

a young newlywed. I'm impressed with her so far. She's been very complimentary toward Lucy. Hannah has two teachers: her morning teacher is in charge of reading, writing, social studies, etc., and her afternoon teacher handles science and math. They say that the point of this new approach with fifth-graders is to prepare them for middle school next year (yikes!) where they'll have to change classes. Interestingly, it also coincides with a big push within the county to have every student learn math at as accelerated a pace as possible. Hannah has been working one grade-level ahead in math for a few years. Now she's part of the first class of fifth-graders to do seventh grade math at our school. I think it's going well, but she says her math teacher "doesn't believe in homework" so it's hard to say for sure.

Grace is finally walking pretty much all of the time. She decided sometime during August that walking is an activity that has some merit (it frees up the hands for other things—mostly destructive). She's also experimenting with talking. She likes to cheer me on as we walk up and down the aisles at the grocery store by raising her fists and shouting, "All right! All right!" I think she got this idea from our summer shopping trips, during which I would keep her sisters in line by giving them jobs to do for me. I must have cheered them on with an "All right!" every time they successfully put their assigned item in the cart. Whatever the origin, it's pretty cute when Grace does it. She's also learned to kiss with her lips instead of her tongue and always makes a loud "muh" sound when she does it.



The picture Tim has chosen for this edition takes us back to the month of August when Hannah took a trip to Palmyra, N.Y. with Tim's parents. This picture of Hannah with her Uncle Pete was taken at the Grandin printing press where the first edition of The Book of Mormon was printed. They also visited the sacred grove and one of Joseph Smith's homes. Hannah had a great time and has announced that now she knows how to entertain herself by looking out the window (which came in handy when her sisters were fighting over which DVD to watch in the van). Thanks Grandpa and Grandma.

Hannah's other favorite August trip was with the extended Willis family to Hershey, Pa. for two days at HersheyPark. She has become quite a roller-coaster junkie, and her father has now officially decided he's too old and curmudgeonly for amusement parks (*Editor: with their attendant lines and hordes of smelly, ill-clad patrons*).

I've now taken up jogging after discovering (by means of the ward 5K race) that working out on the elliptical just isn't the same. I've been slowed some by a recently injured toe, but I'm really enjoying my current workout schedule.

We had a nice influx of people move into the ward at the end of the summer. Most of them already have callings and the ward (and its bishop) find this rejuvenating. The latest crop has yielded a new executive secretary, a new ward clerk, and a new enrichment leader. Unfortunately, people move out, too, and before long we'll need a new primary president and counselor in the R.S. presidency. We're generally enjoying life and the changes this season brings.

We love you all!

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

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