

Dear Family:

Tim is out taking the girls for a walk in the woods so that I can write the Famlet. He has stated that, in view of this selfless service, he expects to find "one rippin' good letter" waiting when he gets back. I didn't bother to point out to him that, during the entire existence of the family letter he has always had relative peace and quiet in which to write. He has never been expected to write and care for children at the same time, and seems unaware that I made this possible. Rather, he believes it to be the natural order of things.

To be fair, the only reason he has the time to take the girls for a walk today is that today was stake conference. As a result, after a very busy Friday and Saturday, Tim's Sunday duties have been much lighter than usual. Also, to be fair, he really likes being with the girls and would probably be doing something with them letter or no letter. He might not, however, have opted to go out wandering around in the woods behind our house alone with all four of them (Grace in a backpack).

We've just come through an amazingly busy week. Sadly, October has been the month of the dead and the dying in the White Oak Ward. Tim conducted and spoke at one funeral on Friday and conducted a second one yesterday. Neither of the deceased was known well to our family. One was an elderly long-time member of the ward whom many remember fondly, but who has been so infirm in recent years, that we just never got the chance to know her. Her name was Audrey Shipp, and having now learned a little about her life, I'm sad to have missed her. She was the director of The Washington Savoyards, our area's premier Gilbert and Sullivan light opera company. And I'm told there was some great singing at that funeral. (*Editor: The presiding authority approved all the music, including the closing hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers"—chosen by the family because Sullivan wrote the music. Who knew?*) Sister Shipp and her husband joined the Church as a result of their involvement with Nancy Marriott in the Savoyards. (Yes, Nancy is one of the Marriotts.) (*Ed.: Or at least she's married to one. Her husband, Richard Marriott, in addition to being bishop of the Potomac Ward, is chairman of Host Marriott Corp. He is probably the only billionaire whose home phone number I have. Maybe I'll actually call him some day.*) Tim reportedly warmed the crowd by referencing his teenage involvement in cut-down road show versions of *The Mikado* and *H.M.S. Pinafore*. It's not entirely clear to me how this fit in to his talk on the plan of salvation, but who am I to question? (*Ed.: I'm a master of segue. And besides, all things pertain to the Plan of Salvation.*)

The other funeral was for the non-member daughter of Sister Nelson, an elderly member of our ward. Sister Nelson became a member of our ward when she moved into an assisted living facility within our boundaries and has never actually made it to church. She's had good home and visiting teachers, however, and seems to feel close to the Church in her heart.

I'm surprised to find myself writing so much about these funerals, but they really have taken up a huge portion of our family's energy this week. I didn't even attend either of them, and I'm not entirely sure whether all of our children knew that that's where Daddy was on Friday and Saturday. But for the last week and a half Tim's been constantly conferring with family members, squeezing in time to go to the funeral home, scheduling speakers, trying to determine how many people the Relief Society is going

to have to feed at the family meal afterward. (*Ed.: Actually the R.S. handled most of the meal consulting. But both families felt that it was the ward's responsibility to put on a full repast for all attendees—as opposed to the standard ham-and-funeral-potatoes-based "simple meal" for family members—fortunately, the bishop's getting better and better at saying no to people.*) Let's not even talk about how many people (myself included) were cooking this week for those meals, coordinating who's bringing what, and then showing up to help serve (all I did was dessert for 20). As bishop's wife, I must say that when I first realized that our ward would be putting on funerals for two people I didn't even know on two consecutive days, the first thing I thought was, "Oh great." (*Ed.: Me too.*) But in the end, despite the inconvenience, I really feel like it's an honor to have been involved. I lost so many hours of my husband's time, but I feel like I somehow get so much more of him back when he's here. I guess we're finding ourselves reminded of how much we have to be grateful for and how wonderful it is to be sealed as a family.

While all of this has been going on, Tim's current employer and a would-be future employer have been playing tug-of-war with him. Tune in next month for the exciting conclusion.

I had a birthday this week, which I celebrated by going out to dinner with my husband (after accompanying him to visit Sister Nelson and another member of our ward who's in the hospital dying of cancer). I also sewed a Halloween costume in time for the ward Halloween party on Friday (Hannah wanted to be Flora, one of Sleeping Beauty's three good fairies; she's the red one—not a commercially available costume as far as I could determine), sorted out my responsibilities with regard to all of the upcoming children's Halloween parties, and waited at the doctor's office for an hour and a half with all four children on Saturday after having been up three hours with a screaming, ear-infected Grace the night before. Thanks to my sisters-in-law I had a really nice lunch on my birthday. I feel like I've been running ever since.

Grace has started talking and she likes to do it all the time. It's fun to hear her playing with language and trying out different sounds for their effect and to see what response she gets. She can get pretty loud in sacrament meeting or just about any public place. Her sister's favorite new game with her is to ask, "Gracie?" to which Grace always responds, "What?" The sisters then ask (in a Lucille Ball-like whine), "Do you love me?" The answer is always a vehement "No!" It gets a big laugh and no one ever gets tired of it. Grace hasn't really figured out the word yes yet, but sometimes we get a "ya-o" that we think may be her attempt at it. She does say "I love you", but only in times of stress, while trying to avoid a diaper changing or nose-blowing, that kind of thing.

Earlier this month Lucy received a complete set of *I Love Lucy* on DVD for her birthday. This was something of a gamble since she'd never seen a single episode, but it paid off. Hannah and Lucy are now absolutely enthralled by the shenanigans of Lucy Ricardo. Even Sophie has learned to like it in the way that little sisters who don't really understand what's going on like their big sisters' favorite things. In celebration of Lucy's birthday, we also went to "Medieval Times" (www.medievaltimes.com) as a family. Hannah and Lucy loved the jousting and fighting knights, while Sophie whined about the fact that we were passing up so many medieval marketing opportunities. Grace was not loud enough to be heard over the ruckus, but she found other ways of causing mayhem. (*Ed.: Dad was a grouch.*) It was one of many good times this month.

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

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