

I haven't read the Harry Potter book yet.

Hannah and Crystal have both finished it, and, following careful negotiation, I'm next in line. I've gotten started, but I've a lot to get done (including this letter) and I'm not sure when I'll get to it.

In a lot of ways this has been Harry Potter's month. Besides the breathless anticipation of the final literary installment (Lucy's repeated pronouncement, "I just need to touch it" perhaps best encapsulated the girls' sentiments) there was also, of course, the release of the film version of the fifth installment of the Potter epic.

The film release was not nearly as exciting to me, because, let's face it, I already knew how *that* ends. But it was a big enough deal to Hannah that she felt she needed to go to New York with her friend Bianca to see an advance screening of it. Hannah's mom was away, so that's how Hannah got to see *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* in Brooklyn on Monday, July 9; two days before any of the rest of you muggles. (I should probably clarify that Bianca's dad went along, too, and thus I didn't send my 10-year-old daughter with her friend on an unchaperoned excursion to New York City.)

I should probably also clarify that Hannah's mom approved the trip, but was off with a bunch of teenage Mormon girls at [Elk Neck State Park](#) all that week. She was pressed into service as a Young Women camp leader at the last minute when a couple of sisters from our ward suddenly found themselves unable to go. Crystal was responsible for the fourth-year campers and reportedly had a very good time. I believe her body has now recovered from the week of not being able to eat or exercise in the way to which she's become accustomed.

The food was interesting. In keeping with the camp's international theme, which was fitting given the diversity of [our stake](#), they prepared Ethiopian food on bishops' night, which I enjoyed. I understand they did a different country's cuisine every day, which, given the inherent limitations of Dutch oven/campfire cooking, struck me as particularly impressive.

Surprisingly, with help from my mother and some kind ward members, I was successful in holding down the fort for the week. I attended two swim meets and somehow kept up with the laundry and dishes (more or less—I imposed a two-day clothes-wearing minimum, underwear exempt, and we ate out a lot). The three "big girls" and I joined their local grandpar-

ents and some local aunts, uncles and cousins at [Strathmore](#) to see and hear a most entertaining presentation of [Cirque de la Symphonie](#), featuring the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra playing pops behind jaw-dropping, Cirque-like juggling, aerialist and contortionist acts. (Go to the [link](#) and click on the image to watch the video. Amazing.)

There was some regression in Grace's potty-training in her mother's absence. For some reason, Crystal got annoyed with me for loosening the criteria for Grace receiving a lollipop from "whenever she uses the toilet" to "whenever she asks for one." She now asks about once every eight minutes. But other than that, everything worked out okay.

#### Golf-related news. Skip if desired.

Despite widespread (and not entirely unfounded) allegations of [cheating](#), the White Oak Ward won the (first) annual Silver Spring Maryland Stake golf tournament last Saturday. Our championship foursome consisted of a tax attorney, a green beret, a nice guy I home teach who wishes he didn't still work at Fannie Mae, and me. Each of us received a small trophy. Mine has been on proud display in the bishop's office, but I'm contemplating moving it to somewhere more prominent — like the pulpit (okay, maybe the clerk's office).

Hannah and I had a great time at Tiger Woods's AT&T National golf tournament. We went to the Wednesday Pro-Am (where Hannah got several Tour pros to autograph her visor) and to the second tournament round on Friday. We followed Tiger for a couple of holes, but mostly stayed away from the masses that thronged him all week, preferring to follow some lesser-known, but still top-notch, pros around the legendary course in Bethesda without getting trampled to death.

Hannah also played her first round of golf with me this month. We only got through six holes before it got dark, but she claims to have had a good time.

Earlier this month, we spent the weekend at [Deep Creek Lake](#) with some White Oak alums who have left the ward, but still live close enough for us to get together every few months or so. I'm probably counting wrong, but if I've got it right, 9 adults (would've been 10 if Derek Hable weren't on a State Department assignment in Afghanistan) and our 16 children crammed into a very nice lakefront house owned by some relatives of our friend [Kathy Gustafson](#). The weekend was long enough for the boys to get in a round of golf at [Wisps](#), and for everyone to hike around [Swallow Falls](#) and do a lot of hanging out. It was good, clean, wholesome fun.

We hope you're having some of that, too.





**Left:** Hannah & her dad at Tiger Woods's tournament at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland. (Tiger missed a lot of putts and finished tied for sixth in the 120-man field.)

**Inset:** K.J. Choi (tournament champion) autographing Hannah's visor



**Quote of the Month**

“No offense, Dad, but most life-guards look athletic and fit...you know, so people will have confidence if they ever need to be saved.”

—HANNAH explaining her surprise at learning that her father worked three teenage summers as a lifeguard

**At the Ward Pioneer Day Picnic (clockwise from above)**

**Lucy** pulling a wagon full of stuff;  
**Grace** with her ubiquitous lollipop;  
**Sophie** fishing.





**Two Big Group Shots (Sorry about that.)**

Above: Crystal and her YW Camp “4th Years”  
Below: Willis, Eskelsen, Gustafson, Hable & Barkdull kids at Swallow Falls

