

Pointless introductory drivel. Skip if desired.

Maybe I'm a true Willis after all.

I was on my standard dinner/movie date with Sophie last Saturday night, and we had a few extra minutes before the show started (*Underdog* — a lousy movie that had me checking my watch every five minutes, but Sophie liked it so much she didn't even finish all her Skittles). So we stopped in at the Borders next to the multiplex so I could buy John Feinstein's latest book, *Tales From Q School: Inside Golf's Fifth Major*. (John Feinstein is easily one of my five favorite authors, and don't ask me to name the other four.)

The line at Borders was longer than usual, which gave me a chance to reflect and ask myself: Why am I queuing up to pay \$26.99 plus tax for a 333-page hardcover book that I'll read once and never pick up again? So I put it down on top of those big gimmicky impulse-buy books they always have near the register and we walked out.

A few days later while at the library with Lucy, I had very little trouble finding a copy of *Tales From Q School*. (Apparently there aren't as many John Feinstein fans around as I thought—surprising, since he resides here in Montgomery County.) And I'm now easing through the familiar dulcet prose of one of my favorite authors...for free (assuming I return the book on time, which, if history holds, I won't).

I think my grandparents would be proud of me.

And there go 45 seconds of your life that you'll never get back.

Several library books were on regular display at this month's triennial "reunion" of descendants of Bertram Cannon and Christine Henrichsen Willis. Grant was tackling a thick Lincoln biography; Dad was working through something of similar heft on Hamilton; and Coco was reading about the hunt for John Wilkes Booth. (For my part, I came prepared with a stack of golf magazines.)

I put "reunion" in quotes because, by my count, 77 percent of the attendees live within 10 miles of one another in the Washington, DC area. The 20 of us who live here drove some 300 miles to [Oglebay](#), in Wheeling, West Virginia, where we were joined by Matt and Andra's family, who traveled some 500 miles from Raleigh, North Carolina.

Twenty-six of us crammed into a six-bedroom, three-bathroom [cottage](#) (the big kids, uh, "slept" in a downstairs common area—conveniently located just outside Matt and Andra's bedroom). The cottage served as a base of operations for group outings to the small lake,

three pools, horseback riding, the zoo (we fed [lorikeets](#)—that was cool), nature center, glass museum, hiking, and some golf. Fourteen grandchildren, ages 10 and down, in a confined space was contrapuntal to the serene, wooded, hilltop setting, but the net effect was a fun and relaxing week. Each day concluded with dinner together, followed by family-home-evening-style activities, spearheaded by Aunt Andra, who did a better job organizing things than I would have thought possible.

I had pretty much no responsibility for anything during the week other than ensuring that the boys got in enough golf. (We did.) So I doff my cap to everyone (virtually everyone except me) who made everything work as well as it did. See you all in three years (except for the 77 percent of you who I'll see in a couple of weeks for dinner at Mom and Dad's place when the kitchen's done).

Church got along fine in my absence. My diligent first counselor sent me e-mail updates throughout the week informing me that everything was okay and that no one had called him for anything. (I don't think I ever told him about the 13 messages that had accumulated on my voicemail.) It's been a better-than-average month, though; one in which I had the privilege of ordaining (or helping to ordain) four relatively new converts in the ward to the Melchizedek Priesthood. One of these brethren, a Liberian refugee, has a mother who has not shown any interest in the Church, but she came that day because she wanted see her son ordained an elder. Being ordained an elder is a big deal. But I guess it's one of those things that sounds like an even bigger deal to friends not of our faith.

The girls head back to school tomorrow, with both Hannah and Sophie transitioning into new schools. Hannah is beginning sixth grade at Silver Spring International Middle School and Sophie's starting kindergarten at Forest Knolls Elementary School, where Lucy is now a third grader. All this is being met with an appropriate blend of anxiety and excitement. I guess I'll have more to report next month on how it's all working out.

Finally, many of you know that I work in the mortgage business. While I don't work for a mortgage lender directly, I am currently employed by a firm ([First American](#)) whose customers are predominantly mortgage lenders. I am happy to report that, despite all the turmoil, at this instant, I still have a job. (Knock, knock.) If you're tired of reading alarmist I-told-you-so diatribes about the crisis by financial columnists and other Johnny-come-lately gas bags who don't know what they're talking about, and instead would like to get some insight from someone who's been working and consulting for some of the world's largest mortgage companies for the past decade...don't call me; I don't feel like talking about it.

Hope your jobs are secure. Have a nice month.



**OGLEBAY 2007**



**(Left to Right)**

**Lucy's** cross-handed putting grip (a la Jim Furyk); **Hannah** on a horse; **Grace's** standard pout — "I don't want to ride the #%@\* paddle boats!"



**Sophie**

Riding a pony (left); after falling in the lake (above)



Playing with Butterflies (at **Brookside Gardens**—Wheaton, Md.)

*Clockwise from Above: Hannah, Sophie, Lucy*

