

Dear Family,

Sitting in the Celestial Room at the end of ward temple night last Wednesday evening, I had a hard time thinking about anything other than how good the mirrors looked.

Twice each year, the temple closes for two weeks for regular maintenance and a thorough cleaning. While the maintenance work is presumably done by people who know what they're doing, most of the cleaning is done by local members who volunteer in six-hour shifts. After 12 years in the area, Crystal and I decided that it was probably our turn. And so at 6:30 A.M. on Friday, August 8th, Grandpa came over to watch Lucy, Sophie and Grace while Crystal, Hannah, and I made the 4½-mile drive to the temple. We deposited Hannah just outside the main annex entrance with all the other people who would be working outside, and then proceeded down to a service entrance next to the baptistry. After presenting our recommends, we were each issued a set of white coveralls, instructed to go up to the third floor to change out of our Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes, put on our "white athletic shoes" and come back down to the cafeteria for further instructions. (Just being able to wear sneakers in the temple was oddly exhilarating.) There were perhaps two dozen people in the cafeteria when the sister in charge started asking for volunteers for various cleaning assignments. Crystal and I kept mum and allowed others to volunteer for "mop the baptistry floor" and "clean out the engineers' office". But when she asked if anyone would be interested in climbing on scaffolding to clean the mirrors in the Celestial Room, my hand was up so fast, I might have dislocated my shoulder.

So I got to ride the freight elevator down to the basement to pick up the scaffolding, and then (with the help of an English law school lecturer who had recently joined the Church and was in the temple for the first time since receiving his own endowment) hauled everything up to the Celestial Room on the 4th floor. After all that, the actual cleaning of the four banks of mirrors, which run from the floor to the balcony some 15 feet up, was a little anti-climactic. But the company was good. Crystal and I were joined in the effort by the aforementioned Englishman, a woman from Madagascar, a man from our stake's deaf branch, and a mother and daughter from Arlington. This is a truly fascinating place to live.

It took some practice (and more training than I would have thought necessary) to use the squeegee and microfiber cloth correctly, but next time you're in there I dare you to find a streak. (Hannah, by the way, who we had a hard time finding when it was all over, had a grand time working the grounds.)

And if that seems like an inordinate amount of space to devote to mirror-cleaning, hey, what can I tell you, it's August. It's generally advisable to avoid being outside in Washington in August. But, wait, August has actually been really, really nice this year, with only a handful of unbearable days. (The prophet Al Gore and his hot air

must be somewhere else on vacation.) The unusually mild weather worked out particularly well for the Rose family (Crystal's aunt and uncle, Betsy and Greg, from Davis, Calif., and their two youngest daughters, Holly and Karleigh). The four Roses were doing a week-long Balto-Washington vacation and spent their first weekend at our place. If I'm not mistaken, the last time we saw them was six years ago, when Holly and Karleigh, who are now both in college, were very cool big sisters to Hannah and Lucy at Sea World and Disneyland. (You might have read about that California trip in my August 2, 2002, letter, which I'm sure you still have. You don't? That's okay, it's [here](#).) And even though the letter doesn't mention the Roses by name, trust me, they were there, and they were great. They still are. They let us spend Saturday with them, and just like six years ago, seemed primarily interested in ensuring that the little kids were having a good time.

Because of the nice weather (and my brothers' inability to squeeze in any time for golf with me) I think we did outside family stuff every Saturday this month. (You don't understand; this never happens.) Four Saturdays ago, Hannah, Lucy, Sophie (on her scooter) and I successfully negotiated an 8½-mile (round-trip) hike from our house to downtown Silver Spring, via the Sligo Creek Trail. (Dinner at Chick-fil-A fueled the return trip.) Feeling emboldened, the four of us decided to take Mom and Grace with us the following Saturday on a hike along the Northwest Branch Trail (which runs behind our house). We didn't get as far that day (perhaps a five-mile round trip). [The editor wants it noted that Grace spent most of this hike, which was over very rough terrain, in Mom's backpack.] We spent a good chunk of the following Saturday at Silver Spring International Middle School pulling weeds, spreading mulch, and otherwise trying to be good citizens by helping get the grounds in shape for the start of the school year. (We're now four days into said school year and have nothing to report...yet.) Then, yesterday, I took all the goodwill I'd accumulated over the past four Saturdays and blew it on a single one-day trip to Yankee Stadium with my friend Jon Eskelson. (In case you're wondering, it's a 3½-hour Saturday morning drive—with one pit stop—provided Jon's driving.) We arrived in plenty of time to grab brunch in the Bronx (he had pancakes; I had a cheese steak), get in the stadium in time to catch the end of batting practice, and then watch the Yankees' bullpen blow a four-run sixth-inning lead and A-Rod ground into a rally-killing double play in the ninth as the Bombers fell to the Blue Jays in the 12th-to-last Yankees game to be played in the House That Ruth Built (before it's demolished after this season). The drive out of New York was not as smooth as the drive in, but I still got home in time to get a reasonable night's sleep. (Which was good, because I taught Relief Society today (5th Sunday—bishop's prerogative) and I was hoping to be awake for that.) I stayed awake, but I'm not sure all the sisters did.

Now that I think of it, I'm playing golf tomorrow morning with my friend (and stake presidency overseer) Bill Elwell, so I guess my family goodwill account will be going negative.





**First Day of School:** Sophie (left) has now started first grade; Lucy (right) has started fourth grade. Hannah, now in seventh grade, leaves too early in the morning for photography.



**At the annual Brookside Gardens butterfly show.**

I think we take this same picture every year.



**At the Ward Pioneer Day Picnic** (which I guess was last month, but we just had the pictures developed...oh, wait...)

Left: Grace and next-door neighbor Michelle play that stupid stick-pull game (or whatever it's called) which I guess was popular before real games were invented. (I'm surprised it wasn't in the Olympics.)

Below: Lucy milks a COW (sort of—that's how we do it back East)



Lucy and Hannah with Holly and Karleigh Rose.  
July 2002, Anaheim, Calif.

Tragically, we didn't get any pictures from their visit this month. You just need to mentally add six years to this one (and replace Dumbo with the Washington Monument).

