

Dear Family,

Have you ever tried to snap a flattering photograph of someone replacing a garbage disposal?

I have. And while I'm sure I would have found the resulting shots of Crystal's posterior protruding out from under the kitchen sink to be endearing and attractive, it's unlikely she would have. Hence, there will be no photographic evidence of Crystal's successful endeavor to replace our malfunctioning disposal. Crystal attributes her success in this complicated undertaking to her upbringing and parents who taught her to believe that she could do anything herself. (My parents, in contrast, taught me to believe that I could do anything *in theory*, but that ultimately it's much easier and less frustrating to pay somebody else to do it.) Crystal's do-it-yourself philosophy, combined with an uncertain economy, the impact of recent bicycle-related expenditures on the family budget, my lack of patience with the physical world in general, and my corresponding wont to take frustrations out on nearby inanimate objects, was the single biggest contributor to why it was she (as opposed to I or Joe the Plumber) tooling away under the sink three Saturdays ago.

I don't know whether it's fitting or ironic (or neither) that all this transpired just hours after Crystal and I attended the wedding of one of my former seminary students. (More accurately, Crystal attended the wedding and I officiated. It was only the second wedding I've performed, compared to my something like eight funerals.) During my seven-minute remarks, I suggested that the notion of marriage partners becoming one flesh implies that what is good for one of us, in order to be good for one of us, must necessarily be good for both of us. Crystal and I then returned home where I watched college football while she replaced the disposal. I got what I wanted (football) and she got what she wanted (a functioning disposal). It was a one-flesh win/win!

A few days later our unofficial ward handyman (and official Cubmaster), who was on standby to come over and finish the job had Crystal failed, told me that I didn't realize how fortunate I was to have such a skilled wife. I told him I did realize it, but thanked him anyway. Sometimes I wonder how it is that she's been willing to spend 5,265 of her 13,882 days on earth married to me, but I'll take it.

Crystal had a birthday this week. (If you're good at division, you can use information from the preceding paragraph to figure out which one.) As a result she now has a new bike—a somewhat-more-expensive-than-mine Trek "fitness" hybrid. The two bikes now hang next to one other in our basement. It's possible we'll even be able to ride them at the same time someday.

Having grown accustomed to drivers honking at me for the sin of riding my bike on the street (although, according to [this report](#), Montgomery County, Md. boasts the

nation's longest life expectancy, I find that it also suffers from an embarrassing dearth of bike lanes) I'm beginning to understand the relevance of bicycle advocacy. I've also become fairly well acquainted with most of the area's hiker/biker trails. One of my favorites is the [Capital Crescent Trail](#), an 11-mile crescent that hugs the D.C. line (more or less) from Silver Spring around to Georgetown. The trail (seven miles of it, anyway) provide a vital link in my 19-mile (each way) bike commute to work (in Vienna, Va., which I managed twice this past week, but realistically don't see myself doing that often going forward). So what I do, Dad, is take the trail to a tiny hidden path another biker showed me that leads down to Canal Road at Chain Bridge, cross the bridge into Virginia, and then make a death-defying seven-mile climb up Dolley Madison Blvd (VA-123) past CIA Headquarters to [my employer's](#) Tysons Corner office. I figure that, between the calories burned and the gas conserved, the chicken burrito from Chipotle I have for lunch is essentially free, no matter how much sour cream and guac they pile on.

Fueling my addiction to the bike have been the colors and smells of autumn, which I seem to appreciate more and more the older I get. One of the advantages of having removed so many trees from the backyard is less raking. (I never understood why a yard that borders the woods needed trees in it anyway.) But the girls have not let this stop them from building large leaf piles to jump into, going so far as to import leaves from the street and neighboring yards. Turns out they're much better at creating these piles than they are at disposing of them when they're done playing (thus incurring the displeasure of their grouchy father who doesn't like the toll large leaf piles take on the lawn after an extended period) but I love them (the girls) anyway.

Lucy turned 9 this month. Her grandmother's and Great-aunt Coco's trip to the American Girl store in Manhattan last month netted her many more accessories for her Kit Kittredge doll. But the largest gift that was saved for last (and the one that probably elicited her most excited reaction) was the enormous, meticulously wrapped key lime pie from Costco, which she was kind enough to share with some of us. (If you're ever having a conversation with Lucy and feel like you've run out of things to talk about, just ask her how she feels about pie. It's liable to launch her into a soliloquy reminiscent of Shakespeare.) Lucy also visited historic [St. Mary's City](#) with her 4<sup>th</sup> grade class a couple of weeks ago, where she took no fewer than 278 pictures in a single day (including seven of one drinking fountain). It's odd to think that my children will probably never have any concept of wasting film.

Finally, we all had a good time representing "Team Peter" at the Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County's fourth annual "Buddy Walk" in Potomac last Saturday. See [Page Deux](#) for pictures. Hannah continues to enjoy softball season. Sophie has three more cavities, which didn't upset her until the dentist told her she wasn't allowed to eat any more Skittles. She's taking it pretty hard ("But Skittles are my favorite food.") and she may never have a reason to go to a movie theater again. But I expect she'll survive. Happy Halloween!





Above: Peter, Grace and Sophie sporting their swag from the Down Syndrome Buddy Walk

Right: We've been going to the zoo a lot lately and have learned that the pandas tend to be most active in the mornings.

Accordingly, we went Saturday morning before General Conference and caught some very cool panda wrestling.

Crystal took about three dozen pictures of the action, including this one, which I especially like because of the expression on the face of the panda that's about to get jumped on.

I might have posted the other 30+ photos to one of those sites where people invite you to go and check out all 700 pictures from their latest trip to wherever, but that's just not how I roll.





**Lucy turns 9.** Left: Her birthday “cake” (really just an amalgamation of cinnamon rolls, since her birthday party was really a family pre-General-Conference Sunday brunch).

Right: Her final “present” from Grandma Christine: A Costco key lime pie.

And here are a few of the 278 pictures Lucy took in St. Mary’s City

([click here for Lucy’s descriptions--and more pictures](#)):

Here we have a boat...



...some weirdo presumably explaining the boat...



...and the drinking fountain that merited seven photos.

