

Dear Family,

There are two reasons I don't usually write about business trips: 1) They're not very interesting, and 2) I can't remember the second one, but the first is reason enough.

It's hard to make people who don't travel much on business understand that a trip to San Francisco (where I went this month) isn't really all that different from a trip to Indianapolis (where I went last month). Both involve an airplane, a hotel, a non-descript conference room (if you're lucky) or cube (if you're not) and really very little else. Sure, San Francisco had better restaurants, nicer weather, better-dressed people and the sweetest commute imaginable—from the Omni Hotel at 500 California St. to the client's office at 580 California St. But when you factor in jetlag and everything else that makes cross-country travel such a drag, it turns out that I'd just as soon be in Indianapolis (a/k/a "India-no-place," a/k/a "India-crap-olis," a/k/a ...) Also, unlike San Francisco, Indianapolis has the distinction of being in a state with an S&P bond rating *higher than Louisiana's*, but that's another matter.)

Self-imposed restrictions on business-travel writing go the way of an Obama appointee's tax return, however, when the destination is Las Vegas—where I also went this month.

Depending on what sorts of newspapers you read, you may have seen something about bank-recipients of TARP money (also sometimes referred to as "your money" by certain people who don't appear to have a very firm grasp of the basic principles of ownership) sending employees to lavish junkets in Las Vegas. One of the events that was painted (unfairly in my view) with this brush was the annual American Securitization Forum, an event where my employer was one of a long list of sponsors with an exhibition booth, but which I hadn't planned on attending because, well, it's expensive, and worker bees like me don't typically travel unless a client (as opposed to my employer) is footing the bill.

That principle ceased to apply when I was invited to speak on a panel discussing the progress of a group (in which I function as an outside consultant) tasked with improving transparency in mortgage-backed securities (assuming there will come a time in the not-too-distant future when such instruments will be issued and traded again). Then, literally three days after being tapped for the panel, Andrew (my brother) called to ask if "by any chance" I was going to "that ASF thing in Vegas." Turns out he (and some of his fellow bank regulators from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors) were going.

So that's how it happened that on a Sunday afternoon, five hours after I conducted sacrament meeting, Andrew and I were driving to Dulles together, having ditched our wives and children to catch the same flight to Las Vegas. We arrived; Andrew checked into his unbelievably opulent room at the Palazzo (paid for with not-your money) while I checked into my less-nice room at Harrah's (sort of next door—paid for with private capital)

and we met in the middle for a late (after midnight Eastern) dinner. Once we'd settled in, the question became what two good little Mormon boys were going to do for fun for three nights in Las Vegas. It wasn't lost on colleagues of mine who didn't make the trip that sending someone like me to a place like that was a total waste, but we got along okay. Even though most of our original plans for a good time—like telling all the local cops how much we love "CSI" and asking whether they know Grissom—were abandoned before we got out of the airport, they eventually gave way to informal contests of who could pick up the most free swag from the conference exhibitors. I wasn't able to keep up with Andrew's pace, but even so, by the time we left, my bag was so crammed with promotional pens, notebooks, footballs, frisbees, flashlights, yo-yos, dart boards, playing cards, hats, t-shirts, tote bags, water bottles, and fistfuls of USB flash drives that I could barely close it. Andrew collected so much *more* crap (stuffed animals, toy cars, iPod speakers) he must've had to leave some clothes.

Oh—I almost forgot—my panel went fine. (Thanks for asking.) We went on shortly after a "working lunch" that featured James Carville and Karl Rove on stage screaming at each other for 45 minutes, so everything probably seemed a little bland after that. But I made Andrew come sit in the audience so I'd have a friendly face to look at while I spoke. It helped.

I returned home and, after confessing various details of the trip to the bishop's wife, interviewed Hannah for her first temple recommend. She asked how I thought I could be impartial in judging my own daughter. I asked her in which way she was concerned I might be biased. She didn't answer that, but did fine in the rest of the interview. The two of us went to the temple together for the first time last night to perform baptisms for the dead (with a dozen or so other youth and new converts from our ward). Uncle Pete and Grandpa came too. Grandpa had to give me a silent, gesture-driven tutorial through the glass wall on the unorthodox method for cramming Peter's entire body underwater. But we eventually figured it out and it was all very nice.

Hannah and I finally got around to taking the bike journey we would have made on Inauguration Day had it not been so cold: a 30-mile loop from our house, past the temple, to the Capital Crescent Trail, around the trail to and through Georgetown, up to and around the Lincoln Memorial, and then home via Rock Creek Park. It was so much fun, I did it again the next weekend with Crystal. I'm happy to report that even though Crystal's in better shape than I am—she even does *man* push-ups!—and even though she has a faster bike, I'm still the faster cyclist. (I also fall less often.)

Finally, this month's pictures chronicle my date with Lucy to the [International Spy Museum](#), one of the few museums downtown that charges admission (which probably explains why it's taken us so long to go there). But it's got lots of cool stuff that appealed to Lucy's gadgety brain, and I'm pretty sure she came away with new and even more creative ideas for concealing stolen junk food in her bedroom. See you next month. Love, Tim et al.





The Many Faces of Lucy as captured during our date to the International Spy Museum last Saturday morning.

From Top to Bottom: 1) On the platform of the Silver Spring Metro Station, 2) In front of the museum (no photography allowed in the museum, the Nazis), 3) On the platform of the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metro Station, 4) Enjoying a meatball sandwich at the downtown Silver Spring Potbelly.





Above: Lucy playing a musical instrument of her own design and construction—a horn consisting of a two-liter soda bottle, a paper-towel tube, and a straw. It sounds kind of like a kazoo.

Right: Crystal at a point along the Capital Crescent Trail that—according to the sign behind her—is 3,400 km from Coeur d’Alene, Idaho (her hometown) and even farther from a half-dozen other obscure places I’ve never heard of.

(Incidentally, the stated distance to Coeur d’Alene is about right as the crow flies, but using roads it’s more like 3,900 km.)

For more useful information like this, please read next month’s letter.

