

Dear Family,

"WASHINGTON BAILS OUT DETROIT"

That was the *Washington Post* headline that greeted me when I stepped onto my porch early Monday morning. The A-1, above-the-fold story had nothing to do with the country's latest lurch to the left, but rather with the Redskins' latest embarrassing defeat, this time handing the Detroit Lions their first victory since 2007. It continues to amaze me that we've now lived here for 13 complete football seasons, and the Washington Redskins—one of the two or three richest sports franchises in the world—have won exactly two playoff games. You'd think the people who run this town could take a lesson from the football team—which routinely outspends the league on blue-chip free agents, but never seems to get any better—that simply throwing gobs and gobs of money at things like, oh I don't know, crummy public schools, doesn't fix anything.

I first learned of the Redskins' debacle from Andrew shortly after arriving at his house at around 5:30 p.m., near the end of a Sunday that had started for me at 6:15 that morning. I went to Andrew's house directly from the church to eat my first meal of the day and to see three of my cousins: Reed Farnsworth and his sisters, Betsy and Joani, who presumably left their children in the care of their husbands in Texas and Utah, respectively, because I don't recall seeing them. But we enjoyed seeing Reed's sisters (and Reed too, I suppose).

I can't remember the adjective Betsy used to describe how I looked on Sunday evening (perhaps she does—it was something like "spent," but it wasn't that. Whatever it was, it was right). My Sundays are usually quite busy, but this one had been unusually draining, not just because of its length (though it was long—and it would get longer, as Hannah and I had to leave the family get-together early to attend Standards Night) but because it was such an emotional roller-coaster. All day I was flung from high moments—like participating in the ordaining of a new convert to the Melchizedek Priesthood, then, 30 seconds later, coaching the man we'd just ordained as he conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood on his son—to low moments—like the ward member who became so disgusted with me because of what I said to her that she marched out of my office and slammed the door (if only I could write my book...)—to more high moments—like conducting a baptismal service for an 8-year-old girl and interviewing a 59-year-old woman about to go to the temple for the first time. The day was kind of a microcosm of a bishop's life, with the pleasant moments outnumbering the bad ones. I don't know why I always get hung up reliving the painful episodes. But I guess that's normal.

It was Hannah's first Standards Night and I think she had a good time. She and I spent most of evening in different rooms, but discussing the same questions. Her group consisted of our stake's Deacons and Beehives.

Mine consisted of parents and leaders. After about 30 seconds, I was longing to be in with the Beehives, because it turns out that discussing standards with a group of parents, most of whom I don't know, just might be the most tedious possible way of spending an evening. (That it came at the end of a long day didn't make it easier.)

Unlike me, Hannah was in no hurry to leave once the refreshments had been served because she had no incentive to get to bed, because the next day was Yom Kippur, which I believe is Hebrew for "No School." I think they all went to the zoo. I'll have to see if they took any good pictures.

Swim team practice, however, *wasn't* cancelled on account of Yom Kippur. Now that the summer swim league has wrapped, Hannah and Lucy have started swimming with the Rockville-Montgomery Swim Club, which if you believe [their website](#), is "one of the largest and most successful swimming teams in the United States." It's quite a competitive bunch, but our check cleared (you wouldn't believe how much), so Hannah and Lucy made the team!

We're just a few weeks in and I'm already wondering if we haven't bitten off way more than we can chew. Hannah and Lucy swim with the "normal" (non-elite) group, so they only have to go on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Crystal's in a carpool with several other parents in the neighborhood who do this, which simplifies things some, but the whole production still puts a crimp on a number of things, including dinner as a family (which is now down to about a 50/50 proposition, though my work and travel schedule bear much of the blame for that) and Family Home Evening, which now doesn't begin until a half-hour before bedtime (though that seems to be working okay). I suppose first-quarter report cards will be the first real measure.

Speaking of which, school is in full swing again and the girls appear happy with their teachers. I went to two of the three back-to-school nights that I was supposed to go to (a record for me) and was, for the most part, impressed with what I saw. The public nature of this letter (and the fact that my children read it) means I can't say *everything* I think about all their teachers, but I'm generally satisfied. I'm especially happy that Hannah got the English teacher she wanted. I don't remember his name, but after just 15 minutes with him, I can tell he's a far cry better than the cranky broads I drew for English all the way through high school.

Grace is in her final year of pre-school, which is held every day from 12:30 until 3:00 at the elementary school where she'll attend kindergarten next year. She likes to draw pictures of our family, and she has a *lot* of them. Sometimes it's hard to tell who's who, but I've learned how to recognize myself: I'm the person with the least hair.



We're delighted to learn of Aunt Lou Jean's continuing recovery and wish Emily and Tyler a happy life together. As for the other five of you reading this: Have a nice month.

Love, Tim et al.



Above: Sophie & Grace pick apples.

Right: Grace & Sophie and the temple doors.

