

Dear Family,

Washington, D.C., according to Wikipedia, "is located in the humid subtropical climate zone."

I don't really know what that means, but generally speaking it sounds like an accurate description of our climate. Golf courses around here don't close "for the season." Winter morning tee times are often delayed by frost, and snow on the course might shut it down for a day or two, but most years that's about it.

I offer this as just one example of why it doesn't really make much fiscal sense for local governments around here to be prepared for one weekend storm that dumps 27 inches of snow followed by a second storm three days later that drops as much as a foot and a half more. I understand there are places where this much snow is a fairly common occurrence. (I don't understand why anybody would choose to live in a place like that.) But what I *really* don't understand is where you put it all after you've shoveled it. I can only balance so much snow on the mountains between my walk and my driveway, between my driveway and the neighbors' driveway, and between the sidewalk and the street. Moreover, I don't really care. And furthermore, the next time some gasbag—from Buffalo or Chicago or some other miserable place where you couldn't pay me to live—goes on TV to talk about how inept we are at dealing with snow, so help me I will cast aside my Christian faith, find that person, and beat him over the head with my *one* show shovel (which until this year was all my family needed). You hear that, Dick Durbin? I'm comin' after you, old man!

The impact of what came to be known as "Snowmageddon" included five days of canceled school, no church at all on Sunday the 7th and only a testimony meeting on Sunday the 14th. (The weekend of the 14th was to have been a satellite stake conference, but the Quorum of the Twelve cancelled it on Tuesday on account of the weather.) My train home from New York City (where I was attending a conference of the Global Association of Risk Professionals—sound fun?) was canceled, resulting in a bonus third night in my better-than-average room overlooking snow-covered Times Square at the New York Marriott Marquis.

Anyway, most of the snow has melted, but there's still a lot left and I'm really ready for spring.

Notwithstanding all the jubilation associated with school closures and playing in the snow, the happiest moments of the month occurred when both Hannah and Lucy received word that they'd been admitted to the high school and middle school, respectively, programs of their choice. For Hannah, this meant acceptance into the prestigious Communication and Arts Program ("CAP") at [Montgomery Blair High School](#), whose notable alumni include (in decreasing order of awesomeness) Ben Stein, Matt Drudge, Morgan Wootten, Carl Bernstein, Connie Chung, Goldie Hawn, and three dozen or so other allegedly famous people I've never heard of. Though Blair, an enormous school with some 2,800 students, is just a 1.7-mile walk (or bike ride) from our house, Hannah would have gone to Northwood HS (with an

enrollment about half the size of Blair's and located less than a mile from home) had she not been among the 75 incoming freshman accepted to CAP. The program seeks to foster "the intellectual, creative, and communication skills of students in a uniquely interdisciplinary, highly product-oriented program that involves them in a comprehensive approach to humanities and the media."

Not to be outdone, Lucy was accepted into the Humanities and Communication Program at Eastern Middle School. (She would have attended Silver Spring International Middle School, as Hannah does now, had she not been accepted into Eastern's program.) Lucy's program features "intensive courses in writing and opportunities for written products to be published and broadcast through a variety of media, such as television, radio, and film. Students create position papers, plays, brochures, magazine articles, and research papers. ...[I]n the program's television studios students work in teams as performers, cinematographers, producers, directors, audio engineers, editors, and graphic artists."

Obviously, I've cribbed heavily from the programs' propaganda in the two preceding paragraphs. This is mainly because all I really know about either program is that admission is highly selective (based on grades, writing samples and special exams the girls had to sit for in December) and that both girls really, *really* wanted in. Anything that encourages good writing is a good thing in my view. So we're very happy for them and hope they do well.

My other hope, with the specter of all this extra schoolwork, is that the girls can somehow manage to be responsible pet owners. Because after years of pet-ownership resistance on my part, it looks as if I'm going to have to buy Lucy a hamster. I still have no idea why people choose to allow animals to live with them, but it appears I've finally succumbed to the barrage of position papers meticulously written and researched by Lucy (and her older sister) contending that I wouldn't really notice a small caged rodent living in her bedroom and that, pursuant to subsequent research, a certain type of hamster (I can't remember which one) is the ideal rodent for a girl of her age and disposition.

So, finally, a month ago, during an unusually vulnerable moment, I relented and told Lucy she could have a hamster if she were able to keep her bedroom clean for a month. Even though this pronouncement prompted a self-exulting dance and effusive assurance that she'd be able to do it, I didn't envision her clearing this hurdle anytime soon. This was mainly because the previous record for Lucy's bedroom *not* looking like the National Mall after President Obama's inauguration* was approximately two days. I was pretty sure we'd go through a couple of months of failure, then I'd lower the bar, and maybe she'd have a hamster by Christmas. Instead, however, perhaps lending further credence to the *Freakonomics* thesis about the power of incentives, Lucy's bedroom has been the tidiest place in the house since February 1st. (That isn't saying much given all the snow clothes perpetually strewn about the house, but still...)

So I guess we'll have a rodent in the house. Next month I'll let you know how that goes (maybe). Have a good one.

Love, Tim *et al.*

*when 1.8 million exuberant liberal environmentalists descended on the city and left behind an estimated [130 tons of litter](#).



For the comprehensive Snowmageddon 2010 gallery, go to www.famlet.org/snowmageddon.



Lucy, Sophie and Grace in front of the house.





Hannah



Lucy harbored fantasies of diving off the deck and taking a swim in the snow.
This is as far as she got.



Grace: "I forgot my gloves...and my hat...and my coat."

