

Dear Family,

We are pleased to announce the forthcoming marriage of our daughter Grace to some boy named Seamus. I don't know Seamus's last name, or even precisely how his name is spelled. ("Seamus" is my best guess based on my intimate familiarity with Celtic names (not really) and Harry Potter characters (really). It's pronounced "Shay-mus.")

Seamus is one of the three "so handsome" boys in Grace's pre-K class that (as you doubtless recall from March's letter) she insisted on inviting to her 5th birthday party. I utterly lack the vocabulary to adequately describe the delighted expression on her face when Seamus's mom called yesterday morning to ask whether Seamus could get a ride with Grace to another birthday party to which both of them were invited. Grace's intention to marry this unsuspecting young man is evidenced in repeated pronouncements as well as in her artwork. Her recent drawings notably include one depicting the two of them with a heart over their joined hands; a second (our favorite) has Seamus battling a dragon who is clutching Grace in one of its hands.

Crystal's been pretty good at keeping Grace's artwork, which heretofore has consisted rather reliably of rainbows, suns, grass and members of our family (who are most easily identified by their relative height and the amount and color of their hair—it's pretty easy for me to pick out the one tall guy whose only visible hair is the receding black widow's peak barely creeping down his forehead). Grace's latest works complement the rest of the collection rather well.

Grace's future husband may or may not choose to meddle with Grace's toilet paper habits. I might advise him that he'd be wise not to sweat the small things, but that might make me a hypocrite (as if *that* matters when giving advice to one's son-in-law). I might warn him that Grace would appear to be the main reason why we never seem to be able to keep TP in stock. She (along with some of her sisters) has adopted the charming habit of using half a roll with every urinary event—this would be harder to prove if she ever flushed the toilet, which she doesn't. The whole thing reminds of me of stories I used to hear at family reunions about Grandpa Willis (himself the father of six girls) who, if I understood correctly, attempted to impose a two-square maximum (which presumably only applied to number ones, but perhaps I misunderstood). At any rate I can't imagine he had much success with that, but you gotta love people who lived through the Depression (not to mention their children, many of whom still cling to the absurd notion that it's somehow immoral not to eat all the food on one's plate). As for me, I'll just budget a couple extra bucks for TP (and Liquid-Plumr) and live to fight another day.

Plus, I really shouldn't complain. Just last night I walked into what I thought was an unoccupied bathroom to find both Lucy and Sophie lathering up their hair in the same shower. They had turned the water off during this process to (in Lucy's words) "conserve resources and money." I've never asked them to do that (as I don't do it myself—in fact, Lucy still gives me a hard time for leaving the water

running while I brush my teeth, shave, and do any number of other things). Now, if only she'd ever turn her own bedroom light off, I'd really have no business complaining about anything.

But back to Grace, she *really* enjoys Mothers' Day, which she views as an opportunity for her mother to pay extra special attention to her. This year she used the holiday as an excuse to break her streak of 21 straight days (the number is made up, but it's a lot) of hiding from her mother when called to come have her hair brushed. So that was nice. She's started doing this Marcia Brady thing after getting her hair brushed—she looks in the mirror, tilts her head to one side, and smiles while flipping her hair with the backs of her fingertips. She's cute and she knows it—watch out Seamus. With Grace now 5, all the girls have now reached an age where they not only want to help with Mothers' Day, but are actually capable of being helpful. It's nice. This year we prepared a lovely chicken rollatini (thank you Costco) with a Caesar salad (thank you, Costco), a Waldorf salad (thank you, Costco), French bread and a wheel of Brie (thank you, Costco), and, for dessert, a lovely peach pie (thank you....Costco).

Hey, *somebody* had to drive to Costco and buy all that stuff. I needed golf balls anyway, so it really wasn't any trouble. Crystal never seems to mind my approach to the fancy home-cooked meal, which is one of many reasons we cruised so easily across the 16-year line of wedded bliss last Friday.

We spent it apart as I, for the third consecutive year, spent the Friday before Memorial Day with Hannah's middle school chorus on its annual trip to Hershey. As has been the case each year, the easy part of my day was the morning, when I provided the piano accompaniment for the three pieces composing the group's [Music in the Parks](#) competition entry—the chorus won its division for the second consecutive year. The hard part of the day was chaperoning nine middle school girls at HersheyPark (as you doubtless recall from my letter of [May 31, 2008](#)). What? You don't? Well then you really should either click on the link (or go to the [archives](#)) as this was more of the same. This might be the end of my career, though, as our family will have no students at Silver Spring International Middle School next year (Lucy's going to Eastern, remember?) As frustrating as it was, I might actually miss it. (Scroll down for a picture of Hannah with her five-pound Hershey's bar.)

Oh yeah, Lucy's elementary school chorus also performed this month. They were great. Their teacher retires this year, which is sad as she possesses talents I will likely never be able to comprehend. I've no idea how she gets that bunch of kids to stay together and on pitch, but somehow she does it and I suspect we'll miss her.

For what it's worth, Crystal and I eventually celebrated our anniversary by going on our standard default date to the Friendship Heights Cheesecake Factory (you know, the one just across the Chevy Chase/D.C. line—the one that was recently in the news after a bunch of its servers were busted for being part of a credit card skimming ring—that one), then to Stein Mart for big, big savings on brand-name merchandise, and then to Target.

It's a pretty exciting life we lead.

Love, Tim *et al.*





Lucy (dead center—the white girl with shorter hair than the boy on her right).

Dad says watching this chorus is a little like watching a Coke commercial. (I know what he means, but only because I'm barely old enough to remember the 1970s.)



Ever wonder what a five-pound Hershey's bar looks like? Kind of like this, but without the corners lopped off. (I just ate a hunk — it's about the same thickness as my desk.)

Lucy, narrating at her chorus concert



At school—a classic Grace pose (she’s probably looking at Seamus)