

Dear Family,

If it's true, as Jerry Seinfeld asserts, that marching bands are "the perfect example of taking something bad and making it difficult too," then the [Ragnar Relay Series](#) is another pretty good example.

Like many of the world's half-baked, crackpot ideas, the Ragnar concept appears to have originated in Utah, as the 170-mile Wasatch Back Relay from Logan to Park City. Owing to the masochistic tendencies of most runners and their proclivity toward irrational activities seemingly designed to inconvenience people attempting to use public roadways for their intended purpose, the concept quickly spread like a bad rash to 14 other locations around the country, including Maryland.

Our local Ragnar is a 200-mile, 12-person, 36-leg relay from Cumberland (a little town way, way out in Maryland's beautiful western panhandle) to Washington, DC. Crystal's team included two of her sisters-in-law (Marci Kent and Jennifer Willis) and nine other women—mostly members of Jen's ward, I think—some of whom I know a little. Depending on which photos get appended to this month's letter, you may be able to ascertain from the shirts that their team name was the "D.I.V.A.S."—an acronym for something, it hardly matters what. I continue to be disappointed that Grant's original team name suggestion—"Twelve Mormon Wives"—was rejected, but I'm slowly getting over it.

Crystal, an erudite philosophy graduate who turns 40 next month, succinctly described the experience as "rad." Unseasonably warm temperatures (over 100 degrees at times) slowed the pace on Friday, but by Saturday evening—some 36 hours after starting—the team crossed the finish line at National Harbor. The later-than-anticipated finish meant that not one of the Mormon wives made it to the general Relief Society broadcast last night. But I suppose they can catch it online.

My own athletic exploits were curtailed for much of September thanks to the badly sprained left ankle I suffered during a spirited backyard game of badminton with Sophie four weeks ago. Sophie's first reaction was to laugh at me when I collapsed in a heap in front of her. I think she quickly felt badly about that as I limped inside as quickly as I could and set myself up in front of the house's biggest TV as my ankle gradually swelled to two or three times its normal size. Because golfers are only slightly less insane than runners (and because I already had the tee time set up and didn't want to let my three buddies down) I went ahead and played golf the following Saturday. That didn't work out too well. But I think I'm almost back to normal now, having played tennis yesterday for the first time since the injury. (It turns out that, as a lefty, I hit both forehands and backhands off my right foot—which might be a bad habit, but I've been doing it since high school, so it is what it is.)

The ankle made our Labor Day excursion to [Harpers Ferry National Historical Park](#) a little dicey, but it turned out okay. The 60-mile drive to the park (located in that

funny little corner where Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia all converge) was nothing for us compared to all the driving we did last month. We picnicked near the visitors' center with some friends (the Warners, the Jenkinses, and the Joneses) before all heading down to the Lower Town District. There we climbed the 200-year-old stone steps, up past St. Peter's Catholic Church (which, according to the sign in front of it, flew the Union Jack during the Civil War in the hope of not being shelled by either side) and on to Jefferson Rock. All of this was especially fun on a sprained ankle, as was splashing around among the slippery rocks in the Shenandoah River. But we all survived and everybody seems to have had a good time.

All of this transpired, of course, in the context of a new academic year that has three of the four girls adjusting to life at new schools. Hannah seems to be settling in okay to the Communication Arts Program at Montgomery Blair High School. Her first-week anxieties about her physics class have subsided some. Though if they come back, I suppose she can seek assistance from one of our ward's three physicists. (She's already learned that her father won't be much help.) She doesn't particularly enjoy Thoreau, and doesn't understand why they have to read him. (I can't help her there, either.)

Fortunately, Hannah also appears to have successfully made the adjustment to early-morning seminary. She gets a ride every morning from Caroline Kemper—a delightful Laurel who I'd love to see Hannah emulate in every way. (She pretty much does.) Caroline's dad teaches the class, but they drive separately for a variety of logistical reasons. So Caroline picks up Hannah and I don't even have to set my alarm. It works great for me.

Lucy's adjustment to Eastern Middle School has not been without incident, but she's moving in the right direction and we're confident she'll get the hang of it.

Sadly, Grace is not in Seamus's kindergarten class. (Seamus, you may recall, was the love of Grace's life in pre-school.) She does, however, seem to be getting on with her life. Each day after school she reports on which boy she played with on the playground that day. (We keep waiting for it to be a girl, but it's always some boy.)

Now in third grade, Sophie was the only girl not to begin a new school this year. She likes her teachers, and has several good friends. I don't know what more I could ask for.

Finally, from the things-of-eternal-consequence department, I had the privilege of baptizing and confirming a retired Washington, DC police detective this month. A wonderfully guileless fellow, he told me he had questioned "those boys" (the full-time elders) the way he used to interrogate suspects, and that no matter what he asked them, he was unable to detect any deception in their responses. So he pursued it further and "Here I am." When he told me that, it was all I could do not to burst out of the bishop's office, sprint down the hall and hug those elders. (I might've if it weren't for my ankle.)

Hope your month's been as pleasant as ours.

Love, Tim *et al.*



Ragnar Relay: Cumberland, Md. to Washington, DC — September 24-25



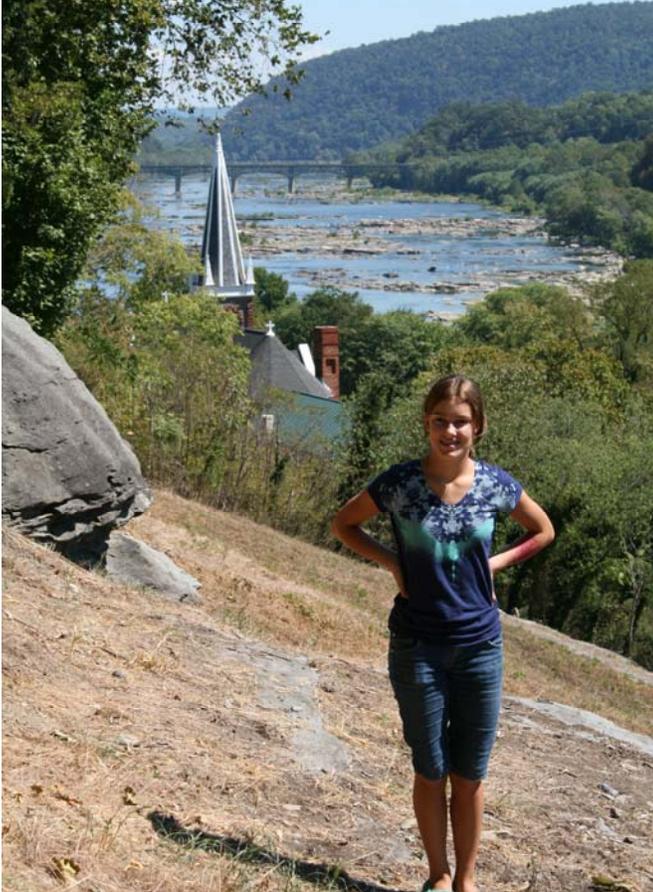
All smiles at the finish line.



Crystal



I think that's Marci, but does it matter?



Hannah and Lucy in Harpers Ferry. (Hannah in front of the aforementioned “neutral” St. Peter’s church; Lucy wearing seaweed (or something) from the Shenandoah River.)



Two elders I could hug (see letter), a really neat guy (see letter), and me (I’m the guy in the bow tie).