

THE FAMLET MONTHLY



Dear Family,

Lucy surprised us last month when she announced she wanted to go to prom.

For reasons I, a father of four daughters, may never fully understand, girls who attend prom are under a cultural expectation to procure expensive dresses that no reasonable person would wear to anything other than a prom. (The same expectation applies to brides, of course, which is every bit as stupid.)

Fortunately for us, we happily live in the poor part of a rather affluent county. And this month we learned about something called “Once Upon a Prom” wherein girls from Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School (in a richer part of the county) donate their used prom dresses from last year to less-privileged girls from our part of the county. Genius! And so a few weeks ago, Crystal drove Lucy over to B-CC (Northwood actually sent a busload of girls over as a school-sanctioned event, but school buses can be hard for Lucy sometimes) to see if they could find a dress that would work.

I half-expected them to be greeted there by a group of stereotypically snotty rich girls dismissively passing off their hand-me-downs in an effort to earn a few cheap SSL hours. I could not have been more wrong. The B-CC girls were delightful as they kindly showed Lucy a variety of lovely dresses. She tried on several and, I believe, eventually landed on one that she likes. I’ve probably seen a picture of it, but I couldn’t tell you what color it is. I’m not very detail oriented.



Above: Grace at Black Rock Cliffs, Appalachian Trail

Below: Grace takes a break on the AT



I hope Lucy has a good time at prom next month because this one has been tough for her. Complications that followed having her wisdom teeth extracted, combined with some other unrelated issues, caused her to lose her part in the Northwood High School production of “Legally Blonde: The Musical.” The role was important to her and losing it made her sad. She handled losing it about as well as one might reasonably expect and attended on opening night to cheer on Sophie and her other friends in the show.

I made it to two of the show’s three performances. They were entertaining and well executed. I vaguely recalled liking the movie many years ago, but I couldn’t remember anything about it beyond the basic premise of a vacuous sorority girl who succeeds at Harvard Law School. Sophie played Pilar, one of the sorority sisters who follows the lead around throughout the play like a Greek chorus.

For whatever my opinion’s worth, I thought Sophie did great. The script and score contained a few land mines that posed some challenges for a good little Mormon girl. There was a fair amount of comic innuendo, but that never hurt anyone, and most of it was subtle enough that I didn’t get it right away anyway. (I’m pretty slow, and Crystal always appreciates when I elbow her to giggle at double-entendre in dialog from five minutes earlier.) More challenging was the production’s frequent punchline use of a certain three-word phrase that vainly invokes the name of deity. This phrase is so ubiquitous in everyday conversation that I imagine many people don’t realize that some of us make a point of never uttering it. It does not offend me at all that others say it. (I am generally one who is more likely to give offense than to take it, and, at any rate, someone else’s relationship to the being whose name they cavalierly drop is their business.) But we just don’t do it, and it complicated things for Sophie, whose character was scripted to either speak or sing it approximately 47 million times. Sophie’s solution was to subtly replace the *-d* at the end of the phrase with *-sh*. I guess that works.

Grandma and Grandpa Kent traveled across the country to see the show. It is always nice to have them around. They visited us last year just in time for Grandpa to help me build a new shed. This year’s visited happened to coincide with the arrival of some new furniture for our front porch from Ikea. We appreciated Grandpa’s help with assembly and haven’t yet figured out what project to coordinate with his next visit. My mother



Above: Grace, Sophie, and me at High Rock.

Below: Lucy, Sophie, and Grace at the original Washington Monument



More of our group at High Rock



will be happy to learn that the old sofa that had graced our front porch for the past six years has finally been consigned to the curb awaiting pickup either tomorrow morning (by the county) or this evening (by the odd fellow who drives his truck around the neighborhood on Sunday nights collecting junk that has been put out for county pickup on Monday).

Also in attendance on opening night were several of Sophie's friends from church. These students had already been desensitized to entertainment containing questionable language the previous weekend when their seminary teacher (Crystal) invited them to our house to watch *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. It is important to Crystal that her seminary students experience all the great cinema of her youth. How this relates to this year's New Testament course of study is unclear, but there's never a bad reason to watch *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. Our ward has a really nice core of kids who, despite all attending different high schools, try to attend each other's plays, sporting events, and stuff. Their parents are equally supportive.

One of these parents is Sister Higgins, our ward's Young Women president, who appears to have made it her mission in life to make Lucy's life as pleasant as possible. From the moment she learned that Lucy had gone into residential treatment early last year, Sister Higgins has actively looked for ways of catering to Lucy's unique needs. I'm not 100 percent sure how much one thing had to do the the other, but not long after Lucy started expressing her desire to hike the Appalachian Trail, Sister Higgins announced that she would be taking all the Young Women on a multi-day backpacking journey over spring break that would ultimately cover the entire 40-mile Maryland portion of the AT.

About a dozen girls undertook the adventure, including Lucy, Sophie, and Grace. I tagged along as well. Crystal might have come if not for her foot that was still recovering from surgery earlier this year. (It's supposedly all better now.) Though she did not come, it was Crystal who oversaw most of the girls' preparation. Not surprisingly, Grace required the most supervision. Crystal's initial check of Grace's backpack revealed that she had packed five shirts, no underwear, three socks (not three pairs of socks, *three socks*) and our gigantic Maglite flashlight. I would end up spending most of the hike near the back pushing Grace along, listening to her repeatedly complain about how miserable her whole body felt and wonder



Above: Sophie onstage

Below: Sophie backstage



out loud why anybody would choose to do something like this for fun. Hearing Grace complain in this way was a little like hearing a recording of myself, and I found it more endearing than annoying. I can't speak for anyone else.

We all made it to the Pennsylvania border at a little after noon on the day before Easter. Well, all of us except Lucy, who wasn't feeling well Saturday morning. And so she got into *Brother Higgins's* van (he had driven up and met us with a welcome hot breakfast), and he drove her to the end where she met up with the rest of us.

Predictably and almost immediately, Lucy began feeling remorseful about not having finished the journey. Sister Higgins somehow picked up on this, and so on "Easter Monday" (the last day of spring break) Sister Higgins and her 14-year-old son George drove Lucy all the way back up to Raven Rock, where we had made camp the final night. Lucy and George then walked the final six or so miles together, from Raven Rock to the Mason-Dixon Line, where Sister Higgins picked them up, and drove Lucy home.

And so, after spending what amounted to an entire week planning and helping a group of girls prepare for and carry out a massive high adventure activity, Sister Higgins spent Monday helping just Lucy get across the finish line. Sometimes we have to wait until we're adults to truly understand the kindnesses people bestow upon us as children. I hope Lucy is able to remember this experience when she's old enough to fully appreciate it and that she has the opportunity to emulate Sister Higgins.

I am profoundly grateful for the many people, including so many of you, who sacrifice to make my family's lives happier.

Love,

Tim

Crystal with Jill Kemper, during one of their downtown donut runs.

