

7 April 1999

Dear Family,

I'm getting it out a little later than usual this month. I apologize for all the extra trips I've compelled you to make to your mailboxes during your period of anxiously awaiting to hear from us. All of my weekends have been consumed by school and church activities (mostly school) and before I realized it, March was over, and our April schedule is no less packed.

I might have composed this letter this past weekend, had we not been favored by a visit from Mom, Dad & Peter. They came down because here in Montgomery County, Maryland (and nowhere else it would seem for a thousand miles) we get the four general sessions of conference on cable. Maybe it's because Bill Marriott lives in the county. This is actually a great county to live in if you're into celebrities. Mike Tyson currently resides here--against his will of course as a guest of our penal system. He's currently serving an 8-month term for a well-publicized road rage incident near Gaithersburg. Our now world-renowned prison system also should be the home of Samuel Sheinbein (or at least his parents.) If you don't remember who Sam Sheinbein is, I'll refresh your memory with some key words and phrases: "Murderer," "Jewish," "Israeli citizenship," "Idiotic Israeli extradition law." If you still don't know who he is, then you never did. Don't worry about it. It'll just make you mad. So anyhow, it was a lot of fun having the family down here. We stocked up on the Diet Barq's in anticipation of Peter's visit. Dad contributed his share by bringing down 48 cans of V-8 Splash and taking us all out to the same New Orleans Cajun restaurant we patronized on my birthday. In the greatest of Tim Willis tradition, I ordered the same thing I had the first time. As always, it was fun for us to have them here. Peter thoroughly enjoyed not having to watch conference. I'm pretty sure Mom preferred the TV version, and almost as sure Dad didn't. This all should make for an interesting debate in six months.

For extraordinarily complex reasons beyond the scope of this letter, we had Easter dinner on Saturday between sessions. This featured, among other things, a honey baked ham from the store which bears that name. Incidentally, Grant, the flavor is worth every penny of the \$50 they cost (especially when it's somebody else's \$50.) The event was attended by Grandma & Grandpa Henrichsen and Coco. We invited these relatives after they generously offered to bring a ham. Easter was just another Christmas for Hannah, who received from her Willis grandparents, among other things, approximately 43 outfits and a talking Laa-Laa doll. (Laa-Laa, in case you don't have a 2-year-old, is the yellow Teletubby and is, as far as we can tell, a heterosexual.)

The David & Peggy Willis family has joined the exclusive club (heretofore belonged to only by Dave & Florence Farnsworth) of members of the extended Willis family who have taken me out to dinner in Washington. We caught up with them at the end of their East Coast tour which culminated with a visit to our fair city. (I realize "fair" has multiple meanings -- the ambiguity accurately reflects my feelings for this place which I generally love in spite of its numerous shortcomings.) We all had a taste of Yuppie at the California Pizza Kitchen near DuPont Circle---the part of town where no one, as far as anyone can tell, is a heterosexual.)

It just occurred to me that I've used most of this letter meant to relate the exciting events of March, discussing things that occurred in April. Hope you're prepared for a thin May installment. My last two months have been marked by so many trips to the dentist that I've lost count. I obviously didn't inherit my Grandpa Henrichsen's teeth (or my father's flossing habits for that matter.) And since there's no way of making this subject even remotely entertaining, I'll move on.

Crystal is in the process of finishing the first of two BYU independent study courses she hopes to complete by June. Doing so will allow her to retain her teaching certification. She currently isn't using it except as a credential in the day care/pre-school brochure. We feel though that it's a good contingency plan for her especially since I do ride the Metro to work every day and have consequently already outlived my current life expectancy.

The day care now has 3 full-time clients and, with Marci home, 2 full-time employees. We have a couple more in the immediate wings and a couple more pregnant Medical students who will have to bring their children to us approximately 45 minutes post-partum to avoid falling further behind in their studies. No time for mother/child bonding; but if someone has to profit from the crumbling of society, why not us?

Hannah now speaks phrases and short sentences. She even says her own prayers at night (with help.) The Teletubbies are still her first true love--one of her favorite things to talk about is how she "spilled the Tubby Custard and Noo-Noo washed it--- but the Tubbies are frequently upstaged by her love for Babe, or "The Pig Movie" as she refers to it. She can also do a perfect Homer Simpson "D'Oh." She's happy. We're happy. Hope you're happy.

Love, us.

Andrew,

Well, I hardly know where to start. The world's a considerably different place than it was a month ago. I don't know how much you've been told about what's going on in Yugoslavia. What you've probably heard is some combination of the words "Yugoslavia," "Serbia," "Kosovo," and "Milosovic." The facts I got on world events while a missionary were often somewhat jumbled. If that's the case, let me bring you up to speed and apologize if this all repetitive.

Serbia is the largest republic of Yugoslavia, and Kosovo is a province of Serbia. However, 90% of the population of Kosovo is ethnic Albanian, not Serb. As a result, Kosovo has been independence-minded for a very long time. For most of history this attitude has been passive, but in recent years, Kosovo has raised a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) which has tried (unsuccessfully) to achieve independence in Kosovo by the sword. Serbia, time and again, has effectively squashed all attempts at rebellion. But they haven't stopped there. Serbian soldiers have gone into Kosovo and massacred thousands of women and children, and shows no signs of stopping the massacre until Kosovo is completely cleansed of ethnic Albanians. (Not that it really matters, but the Serbs are so-called "Christian" and their victim Albanians are largely Muslim.) So for the past two weeks, NATO, led by the United States, has been conducting an extensive air bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, but the cleansing continues and Kosovar refugees are pouring into neighboring Albania and Macedonia. We're also airlifting them to other places, since the neighboring countries are shutting down the borders because they can't handle the volume of refugees. The images are truly frightening. Last week, the front page of the Washington Post (and probably every other newspaper in the world) had a picture of numberless Kosovars crammed in a train about to be hauled away. It looked just like something out of Schindler's List. Serbian president Slobodan Milosovic (whose name I'm doubtless misspelling) is frequently likened to Hitler. References to the Holocaust are overstated since the numbers here aren't nearly as high, but the principle is eerily similar. It's becoming increasingly clear, that while the bombing is creating substantial damage, it isn't sufficient to get the Serbs out of Kosovo, and ground troops will be necessary. Nobody likes that idea, because it could very conceivably become another Vietnam. But it's looking more and more like it will be necessary. As of this moment, the air attacks continue and there are no plans for ground troops. Congress only approved the air strikes by a narrow margin, and it seems likely that a full on declaration of war with ground troops will have trouble getting through the Senate. But I don't know what will have happened by the time you get this letter. I hope they're at least keeping you mildly informed.

On a lighter note, the sports world is alive and well. The baseball season started this week. The Phillies are 1-1. They started the season against the Braves, and actually won the first game. You knew it couldn't last though. They're expected to be better than the Expos in the NL East, but no one else. After their World Series appearance last year, the Padres promptly sold just about everyone on the team and appear to be on their way to the cellar...Hello, can you say "Marlins." The Yankees are pretty much the same team they were last year, except they traded David Wells to the Blue Jays and got Roger Clemens. So, uh the wheels are really going to have to fall off for 1999 not to be a repeat performance of 1998 for the Yanks. You never know though. The Cardinals have played one game, and McGwire has 1 home run--he's therefore on pace to beat his record last year (70) by about 92.

The Sixers and Flyers are both starting to fade. Lindros and Iverson both at one time led their leagues in scoring. Iverson still leads the NBA, but Lindros is done (see enclosed article.) The Flyers have qualified for the playoffs, but are really backing their way in, and without Lindros will doubtless make an early exit. The Sixers currently are 10th in the conference, which of course is two slots out of the playoffs, but considerably better than where they've been most of this decade. They could still pour it on and get in. The Jazz, who for a while looked unstoppable in the West, have come back to earth a little bit. Back to back blowout losses to the Clippers and the Kings have served notice to the league (especially to the west) that Utah is very vulnerable. Who knows though. Rodman signed with the Lakers (I think I might have already told you that) and they're pretty good. As you can see from the standings though, Portland just never loses. It's great to see Chicago in the cellar (though they recently beat the Sixers.)

UConn upset Duke in the NCAA final. Tons of upsets in the first two rounds (even more than usual): Weber State beat Carolina in the first round--of course nobody here has any idea where the hell Weber State is (I think it's in Ogden, but I'm not positive.) Anyway, tons of upsets early, but in the end 3 #1 seeds were in the final 4 and Duke and UConn were the top two teams in the country. Good tourney. I won some cash in the office pool.

So how's the renaissance choir going? Still in business? I guess Mom told me you were transferred again. Heard about your great family and new bishopric member. Sounds like fun. Hope things are good. Miss and love you.