

## Dear Family,

Grace had already pronounced July 4, 2011, the best day of her life so far. She did so in the afternoon following an estimated 17 thousand uninterrupted runs down the slip 'n' slide at the picnic hosted by the gracious couple who live two doors down from Grant and Jen. We joined Grace's paternal grandparents and most of her cousins in crashing this picnic for the fourth or fifth year in a row and had a very nice time. It's become a fun little tradition for us. Later that night, Grace split her knee open on an escalator inside the Pentagon. She now looks back on the day as "painful."

We watched the July 4th fireworks from the Pentagon office of an assistant secretary of Defense, whose wall of windows looks out across the river at the monuments, which frame the show. Contrary to how our town is portrayed in movies and on TV, most offices *don't* have huge picture windows providing unobstructed views of the Capitol and Washington Monument. But this one actually does, and the view was nice, though ultimately the experience wasn't all that different from watching the fireworks on TV. (I know this because we were watching them on the office TV at the same time—there's about a three-second delay.) But watching them on TV doesn't enable you to say that you watched the July 4th fireworks over the National Mall from inside the Pentagon, which is a cool thing to be able to say. (Since you asked, we gained access to this very nice office by way of a very nice friend who works for this particular assistant secretary—who wasn't there but is probably also very nice.)

The following weekend saw the six of us make our way downtown to the Kennedy Center to see *Wicked*. You may recall that Crystal and the three oldest girls [saw it on Broadway almost exactly a year ago](#), but Grace and I hadn't seen it, and since Grace has most of the songs memorized, and everybody else wanted to see it again, we figured it was time for all of us to go. Hannah spoke for all her sisters when she described it as "still awesome the second time," and it would be hard for me to disagree. The conversation over dinner afterward at the Cheesecake Factory included comparing and contrasting the Broadway and Washington productions. I didn't follow most of it, but the consensus seemed to be that they liked Elphaba better here and everything else was about the same. I very much enjoyed the show, notwithstanding its transparently misandrous overtones. The moral of the story seems to be that girls are right to follow their natural inclination to rebel against male authority figures in their lives because those figures are likely to be unenlightened fools and/or frauds. The closest thing the story has to a masculine hero is Fiyero—a character who enters as an ungrounded pretty-boy ("[Dancing Through Life](#)") and evolves into a man with literally no brains. Don't get me wrong, I love the show, but as a male authority figure on at least a couple of fronts, I just want you to know that I'm wise to these attempts to undermine my kind.

p.s. I've also reached the point where I can no longer listen to "[Defying Gravity](#)" without mentally composing an (admittedly facile) sermon exploring all the various ways in which the song is utterly antithetical to the Plan of Salvation. It's a sermon I'll never actually write or give because, if for no other reason, complicated pop culture references in talks tend to make for a bit of a high-wire act. (And besides, I really like the song.)

When the girls weren't watching musicals this month they were practicing for and performing in them. Every two or three years our stake gets ambitious and endeavors to put on some sort of production. This time it was a musical revue containing a wide variety of numbers built loosely around a half-dozen or so Gilbert & Sullivan standards, mostly from *Penzance*. Crystal did a very nice job as the modern major general. Elsewhere in the program, Hannah, Lucy, and Sophie made up half the ensemble that performed "I Enjoy Being a Girl" and Lucy later soloed during "Under the Sea." Grace and I—the only members of the family *not* in the show—enjoyed watching it. The two of us have also enjoyed quite a bit of one-on-one time this month while everyone else has been at rehearsal. We've spent most of this time at Chick-fil-A, at home watching TV, or at the driving range. (She thinks I'm the world's greatest golfer—and you might, too, if the only place you saw me hit was on the driving range.)

Predictably, rehearsals competed with swim meets throughout the month, but somehow it all worked out. It was particularly challenging for Hannah who missed the final big Saturday rehearsal so she could swim in four individual events and one relay at the season-ending divisional championship meet. She came home from that meet with four medals: three for her second-place finishes in freestyle, breaststroke and butterfly and another for coming in third in I.M. Her team won the meet and the overall division championship. Everybody's happy.

In the middle of all this, Lucy just finished a week of "drama camp." It will probably come as little surprise to you that there are few places where Lucy is more in her element than at drama camp. I don't know how Lucy will feel about that last sentence, but I don't think she'll deny it.

Finally, I'm happy to report that our formerly rotting 18-by-8-foot covered front porch has been restored to health thanks largely to the efforts of two guys I home teach (Rick Kemper and Kelly Jacobsen) and two full-time elders. My home teacher would have helped, but he's visiting family in Utah this week. It's funny to think that it wasn't too, too many years ago that I used to wonder whether home teaching in geographically dispersed wards wasn't more trouble than it was worth. What an idiot I was. It took me all of about 15 minutes as bishop to realize that there's just no way a lay-clergy model works without it. Anyway, we're delighted with our newly replanked porch. Feel free to drop by sometime and take a look at it. We'd love to see you.

Love,

Tim et al



Crystal: a modern major general



Pirates: Lucy, Sophie, Hannah, and Crystal





Sophie, Lucy and Hannah at the Kennedy Center Opera House.



Grace and me. We had a lot of time together this month.



Elder Greiner (from Idaho) and Elder Wells (from Utah) work on our porch.



A farewell to the summer swim team season:

Top Left: Lucy and Grace (seated)

Above: Lucy

Left: Hannah (those are different kinds of sushi on her swim cap—our household goes through a lot of swim caps).