

the Famlet monthly

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Dear Family,

Notwithstanding the Sunday date at the top of this letter, I'm actually beginning this on Saturday afternoon, as I have 45 minutes to kill before leaving for stake conference. I probably won't get very far with this because I keep getting distracted by the 15 Lucy-aged girls (and two boys), mostly from school and swim team, down the basement practicing their own special arrangement of Cee Lo Green's superlatively profane hit *F[orget] You*.

I understand the girls are preparing to perform the tune for their friend who, earlier this week, was diagnosed with childhood Hodgkin's lymphoma (a disease that I'm told isn't as bad as it sounds, but...). Anyway, the girls have changed the lyrics, not only to eliminate the obscenities, but to praise their friend and redirect the song's underlying message of contempt toward her cancer. It's kind of sweet (in a 12-year-old-girl sort of way).

The song is now indelibly lodged in my head, which means I'm about to walk into the priesthood leadership session of stake conference humming the melody to *F[orget] You*.

Many of these same girls (including the soon-to-be cancer patient) were here two Saturdays ago celebrating Lucy's 12th birthday. I missed a lot of it (I can't remember why) but the remnants of 50+ cans of silly string that were emptied on the deck and in the backyard are an enduring reminder of it. It also featured a chocolate fountain (I'm not sure which is a bigger pox on the land, chocolate fountains or those stupid windmills). Anyway, Lucy's happy to finally be in Young Women and, when not angst-ridden over the prognosis of her friend, seems to be doing okay.

The other birthday this month was Crystal's. I imagine she's delighted to have me tell you she's now 41 (which seems really old to those of us still in our thirties). I only mention this because we didn't really do anything all that special last year when she turned 40. I frankly don't understand the simple-minded fascination with numbers that happen to be divisible by 10. We advanced thinkers are more intrigued by primes (41, for example), and so it was *this* year I elected to organize a surprise birthday party for her.

When I say "organize a surprise birthday party," what I mean is, I called our friends Bill and Whitney Warner and told them what I wanted to do, and they (Whitney) did everything, including getting the black balloons, arranging for the food, and hosting it at her house (which is much bigger and nicer than our house, so that worked out well). I don't think Crystal was actually surprised, but she pretended to be, and she seemed to appreciate the effort.

Hannah continues to enjoy high school. She and some friends even went to homecoming earlier this month. I don't know whether the term *stag* is correctly applied to girls, but they didn't have dates. One of their stated reasons for wanting to go was to sell cupcakes for some school-related cause. I can't remember what. She continues to enjoy her [CAP](#) classes, and she told me a week or so ago that her journalism class was beginning its Watergate "unit." It's probably just me, but an entire unit strikes me as a disproportionate amount of time to

devote to a single event. Maybe it's because Carl Bernstein is an alumnus of Hannah's high school (he really is). Maybe it's because journalism hasn't really had anything of substance to crow about since then. Or maybe it's just because her journalism teacher is a rabid, tax-loving, Nixon-hater (which she is). Whatever the reason, Hannah likes that class and most of her other classes and is even doing well in chemistry. I hired her yesterday (Saturday) to copyedit a 35-page report to Congress I've been writing for a certain federal agency. She knocked it out in about four hours (mostly while I was watching college football). Best 40 bucks I ever spent.

I think Sophie and Grace also are still enjoying school, though they're somewhat less demonstrative about it. You may recall that Sophie used to take her own temperature every school morning in the hope of somehow generating a number that would enable her to stay home. She doesn't do that so much any more, but she still maintains a near-religious devotion to the diagnostic power of the digital thermometer. A couple of weeks ago (on an evening when Crystal was out—I don't remember why) Sophie stumbled into my bedroom looking gray and just altogether ill. She told me she wasn't feeling well and went to retrieve the thermometer from my bathroom. I felt her forehead and told her that I didn't think she had a fever but that I could tell she was sick. Undeterred, she stuck the thermometer in her mouth, waited for the beep, took it out and looked at it. Her shoulders drooped as she reported the result, "97.8 degrees. I guess I'm not really sick." She then slowly made her way back down the hall toward her bedroom. And promptly threw up. I don't know whether she's lost her faith in the thermometer. Stay tuned. (Her illness didn't last more than a day or so, by the way. She's fine now.)

I caught a touch of it, too, which slowed down my running for a day or two. But my routine has more or less held together through October. The 24.8 miles per week I averaged this month was down from my 31.1 miles per week in September, but I'm also getting a little less slow. I averaged 8:52/mile over my 25.5 miles last week. Nobody who cares about these kinds of figures will find them the least bit impressive, but I was north of 10:00/mile as recently as mid-summer, and as a saying on my Willis grandparents' bulletin board taught me, it doesn't really matter where you are on the path, so long as you're moving in the right direction. It occurred to me this week that I'm now replacing my running shoes more often than I swap out my toothbrush (which I do every three months). Crystal's and my first half-marathon is two weeks from yesterday in Richmond, and I'm actually excited about it. (Crystal isn't.) I can't say how long this little awakening will last—I'm trying to work in more cross-training (swimming) to keep my joints from falling apart—but I'm eating better and am under 197 (prime number) pounds for the first time this century (I think). There are 10 suits in my closet that don't fit anymore, and I'm too lazy to take them to the tailor, so I look like a bum, but I feel great.

Grace is also eating better. She reported to me one morning earlier this month that she had just eaten three bowls of Cookie Crisp and that that was a "new record." Cookie Crisp might just be the world's greatest cereal, and I'm very proud of her.

Happy Halloween. Love, Tim *et al*

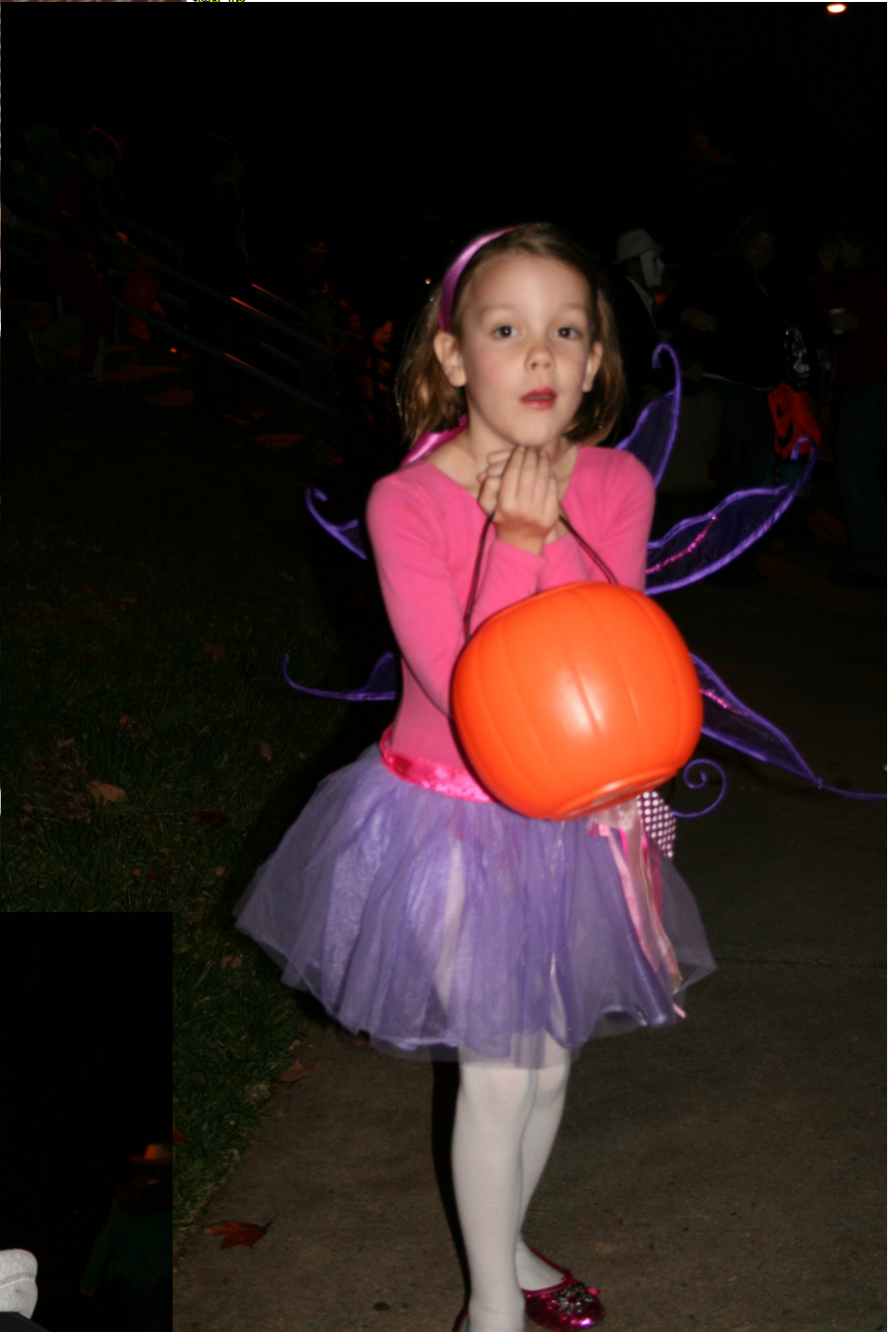




Lucy exults on her 12th birthday. (If you know Lucy, you'll understand why she has a birthday pie)



Lucy's Silly String birthday party (in our backyard).



Sophie at school; Grace and Lucy at the White Oak Ward Trunk-or-Treat activity. All costumed on the Friday before Halloween.

(You can't see it, but Lucy has a box of Cookie Crisp with a big cleaver through it. She's a *cereal killer*.)