

# the Famlet monthly

November 30, 2011

Volume 14, Number 11

## Dear Family,

When I was a kid in New Jersey I had this friend named Ricky. We did a lot of things together. Birthday parties, Cub Scouts, we were even baptized at the same service and confirmed during the same fast and testimony meeting. Ricky was two weeks older than me, which meant he got to start Cubs first. Sometime during the two weeks that Ricky was a Cub Scout and I wasn't yet, I attended the Cub Scout [regatta](#) just so I could watch and cheer for Ricky's boat. (I also booed all the other boats—until some grown-up told me I wasn't supposed to do that. I remember feeling very embarrassed.)

Ricky and I remained friends until we were 10 or so, when his family moved away to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. I wouldn't encounter Ricky again until sometime after I'd become engaged to marry his older sister.

He goes by 'Rick' now, and we still don't see each other often because we live here and he lives with his wife, son, and daughter in Los Angeles. (In case you've forgotten, my award-winning account of his 2002 wedding on Catalina Island is posted [here](#).)

Rick is in "the business" (and by "the business" I mean "the industry") editing and producing what is still quaintly referred to as "film." He came to Washington earlier this month to attend the premiere of his latest project, a television documentary airing on MSNBC entitled "Young Kids, Hard Time." The show chronicles the day-to-day lives of juvenile offenders who are tried as adults and sentenced to adult prison terms. If you've ever been inclined to think that it's a good idea to hang a 30-year sentence on a 13-year-old boy (regardless of what he did) this show might change your mind.

Rick invited Crystal and me to join him at the premiere, which was held at the National Press Club. We had a good time, and, in return, we allowed Rick to sleep in our disgusting basement. (If all goes according to plan, however, our basement will have been transformed into a downright hospitable place a month from now. Stay tuned.)

Rick's visit happened to coincide with the Richmond Marathon. Crystal, Roland, Marci and I were running in the concurrent "McDonald's Half Marathon" (a race I chose solely because I thought they'd hand out Big Macs along the route—they didn't). And so on the day following his premiere, Rick joined Crystal, Hannah and me in making the 125-mile drive south to the one-time Confederate capital for the race.

The drive was pure torture. Trying to escape Washington in any direction on a Friday afternoon is never a winning proposition. But my suspicion that things were even worse than usual on this day was confirmed when Rick said something along the lines of, "And I thought the traffic in L.A. was bad..."

We rolled into Richmond in time to do not much more than pick up our race packets, grab dinner with Roland and Marci and family, and then retire to our respective quarters—the Kents to Roland and Marci's motor home, and Crystal, Hannah and I to the Richmond Marriott.

In contrast to Roland and Marci, who are seasoned Ironman triathletes, this was Crystal's and my first half marathon. Con-

sequently, our principal goal was just to run the whole way. My other goal was to finish in under two hours. I barely managed that, rolling in at 1:59:13—a solid half hour behind Roland. My time was good enough for 2,257th place out of 6,263 finishers. (It helps if you kindly ignore the fact that women accounted for 72 percent of the 4,006 people who finished behind me. I was, nevertheless, no more than a minute or two behind the median finishers among my own gender and age group. *How's that for bragging? I'm only slightly slower than average!*) My five fastest individual miles were the last five (and the 13th was my fastest of all) which tells me I probably left something in the tank. This inspired me enough to register for the 2012 Richmond (full) Marathon, which gives me one more thing to fret about for the next 12 months.

I may not be a fast runner, but you should see how slowly I swim. Sometimes Hannah and I share a lane at the Y. She passes me every three to four lengths of the pool. She's faster just kicking with her arms at her side than I am swimming. She stops occasionally to offer pointers on how to improve my pull (which is weak) and my kick (which is a total joke). I think I understand what she's telling me, and I try to do it, but, as with various types of skiing, I have a hard time making my body actually do what I tell it to. Anyhow, Hannah's back on the Blair High School swim team this year. Her first meet is Saturday, where she'll swim three freestyle events, including the anchor leg of the 400-meter free relay.

Thanksgiving was chaotically pleasant, as usual. The afternoon before, the six of us (plus a friend of Sophie's) joined Grant's family, Grandma and Aunt Coco at the Olney Theater Center's production of *The Sound of Music*. Having sat through both the play and the movie as a boy and coming away with the impression that the show would still be really boring even if it weren't so long, I went in with fairly low expectations. I guess I've grown up because I actually enjoyed it this time, and so did all the girls (which is less surprising, since, well, they're girls). After the show, we went down the street to grab dinner at Café Rio. We'd been eating for a few minutes when I walked Captain Von Trapp, Liesl, Rolfe, a bunch of nuns, and I don't know who else from the show. It took about 30 seconds for the girls from our table to muster the courage to make their way over to the actors' tables. Lucy had them autograph her Playbill, and Hannah had them autograph her Café Rio carry-out menu. It was all rather sweet.

As for Café Rio, I've now eaten there. It was fine. Note to my brothers and other people (mostly from Utah) who speak of Café Rio in superlative, near-reverential terms, as if its very existence is somehow evidence of a benevolent supreme being: Enough already. It's fine. It's good, even. But at the end of the day, it's Mexican food. And whether you think it's on par with Chipotle (which I also like) or think it's light years better, it still boils down to beans, rice, cheap cuts of meat, pedestrian sauces and a tortilla. It's good comfort food, but ultimately it's limited by being an inherently mediocre genre. That's why there's bad Mexican and there's good Mexican, but there's no such thing as great Mexican. (Chinese food—same thing, same reason.)

So find a great Thai place and enjoy the holiday season.

Love, Tim et al





**Grace** (blue smock) is now in “Daisies,” while **Sophie** (green vest) has moved up to “Juniors.” I’ve recently learned that “Daisies” and “Juniors” are flavors of Girl Scouts. I’d previously only heard of “Brownies” because Sophie was one last year. As it turns out, “Juniors” are older than Brownies, but younger than full-fledged “Girl Scouts,” and Daisies are younger than Brownies. I’m pretty sure they all sell cookies though, so come January, my inexorable march down the BMI scale will come to a screeching halt.

In this picture, they’re heading out to Girl Scout “Investiture” (whatever that is).

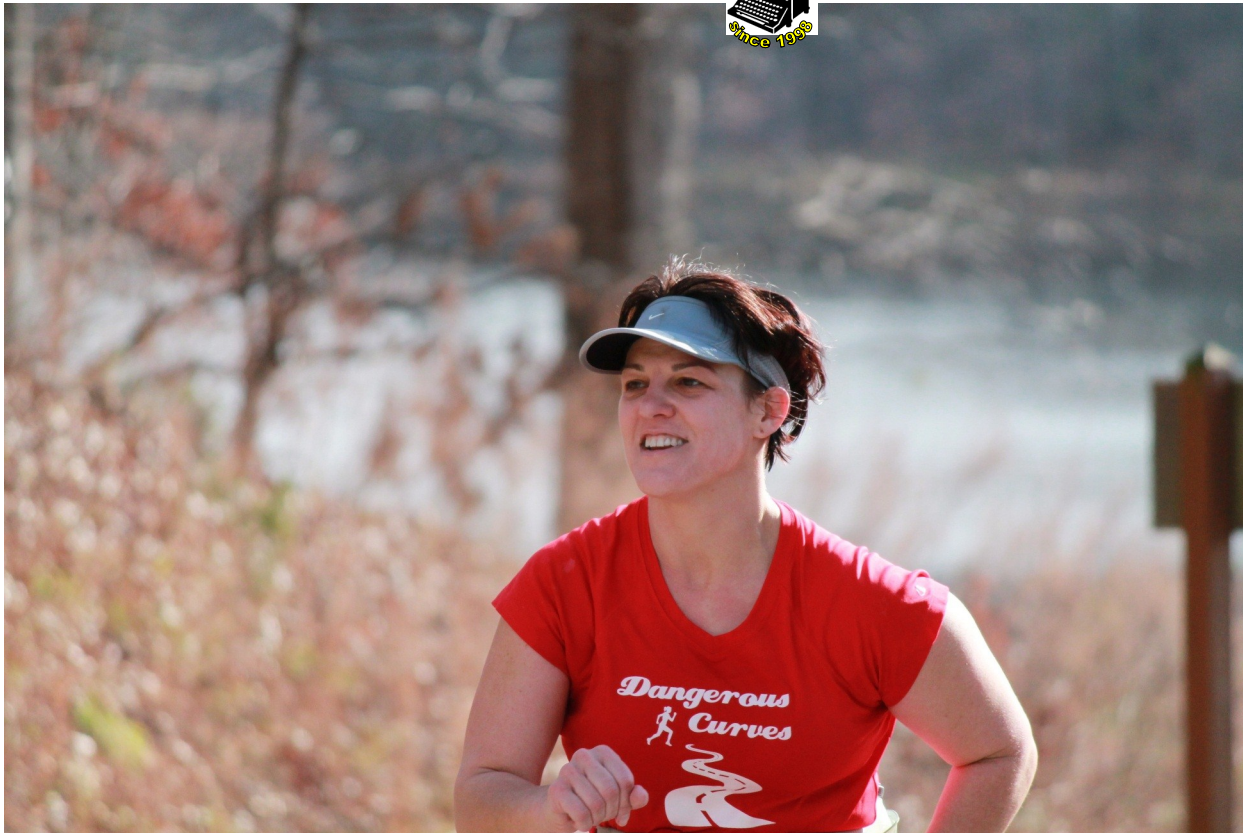
Regular readers know that pictures of me rarely make it into these letters. This month you get at least two (because I’m so proud of myself).

This one is of me crossing the finish line at the McDonald’s Half Marathon in Richmond, Virginia. (Somewhere on the internet, there’s video of my arms-extended pirouette just prior to the finish line. I might have to figure out how to post a link to that.)

Photos allegedly exist of Crystal, Roland, and Marci running the same race (and even the four of us together showing off our awesome medals). I was unable to find those photos prior to press time, however. Sorry. Perhaps you could check back later.







These pictures of Crystal and me were taken during the final mile (almost entirely uphill) of the Montgomery County Road Runners' annual Saturday-after-Thanksgiving "Turkey Burn-off" 10-miler at Seneca Creek State Park.

I'm a new member of the MoCo Road Runners, and, overall, I think I like them. I have just two gripes thus far:

- 1) They are adamantly opposed to runners wearing earphones, and earphones are banned in all their races. (This was the longest distance I'd ever run without them.)
- 2) They laid out a 10-mile race course with an uphill finish!

