

the Famlet monthly

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Dear Family,

So I have this whiteboard on my office wall at home, and notwithstanding my frequent and seldom-heeded request that people stay out of my office and not mess things up in here, the girls regularly come in to steal my stuff and draw on the whiteboard. This morning I walked in to find a message in Grace's handwriting.

It reads: *I [heart] Daddy so so so so so much.*

And then she starts on a new line: *As much as Mommy.*

I might never erase it.

Summer swim league is over. And for the 10th year in a row, I've been the less-active spouse of a highly engaged swim team mom. As a result, I was struck by the usual pangs of guilt for not doing as much as so many of the other parents, though the pangs were probably not frequent or severe enough to cause me to change my ways. I did, however, make it to most of the meets and even worked the café for part of one of them. I cut a few bagels and croissants in half and put sliced watermelon on paper plates. So there.

Every swim season ends with an awards banquet. Grace was awarded a medal for being the team's most improved 8-and-under girl. Most of her improvement came in the last meet of the season after her coach convinced her to focus her attention on the lane line at the bottom of the pool rather than admire the scenery while casually making her way down the pool. Grace followed this counsel with tremendous intensity—at times pushing her head further beneath the surface of the water than was needful in order to better focus on the line. She dropped 7 seconds in her 25-meter freestyle event—*seven seconds!*—and actually finished ahead of a few swimmers. Her mother and I had been trying to get her to keep her head down for as long as she's been swimming. I guess the parenting lesson is that if you want your children to do something then you're better off asking someone else to tell them to do it. (But I think I already knew that.)

Sophie didn't have as much room for improvement as Grace did but still dropped significant time in all her events. She has expressed renewed interest in non-summer swimming. She dabbles in this some years but has never really sustained interest in it. This year might be different. For the second year in a row, Hannah was a top-10 point earner, which gets you glory and adulation and a somewhat larger trophy at the banquet. This despite having moved up to the 15-18 age group this year and being the youngest swimmer in most of her races.

(Everybody gets some sort of trophy, of course. It wasn't that way when I was a kid. The championship team and the all-star team got trophies, and the rest of us got squat. And as I sit here inclined to pine for the good old days

before everything became the Special Olympics and everyone was declared a winner, I turn and notice the medal I proudly display on my office wall. It was placed around my neck by a volunteer at the Washington DC marathon after I shuffled across the finish line in 2,183rd place back in March. It's the exact same medal that was awarded to people who finished two hours ahead of me. Come to think of it, I guess I've always liked the Special Olympics.)

Lucy opted out of swimming this summer but still supported the team as a "runner." (If you're familiar with minimally-automated summer swim meets, you know the runners are principally responsible for transmitting race results from the pool-side officials to the scorers.) Lucy's a good team player who likes to help where she feels she can be useful. And she's useful in a lot of places.

Speaking of useful, Crystal and I have new bikes. One of the benefits of riding a clunky, low-end hybrid for as long as I have is you really appreciate it when you move up the 2012 Trek Madone 4.5. It's 60 centimeters of pure carbon-fiber awesomeness! I rode it to and from work (20+ miles each way) for the first time on Thursday and shaved 30 minutes (each way) off the time it used to take me on my hybrid. *Thirty minutes!* To be fair, I'm somewhat lighter and in considerably better shape now than back [in 2009 when I was riding my hybrid to work](#), but I'm not really in biking shape, and still, *30 minutes faster!* Riding this bike is nothing short of effortless flight over the pavement. Grant invited me out for an early-morning ride yesterday with the other counselor in his bishopric, named Rob. Rob happens to be a Secret Service agent who used to accompany President Bush on rides. (I learned this because he was wearing his Bush 43 protection detail cycling jersey—how cool is that?) President Obama isn't a biker (the commie) so Rob doesn't ride for work anymore, but he's still a really good cyclist, and I was worried about slowing him and Grant down. But they were nice to me and I had a good time.

Speaking of Secret Service agents, Crystal and girls saw quite a few of them earlier this month at our ward youth activity—a tour of the White House. Hannah and I were at the divisional championship swim meet, so we didn't go, but everybody else did and had fun (I think).

But back to bikes, Crystal's new one (a bright purple, carbon-fiber Kona) is pretty awesome, too. She just needs to work up the nerve to ride it in traffic.

Since I'm already in pretty decent running and swimming shape, and getting back into cycling has been easier than I thought it might be, Crystal and I have gone ahead and registered for the Olympic-distance [SavageMan Triathlon](#) in and around Western Maryland's Deep Creek Lake on September 15th. We'll let you know how that works out.

Love, Tim *et al*

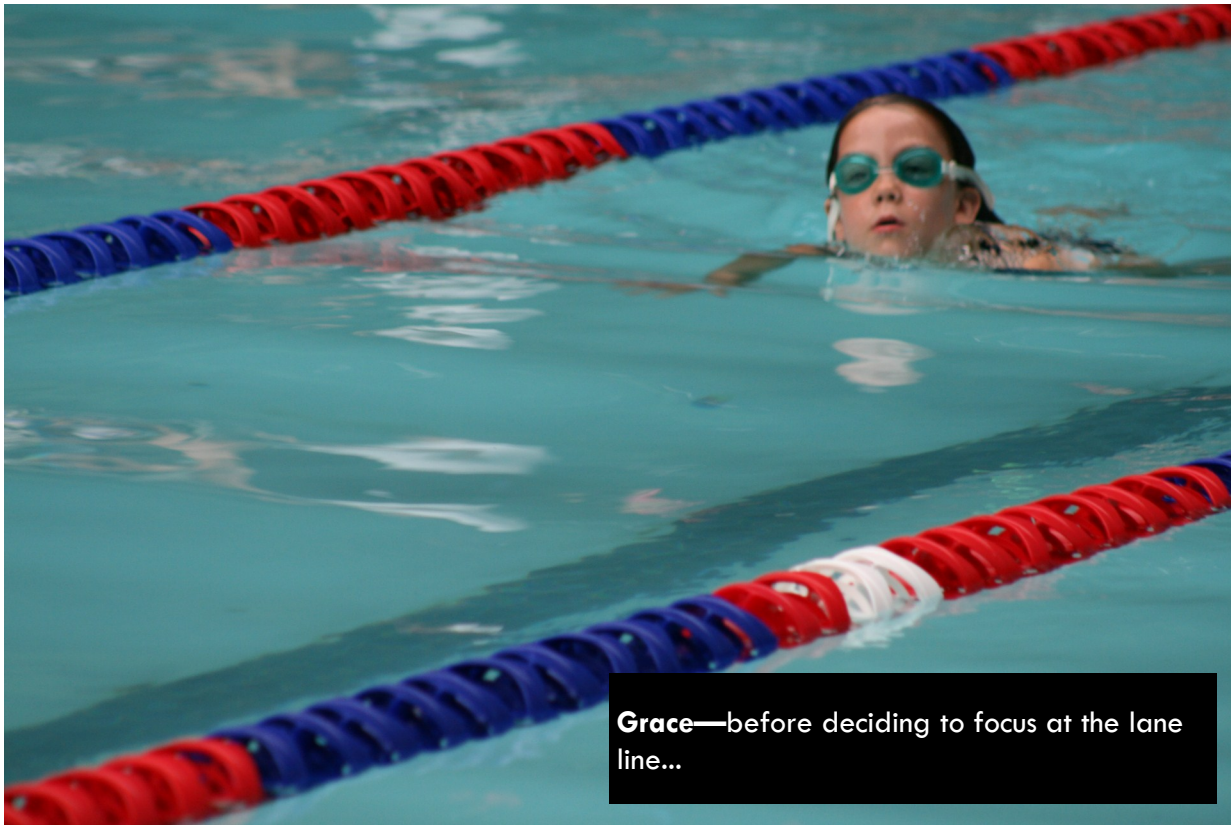




Grace, Sophie and Lucy at the White House



At Five Guys—after the White House. The tall girl in the middle is named Mckenna. She's not a member of our family, but we'd take her.



Grace—before deciding to focus at the lane line...



...and her patented knee-first entry...

...and her now immortalized note on my whiteboard.

