

the Famlet monthly

November 30, 2014

Volume 17, Number 10

Dear Family,

If you were following me on Twitter ([@timothywillis](#)), and chances are you're not, you would already know that I established new personal records this weekend both in the 10K, in a race on Thanksgiving morning, and in the 10 mile, in a race yesterday morning.

The annual Saturday-after-Thanksgiving race is called the "Turkey Burnoff," presumably for the benefit of those who persist in the (mistaken, I think) belief that weight can be effectively managed by compensating for caloric intake with physical activity. My skepticism of this relationship continues to deepen. While I acknowledge that there may be truth to the notion in some very abstract sense, if the relationship were anywhere near as linear or arithmetically simple as the step-counting, Fitbit-wearing, fat-free-food-seeking masses make it out to be, then the quadriplegic man for whom I cared for over a year back in college would have weighed 850 pounds. (He didn't.)

I mention the stupidly named race not only for the opening it gives me to attack conventional wisdom but because this was the first year I ran it without Crystal. She has run it more times than I have, but she missed this year because of the bunionectomy she had on the knuckle of her left big toe earlier this month. She is halfway through her scheduled six weeks in a walking boot, is getting around fine, and seems to be feeling okay.

The procedure caused her to miss Sophie's performance that evening of "Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again" at her school's "Coffee House," something else you'd already know about if you followed me on Twitter. (Do you need the handle again? It's [@timothywillis](#). Just click on it; it's not that hard.) Coffee House is a thrice-annual joint venture of the Silver Spring International Middle School instrumental and choral music departments, in which, on a Friday night, they use lighting, tablecloths, and various other effects taken from the art room in an effort to capture the ambiance of a coffee house in the band room. Individuals and small ensembles then take turns giving short performances. It's a pretty neat thing and cause me yet again to be amazed not only at the caliber of music middle school students are capable of generating but how much effort teachers put into stuff like this outside the classroom (even though this was technically in the classroom—the band room, actually, but you know what I mean—it was after hours).

Anyway, Sophie sang great. I was her accompanist. One of the other parents took a picture, which I've attached, and another student shot video and allegedly posted it to YouTube, but I don't know where (kids these days) and so I can't give you that. Sophie and her sisters *really* like Phantom of the Opera, which I guess is *still* running on Broadway, which is amazing to me since it started there when I was in high school. The girls sing the songs around the house *all the time* and often try plucking them out on the piano. It is at times both cute and tedious.

Sophie's audition for all-county chorus was not successful this year. (She made it last year.) We are still awaiting the verdict from her all-state audition. If I'm being honest, things like this give me mixed feelings as a parent. I want my daughters to be successful in things, but I also like *not* driving all over creation.

The day after Coffee House was the home leg of D.C. United's opening round playoff series against the hated New York Red Bulls. (This would be soccer, in case you don't know.) Sophie, Grace and I went together. I did not get seats in our usual section because I was tired of sitting behind the same large group of local fans that wave gigantic flags throughout the game and obscure my view of the action. I did not realize that our new seats across the stadium were going to be right next to a huge bloc of visiting New York fans who spent the entire match singing, chanting, cursing, and probably spreading tuberculosis. But at least we could see the pitch. United won the game but lost the series on aggregate goals scored, thus becoming the latest local team to follow a highly successful regular season with an early flame-out in the playoffs. (See: *Washington Nationals (2012, 2014)*, *Washington Redskins (2012)*, *Washington Capitals (2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013)*.) Our side's failure did not deter Grace, who insisted on staying until the final whistle even after it had become quite cold and the ultimate outcome was no longer in doubt. I may have a sports fan in Grace. She is the only member of the family who will cuddle up next to me to watch a game on TV and actually seem to enjoy it. We'll see if it lasts.

We missed Hannah on Thanksgiving. She spent the holiday in Pocatello, Idaho, with the family of her friend Ben Randall. (See [September's letter](#) if you don't remember who Ben is.) The rest of us had a nice weekend with the usual suspects, minus Andrew's family but plus Roland's family. The highlight of the weekend (other than my race results and watching the Eagles demolish Dallas) was probably our Black Friday morning visit to the Temple. Including Roland's and Marci's kids and Peter, I believe we brought nine patrons to the baptistry. Matt, Grant, Roland, and I took turns baptizing and confirming our kids (and brother) and it was most pleasant time.

I haven't seen it hit the *Church News* (possibly because I don't read the *Church News*) but our stake presidency was reorganized earlier this month. I am at a loss to describe how much I love our new stake president, Eric Denna. He recently joined the University of Maryland as its VP/Chief Information Officer. Earlier this year, while holding the same position at the University of Utah, he got a call from the president of the U. of Md., whom he didn't know well, asking him to apply for their opening. Eric and his wife Lyn were living in Bountiful, less than an hour's drive from all 11 of their grandchildren. Eric asked Lyn what she thought they should do and was more than a little surprised when she said she thought they should go. When I met them for the first time several months ago, he told me he felt they had been brought here for a purpose but did not know what it was. I had a pretty good idea. He's been a stake president before and a bishop three times. He was also the Managing Director of the Church's Priesthood Department for eight years. He is an absolute giant—it's like having a General Authority for a stake president. Just seeing him walk into the room makes me happy. And I get to be his counselor. So I've got that going for me.

May the Christmas season bring you comfort and joy.

Love,

Tim et al





Above: Sophie and Grace at RFK Stadium, witnessing the end of DC United's short-lived playoff run
Below: Sophie's "Coffee House" performance (in the Silver Spring International Middle School band room).
That's me at the keyboard.





These two photos are little self-indulgent, sorry.

Above: Dennis Windley (outgoing stake president, unbuttoned jacket, third from right) surrounded by the five men who served as his counselors: Francisco Ovalles, Stephen Antoniak, Bill Elwell, Michael Keller, and me.

Below: Eric Denna (new stake president, center) surrounded by his two counselors and Elder Jack N. Gerard, Area Seventy (far left) and Elder Anthony D. Perkins of the Seventy (far right)

