

THE FAMLET MONTHLY



Dear Family,

Sometimes you don't realize how long you've been doing something until it ends. Not all of life's little eras and streaks are necessarily worthy of note, but cosmic significance has never been a requirement for me to write about something.

June marked the end of Lucy's four-month relationship with veganism. She is now simply a vegetarian, which is far less annoying. She did a remarkably good job of putting up with my good-natured ribbing (I always *intended* it good-naturedly, at least) but ultimately I think it was grandma's macaroni and cheese that did her in.

Pizza may have played a role, too. There's a new place in the Wheaton Plaza food court that sells vegan pizza. Lucy had it once and claimed to like it, but "vegan cheese" is one of those things that can make me wretch just thinking about it.

As for me, I remain more persuaded by the science behind ketogenic diets than any other, but I lack the discipline to actually live them. Carbohydrates are just too delicious. The futility of believing that a principle is true while failing to bring one's life into conformity with it seems like a good sermon topic, but alas, I am now out of the sermon-giving business. (More on that later.)

Consequently, I continue to eat more or less like a 15-year-old boy. I like to think that I am not the same person today that I was a year ago, five years ago, or



Lucy at the Renwick Gallery—June 29th, 2018.

ten years ago. I prefer to dwell on areas in which I feel I have improved, but these improvements are not easily measured. One of the reasons I've continued running the Baltimore 10-Miler for six of the last seven years is that I appreciate having the benchmark. This year's race revealed that I am both significantly heavier and slower than I was a year ago. I finished this year with my worst time ever—nearly ten *minutes* slower than last year. I have lots of excuses, but I won't bore you with them.

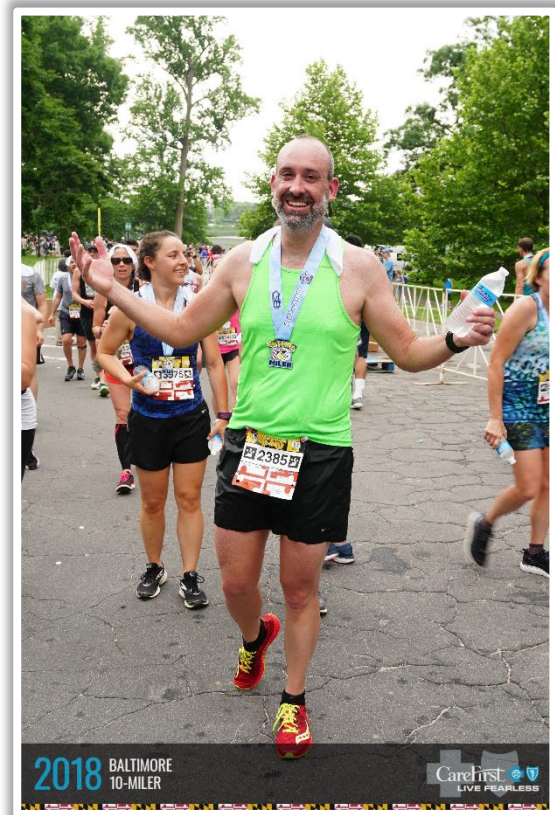
Wait, yes, I *will* bore you with them. My first excuse is that it was an usually hot and muggy June morning. (June mornings around here are often muggy, but this one was worse than most.) Note to family members in drier climates: running in warm humidity is torture—especially for us larger people. I spent a couple of days in Denver earlier this month, which allowed me to test a hypothesis I've held for years: all else equal, running in warm humidity (dew point in the mid-60s or higher) is more taxing than running at altitude. Based on a statistically dubious, non-blinded, single trial, $n=1$ experiment in which I was both the researcher and the subject, I can categorically state that running in Baltimore in June (elev. 238 feet, temp. 73 degrees, dew point 68 degrees) is a helluva lot more taxing than running in Denver in June (elev. 5,280 feet, temp. 72 degrees, dew point 25 degrees). Also, I understand bodies can acclimate to high altitude. I was born in Washington, D.C., and have lived in high humidity virtually my entire life—it doesn't get any less miserable.

After my run in Denver I needed to pick something up at Walgreen's. Believing that I might qualify for a discount, the cashier asked if I was 55 or older. (I'm 46.) Maybe the altitude was more taxing than I realized. Or maybe this gray beard just isn't working for me as well as Crystal claims.

Another excuse is that I've been doing a lot more biking than running lately. The bike continues to be how I get to work 95 percent of the time. Occasionally, when it's icy or if I'm just looking for a reason to have my soul sucked out of me, I take Metro. One time—*one time* since last July—I drove to work. It was this month—June 1st—the day before the Baltimore 10-Miler—because I wanted to preserve my legs. Lot of good that did me. I'd like to say that my commitment to biking to work somehow issues from my concern for the environment or a commitment to physical fitness, and I suppose I do care about those things. But the



Me, feeling hefty, during and after this year's Baltimore 10-Miler



overriding reason is I'm just a cheapskate who hates to pay for parking.

My other excuse is persistent, painful tightness in my right hamstring that hobbled me for all of May and the first half of June. But that seems to be better now.

Sophie and Grace are at girls camp this week without their mother for the first time ever. Crystal had attended camp in various capacities for a majority of the past 12 years. This is over now, and it's been an unusually quiet house for the past few days with virtually no piano and just Lucy home with us. Yesterday she and Crystal went to the Renwick Gallery, which is currently exhibiting a bunch of [art from Burning Man](#). (See accompanying pictures.) The probability of my ever going to Burning Man is somewhere between 0.004 and 0.008 percent, but there's a part of me that thinks it looks kinda cool.

Lucy, not currently employed, is now seeking work as a professional mermaid. She frequently takes her mono-fin mermaid tail to the pool, swims around in it, and enchants younger girls with her ukulele playing and singing. Some of these girls seem to think Lucy possesses magical powers. Last week, one of them asked Lucy if she would play and sing at her birthday party.

"When is the party?" Lucy asked.

"In about five minutes," the little girl replied.

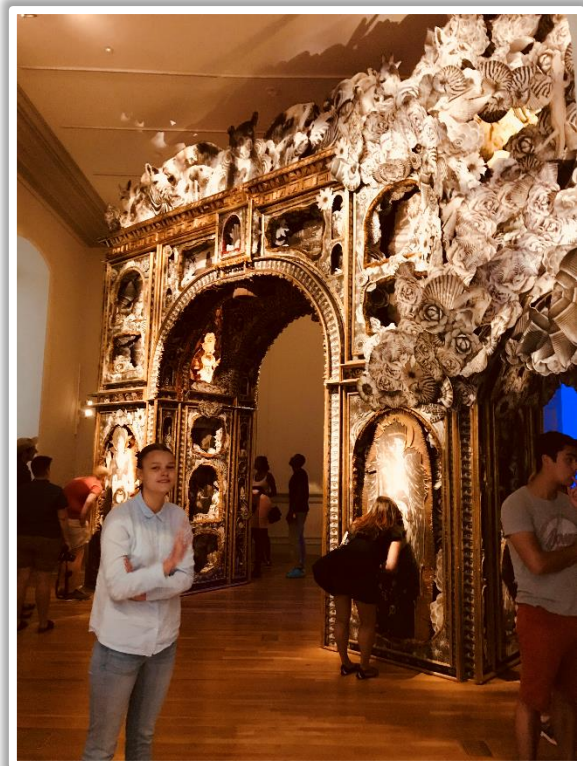
And so Lucy performed. I believe she was paid in pizza. Good thing she's not a vegan anymore.

Lucy is now regularly attending the Strathmore Young Single Adult Ward. The ward meets in Chevy Chase and I don't really understand why it's named for Strathmore. Actually there are lots of things I don't really understand about singles wards—including why they exist—but Lucy seems to like it there.

Sophie is lifeguarding again this summer and taking a Health course from Montgomery College. The course is part of a joint program between Montgomery County Public Schools and our local community college that will enable Sophie to graduate from high school in 2020 with an associate's degree, provided she does well enough on certain AP tests (we'll find out next month). My understanding is that she will split time during her upcoming junior year between her high school and the college and spend most of her senior year at the college. It's also possible that I have all of this entirely



More of Lucy at the Renwick Gallery



wrong. Secondary education was a lot simpler when I was a kid.

Grace is arguably too young to have a job, but she spends more time and money at Starbucks than any of her sisters (or the average Mormon).

Despite the long hours (she reported working seven consecutive days last week) Hannah seems to legitimately love her summer job as a certified nursing assistant at some nursing home in the greater Provo area. Nothing about what she does sounds appealing to me, but nothing about what I do for a living sounds appealing to her, and so I guess we're both in the right line of work. Hannah is enjoying the opportunity to put into practice skills she has been learning in nursing school, including (the one that amazes me most) how to change the sheets with a person in the bed. Hannah is also teaching swim lessons at the Provo Recreation Center two days a week. I understand she does this in part for the extra income but mostly because it affords her free access to the pool. I'm told JT has left his job at Office Depot for a more lucrative position doing some sort of IT support on campus. Hannah says he gets paid more than she does. The gender wage gap appears to start early.

Finally, the release of our stake presidency this month marks the end of a 12-year era of "sit-on-the-stand" church callings for me. The release was accompanied by a range of conflicting emotions that I did not anticipate, including some I am not especially proud of. But it is impossible to deny the inspiration behind the calling of our new stake presidency—Eric Baxter, Bob Brown, and Harry Reategui—men of extraordinary talent and character I have known, loved, and served with for years. They will be wonderful.

Three or four days following my release, Bishop Kemper stopped by and asked me to be the "Young Men president." I've never been that before and am still figuring out everything the job entails. It's an oddly named position in that the person who holds it is neither a young man nor the "president" of anything. What I am is an adviser to the 20 or so teenage boys in our ward, a little more than half of whom come to church regularly. Only a few of them are old enough to have any meaningful recollection of me as their bishop, but I'm awfully fond of them and I think I'll enjoy this (at least until the Church formally discontinues the position, as I predict it will).



Above: Lucy the Mermaid

Below: Our 10th Annual Smith Island Cake with the Eskelsens (finally home from Germany)



I'll probably be expected to do more camping than I am currently accustomed to. Given some time, I'm sure I can think of things in life that I enjoy less than camping, but it's not a list I can just rattle off quickly. I'm sure it will grow on me. While I technically report to the bishopric, everyone knows that for all practical purposes I report to the Young Women president, Allison Higgins. Regular readers of this letter already know why our family loves Allison (who, unlike me, actually *is* the president of something). It should be great.

May your next chapters be pleasant and productive.

Love, Tim