

THE FAMLET

MONTHLY



Dear Family,

Twenty-five years ago, on May 28th, 1994, I married Crystal Kent in what was then properly called the Washington Temple. (It was subsequently renamed the “Washington D.C. Temple” to bring it into conformity with the Church’s geographic naming convention for all temples—with the exception of the Salt Lake Temple, which gets a pass because it’s old and special. No amount of nomenclatural finagling, however, can change the fact that the Washington D.C. Temple has always been in Kensington, Maryland.)

Crystal and I were BYU students at the time. Tradition held that we should have been married in “her” temple, which then was in Seattle, though a number of temples closer to her hometown of Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, have gone up in the years since. But she did not feel any particular attachment to the Seattle Washington Temple. And getting married in Maryland would make it easier for my then-85-year-old Grandpa Henrichsen—a Washington Temple sealer—to perform the ceremony.

All temple sealers preface the marriages they perform with (at times lengthy and wandering) preambles in which they attempt to lay out the significance of what is about to transpire. They are probably instructed to do this, though it could just be that temple sealers are all old men and can’t help themselves. It’s probably a little bit of both. Dad, who has performed numerous temple marriages himself and uttered more than his share of such preambles, acknowledges that nothing he



Above: The view from where I wrote much of this letter

Below: Swimming with dolphins.

says in that context is likely to be remembered by anyone. But that doesn't stop him from saying stuff.

Accordingly, I remember very little about what Grandpa Henrichsen said to Crystal and me on the sixth floor of the Washington Temple on that Saturday morning a generation of Mays ago. But I remember how he said it. I remember his perfect, cane-aided posture—a reflection of the Army and CIA officer that he'd been. I remember the deep and rich timbre of his voice. And I remember the genuine affection that seemed to exude from him as he called me "Tim m'boy."

And I remember that Crystal was there, but that's about all. I don't remember much of what I felt or what I thought about. I'd like to be able to say that I could see into eternity as I gazed into her eyes across the altar where we knelt, but that would be a lie. It's possible that I saw and thought that, but if I did, I don't remember it. I remember feeling happy and not particularly anxious. "The girl you marry will take a terrible chance on you," Gordon B. Hinckley would warn the teenage boys of the Church four years later. This was certainly true in my case, but he hadn't said it yet, and I was too young to be nervous about anything.

The Washington D.C. Temple is currently closed as it undergoes a multi-year renovation. Our ward's Young Men and Young Women had their combined activity this month at the temple visitors' center. As the activity wound down, I gazed out from the visitors' center across the unsightly construction area the temple grounds have become. It occurred to me that the temple itself has come to resemble how it looks in our wedding pictures. (It was being renovated then, too, but remained open through it.)

Culturally, we seem to like to think of weddings as little microcosms of perfection—perfect unions of perfectly dressed people created in perfectly beautiful places. And while there's something lovely about that imagery, it belies the fact that nobody has anything that even resembles a perfect marriage. The more I think about it, the more fitting it seems to have been married (as we were) in a building with scaffolding surrounding several of the spires and a crane in the background. Because what is a marriage if not an unending construction project? Things break, plans change, deadlines are missed, budgets are overrun, and I doubt you ever really finish. But I suppose "finishing" was never really the goal to begin with.



Utah World War II veterans on the Honor Flight to Washington

Using superlatives to describe loved ones strikes me as a futile exercise. I was thinking about this on Mother's Day earlier this month as I scrolled through a long string of lovely Facebook tributes written by people claiming to have the best mother in the world. They obviously can't *all* be the best (since the greatest mother in the world is, in fact, mine). But I understand the impulse to resort to this kind of language. It's often easier to use superlatives than it is to adequately describe what it is about someone you love that makes her so great.

Anyone who has spent two minutes with Crystal knows that she is loud and smart. Those who know her a little better are familiar with her kindheartedness, patience, and altruism. She is hardly unique in this, but I suspect there are far more people who merely appear to possess these characteristics. Crystal is the same genuine person around the house, at the dinner table and while driving that she is at church and in other public settings. (I could fill a year's worth of letters with examples of why the same cannot be said of me.)

Everyone should have the good fortune of marrying a philosophy major. While earning that degree all those years ago, she was a teaching assistant for two formal logic courses: Philosophy 205 and Philosophy 305. This pair of courses was sufficiently quantitative that it could be used to satisfy a general education math credit. This made the courses appear attractive to certain people who believe themselves to be "logical" despite not being good at math. Unfortunately, a Venn diagram illustrating the intersection of people who stink at math with people who stink at formal logic is a circle, and students who who believed otherwise posed a challenge for undergraduate Crystal.

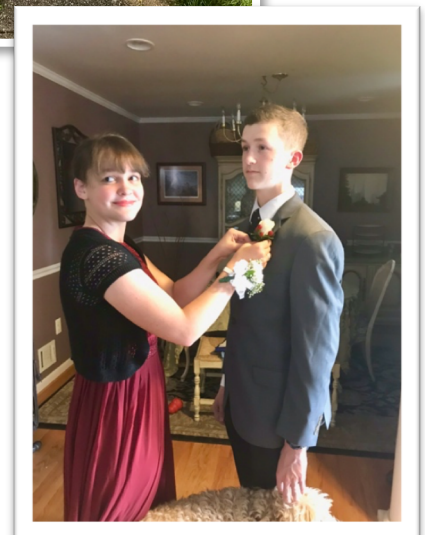
The experience seems to have imbued her with extraordinary patience. You might think it would be frustrating to be married to someone capable of using symbols on a whiteboard to meticulously explain why your argument is invalid. But in fact, her big brain and big heart combine to make her a pretty great wife (it's never bothered me to be married to someone smarter than I) and about as close as a person can reasonably come to the Platonic Form of a mother.

Her approach to addressing our family's challenges is at once analytical, reasoned, and compassionate. It's not that she handles every situation perfectly or never becomes unglued. I don't think such a person exists. And if she did, I don't think I'd find her very interesting. (And she certainly wouldn't want anything to do with me.) But you should see the way Crystal deconstructs a problem. It's pure genius. Philosophy is

Hannah with "her" Honor Flight Vietnam veteran



Sophie goes to prom with a couple of nice boys I like.



the love of wisdom—it's how Sophia got her name. (We named our first two daughters after women we admire and our last two after qualities we seek.) To choose to spend my life with this particular lover of wisdom is far and away the wisest thing I've ever done. A week seldom passes in which I don't feel profound gratitude for her having chosen me back.

And not that it matters, but I still think she's pretty hot.

We spent our 25th anniversary in the Bahamas. I continue to work under the assumption that you are about as uninterested in the details of my vacations as I am in the details of yours. But you've made it this far, so I'll tell you that we had a nice time mostly doing nothing, apart from swimming with dolphins (which was about as fun as you'd expect it to be), snorkeling in water reminiscent of Hawaii, but warmer (I got to be friends with one particular sea turtle), and eating too much. On the day before our anniversary, Crystal and I decided that we wanted to search out some more interesting surf than our resort's placid beach offered, and so we found some on the north shore of Paradise Island. Within 5 minutes of entering the water, Crystal had injured her knee, and I'd wrenched my back, and so we quickly retreated to our friendlier piece of ocean and spent most of the next day shopping in downtown Nassau with all the other geezers.

Hannah and JT spent their first anniversary apart as Hannah made her first of two May visits to Washington, D.C. with her fellow BYU nursing students. We made arrangements to bump into her a couple of times, which worked out nicely for us. Her second trip here—a shorter one over Memorial Day weekend when Crystal and I were out of town—was as a [Utah Honor Flight](#) “guardian.” This involved helping to escort a group of aging Utah combat veterans (and about 50 wheelchairs) across the country to visit the war memorials here (WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Marine Corps/Iwo Jima, Navy, Air Force, and probably others.).

I can see most of these memorials from my 12th floor desk in Arlington, literally without even having to stand up. To say that I take them (and what they represent) for granted is a massive understatement. But judging by Hannah's description of the weekend, they hold a great deal of meaning to the people they honor. I don't know how many WWII vets still walk the earth, but it can't be many. My Grandpa Willis, who commanded a large P.O.W. camp in Reims, France, and my Grandpa Henrichsen, who worked with the French Resistance as an intelligence officer, have been gone for two decades and would be 106 and 110, respectively, today. Good on the BYU College of Nursing for helping sponsor this.

In other news, Sophie went to two proms and has resumed her job lifeguarding. Lucy has officially graduated from her Professional Animal Workers program and will begin Montgomery College's veterinary assistant program in the fall. And Grace continues to pursue her quest to view every single video that has ever been posted to YouTube.

We're home now. I tried running this morning for the first time since throwing my back out in the Bahamian surf on Monday. I made it almost a whole block before giving up. Things aren't looking good for the Baltimore Ten Miler on Saturday. Happy summer!

Love, Tim, *et al*



28 May 1994

Still under construction

