

THE FAMLET

MONTHLY



Dear Family,

Writing bold predictions that are unlikely to be read by very many people does not require a great deal of courage and is a pretty good way of coming across as more clairvoyant than you actually are. You simply allow all your incorrect forecasts to be forgotten (which is easy since hardly anyone noticed them to begin with) and then flail your arms wildly on those rare occasions when you're right.

On a completely unrelated note, you may recall a prediction from p.4 of [March's letter](#), written in the wake of clutch strikeout accumulator (and likely future mission president) Bryce Harper's departure to the Phillies, that the Washington Nationals would be better without him. (If you don't follow baseball, they've been unquestionably better without him.) A lot of people now claim to have felt that way all along, but how many of them can document it?

Few things evoke the kind of smug satisfaction that comes from a correct public prediction. I still remember Mr. Robbie's 4th grade class in which I predicted that the San Francisco 49ers would defeat the Cincinnati Bengals in Super Bowl XVI by a score of 28-21. (The 49ers won 26-21.)¹ I don't remember what I won for that, but I recall having to split it with Jeremy Lipkin (I think it was Jeremy), who predicted the 49ers



Grace - 1 day old - Loyal Nats supporter since 2005!

¹ San Francisco went off as a 1-point favorite, and so they covered the spread either way. Calling for a 49ers Super Bowl win may not sound like such a bold prediction in hindsight, as they would go on to win four of them in the 1980s. But this was their first one and they had been terrible my whole life (I was 10) up until then.

would win 26-19, and with some other boy who predicted they would win 24-21. My ability to recall all these obscure details is evidence not so much of an especially sharp memory as it is of how infrequently I get things right.

(A few of you noticed that my prediction of the end of ward Young Men presidents ([back in June 2018](#)—bottom of page 4) also came home this month. I'll confess that I may have had some inside information there and can't honestly attribute that prediction entirely to my own cognitive powers. I don't have any other inside information, so don't ask me. Or ask me if you want—but know that I'll be making it up. I have not yet been formally released as our ward's YM president and so you'll have to keep reading my letters to find out what's next for me.)

Speaking of changes at church, I have attended precisely one baptismal service since the long overdue policy adjustment allowing women to be witnesses. The announcement was a bigger deal to Crystal and Hannah than I thought it would be. (I think it affected them more than *they* thought it would, too.) If nothing else, the policy has revealed that female witnesses are every bit of capable of being Pharisaical about it as male witnesses are. (The sister missionaries who witnessed the baptism I attended required the ordinance to be performed three times on a 12-year-old boy.)

Perhaps someone can help me find the scripture or policy language that 1) requires the designation of "official" witnesses to a baptism that is already being witnessed by a roomful of people, 2) explains why the same thing isn't required for confirmations, or 3) specifies that the "official" witnesses' job is to be 100% confident that every single molecule of the baptized person's body, hair and clothing has been completely submerged for some arbitrary number of nanoseconds. I blame men in general for making up all this extra junk and for imbuing the simple act of witnessing a baptism with all the complexity and pedantry of judging whether an NFL wide receiver got both feet in bounds and maintained control of the football while falling to the ground. Maybe women can fix what we've broken.

Crystal and Lucy celebrated birthdays this month. Lucy turned 20 while Crystal remained safely south of 50 for another year. Both posted impressive athletic accomplishments this month. Watch how I now use these to call attention to myself.



Grace (14½ years later) picks apples



Lucy (age 20) blows out the candles on her traditional birthday pumpkin pie and dresses as a "Thesaurus" for Halloween.



Crystal returned to triathlon for the first time since 2015 (I think). She placed third in her division in the Pleasants Landing Sprint at Lake Anna, Virginia. I think she was happy with it even though she finds running increasingly punishing with each passing year.

Podium finishes are not unusual for Crystal, but they are for me so let's talk about me. I also ran Pleasants Landing—my third triathlon in four weeks. Exactly as I did in last month's Giant Acorn Olympic-distance triathlon (which starts in a different part of the same lake), I came out of the water in 3rd place (among 45- to 49-year-old men) and moved up to 2nd place on the bike. Unlike last month's race, however, in which two guys passed me on the 10-km run to push me down to fourth, this month's triathlon ended with just a 5K, which only gave *one* guy enough time to run past me and *finally* allowed me to hold onto the third step of my first-ever podium! Boom! I'd like to thank all my fans, my 5th-grade teacher, Mr. Fialkow, for always believing in me, and my loving relatives who actually bothered to read this far. (Podium video [here!](#))

I received an email from USA Triathlon a few days later informing me that I had qualified for the 2020 Age Group National Championships in Milwaukee.² I'm not going to go, but maybe I'll add it to my resume—somewhere between my Eagle Scout award, my missionary service, and making it into the South Jersey Music Teachers Association Juried Piano Recital all those years in a row.³

In other sports news, Lucy celebrated the start of her third decade on earth by crushing the Amos Alonzo Stagg 50-miler last weekend (along with Sophie, me, our stake president, his son Adam, our ward's Scoutmaster, and eight other people from a neighboring stake). Of the 63 people who started hiking/jogging along the C&O Canal towpath at 9 p.m. on Friday, only 14 of us finished the 50 miles before the 18-hour cut-off (3 p.m. Saturday).⁴

Covering 50 miles on foot all at once is one of those things that sounds pretty hard until you get about a third of the way in and realize that it's actually going to be much harder than you thought. I was completely



Crystal and I on our respective podiums after the Pleasants Landing Triathlon



kineticmultisports.com

Male 45 to 49

Overall	Place	Name	City	Bib No	USAT Age	Rnk	Swim - Time	T1	Bike - Time	T2	Run - Time	Total	Penalty	
1	16	Jose Idler	Hyattsville MD	345	49	1	13:48.7	151.8	3	33:43.7	152.0	2	22:14.7	1:13:30.9
2	18	Tim Flaherty	Purcellville VA	566	49	7	17:09.4	145.0	1	32:53.2	125.4	1	21:47.9	1:15:01.0
3	24	Timothy Willis	Silver Spring MD	132	47	3	15:44.9	221.4	2	31:01.4	141.6	5	23:48.4	1:16:37.7
4	54	Ryan Buchholz	Falls Church VA	330	45	10	19:26.0	239.4	4	34:59.9	230.4	4	23:31.2	1:22:37.0
5	71	David Deal	Washington DC	341	49	4	16:18.8	305.0		35:52.0	10	28:28.3	1:25:44.2	2:00
6	78	Benjamin Reames	Alexandria VA	579	47	11	20:56.2	215.9	8	38:56.8	229.8	3	22:34.5	1:27:13.3
7	80	Bill Davis	Mechanicsville VA	343	49	2	15:17.1	343.4	7	38:16.9	248.0	8	27:16.9	1:27:22.5
8	92	Alic Cleathous	Baltimore MD	334	47	6	17:06.4	331.6	6	37:32.7	303.3	9	28:19.7	1:29:33.8
9	116	Jason Floyd	Washington DC	335	48	5	17:03.1	342.9	5	36:34.0	244.4	13	32:49.5	1:32:54.1
10	123	John Swanlund	Glen Allen VA	340	49	8	18:46.6	338.4	9	41:50.5	230.4	11	29:02.2	1:35:48.1
11	129	Igor Zurnov	Mc Lean VA	578	46	12	21:32.1	500.6	10	43:02.3	205.6	7	26:11.0	1:37:51.6
12	154	Kosta Makrodimitris	Beltsville MD	339	48	13	24:50.7	930.7	11	44:04.3	436.5	6	24:42.7	1:47:45.4
13	178	Adam Kinnappell	Charlottesville VA	344	49	9	19:02.3	454.8	12	50:24.9	337.6	14	35:50.0	1:53:49.8
14	193	Andrew Hodge	Virginia Beach VA	337	48	14	27:15.0	527.8	13	1:07:13.9	303.7	12	29:22.8	2:10:23.3

² Qualifying for Age Group Nationals at the sprint distance is not as prestigious as it might sound, but it's harder than it used to be. Basically, in a race like this you need to finish in the top 25% of your age group. (Details [here.](#))

³ None of these things is actually on my resume.

⁴ It wasn't a race, but I finished first—at a little before 8:30 a.m. (I'd like to thank my fans, my teachers, my family...). Lucy and the Scoutmaster finished shortly after noon, and Sophie, Adam and the stake president finished a little before 1:00 p.m.

unprepared mentally last year for how difficult it would be, and Sophie, Adam, and I all dropped out early. The failure left a bitter taste in all three of our mouths and compelled us to have another go at it this year. Lucy's last-minute decision to join us made me nervous. I was afraid she had no idea what she was getting herself into and would drop out when the discomfort started to mount (as it does for everyone). My fears proved to be unfounded and the Scoutmaster (who successfully completed it last year but elected to do it again for reasons I don't fully understand) attributed the two-hour improvement in his time this year to trying to keep up with Lucy. Lucy was concerned that her sore legs would make it difficult for her to handle her dog-walking duties on Monday, but she powered through it. She's a pro.



Adam, Lucy and Sophie shortly after walking 50 miles in under 16 hours.

Into the Woods is getting closer, which means it is consuming more and more of Sophie's and Grace's time. Grace seems to have inherited Crystal's voice and my posture. The teachers running the show seem astounded that she is able to sing as beautifully as she does without standing up straight. I think it drives them crazy. That's my girl!

Earlier this week, I suggested that Crystal dial into the annual conference call with my employer's benefits provider so she could hear all the options and weigh in on whether our family should be making any changes during open enrollment. I realized this may have been a mistake when she texted me in the middle of the call (quoting verbatim):

"Sounds like if you die by an accident (hit by a car) it's better for me than if you die from a heart attack! So that's good!"

So that's good?

My mind started contemplating what kind of accident she might be planning for me. But I then I realized it could also mean that, given how I live my life, she believes I'm more likely to die in an accident than of natural causes.⁵ We'll go with that one.

It's not just my income she'd be losing after all but also my unmatched skills around the house. A couple of weeks ago, I set about fixing the toilet in the master bathroom. That tower thingy⁶ in the tank needed to be replaced. It was on her list of things for the handyman (named Obe) she hires every now and then. But replacing the tower thingy is one of the few plumbing-related things I actually feel like I know how to do, and I told her it would be silly of her to pay Obe to fix it.

And so I got to work. But removing the old tower thingy proved more difficult than I anticipated, and after about 10 minutes, having succeeded only in rendering the toilet even less functional than it was before, I gave up and got into the shower. I wasn't too worried about it because it's not as though having a working toilet in the master bathroom is all that important (it's not a huge house and we have other bathrooms). It's almost as though Crystal knew what I was thinking because, literally in the time it took me to shower, she removed and replaced the old tower thingy and had the whole rig flushing and filling like new.

So, yeah, I don't know how she could possibly get along without me.

We send our love.

Tim *et al*

⁵ My physician (who finally got me to start taking blood pressure medication this month after a year of arguing with me about it) might disagree, but that's a whole other topic.

⁶ I believe the tower thingy is technically known as a "fill valve."