

November 7, 1993

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Dear Family,

Thanks, Charlotte, for all you're doing to get out the Hallmanack. We enjoy getting all the family news.

Daniel was drafted by a friend to play the part of "investigator" in teaching missionaries at the MTC--which he thoroughly enjoys, though it means getting up early each Sat. morning. The first two weeks he didn't see Laura but the third week he was actually assigned to her district--so he has seen her three weeks in a row, now--and then, next week she leaves for Ecuador. Today, she taught him a second discussion. He says she remembered all the right things to do, but he enjoyed remaining unconvinced. He officially reports that she looks beautiful, is very happy, and has a marvelous rapport with her companion. Her Spanish teacher at the MTC called today with a message for Daniel (who had already left), but when he learned I was Laura's Mom, told me she has made amazing progress with both the language and discussions and that she is just doing great! Laura sent home a letter with Daniel today, which was sent by a returned LM from Ecuador to another LM at the MTC who is going to Ecuador, which reads as follows: "You are going to love the mission (but probably not at first). It's extremely primitive country, with the most humble people on earth! The mission work is awesome. Pres. Alestia is a wonderful man! His wife is the sweetest person you'll ever meet. His right hand got caught in a machine when he was little, so he prepared to shake his left hand. He is inspired by God. You'll learn so much from him. Before I forget.... You'll eat things you never imagined: chicken foot soup, guinea pig, exotic fruits. You'll get more bug bites than you imagined possible (Skin so soft is a pretty good repellent). You'll sleep under mosquito netting. You won't need more than one pair of nylons. You'll arrive in Ecuador during the VERY HOT season--it will get down to just HOT by May/June. It rains a lot when it's VERY HOT. Take plastic shoes. If you wear an 8 1/2 or bigger, finding shoes is a little tricky, but possible. Don't worry about clothes. You can have them made cheap or buy them at second hand stores. Don't be paranoid about getting sick. You'll get sick but you'll get over it--the medicine is good for the bugs they've got. I would be giving anything to be going with you. I love Ecuador--you will too. It won't be easy at all. You'll struggle like you never have before. You will become a new person. It's worth the pain. Hang in there when it gets tough. Work hard. You'll have great success." Laura writes, in response to this: "Eek! Where am I going? Scared....of this place! Guinea Pigs...That's something I just WON'T eat!" Ho. We shall see.

Daniel is also volunteering Sat. nights at the Etruscan exhibit and has a new part-time job typing research studies for the Fam. Living Dept. It's supposed to be for ten hours a week, but right now they have a rush job, so he can work as much as he wants. He is a joy to have around--we're glad he thinks he's too poor to live away from home next term--though with this new job, he might get independent, after all. He dates a lot of girls, but most of them are going on missions, so he just says "hello" in time to say "goodbye." His church job now involves genealogical extraction.

Dan was sent free tickets by F.A.R.M.S. to their banquet at which Elder Dallin Oaks was the featured speaker. It was an inspiring evening--not only to hear Elder Oaks, but also to preview the FARMS research projects for next year. There is some exciting Book of Mormon research going on right now. Dan is working with FARMS on a Dead Sea Scrolls project and spends a lot of evenings and Saturdays doing volunteer work for them, thoroughly enjoying it and the people he works with. Dan is in the S.S. superintendency, and we both enjoy singing in our excellent ward choir, but wish it didn't meet at 11 a.m. when we'd like to sneak over to hear Tracy Jr.'s gospel doctrine lesson.

I love going back to school, as long as I concentrate on my homework and don't look at the housework piling up. I need a wife! Classes are much more difficult than they were when I was there in my twenties. It's a struggle to stay afloat with only 8 1/2 hours--6 of them, writing classes. Mounds of paper and clutter are rising everywhere--I just hope nobody lights a match. Saturdays I cook up a huge batch of lentil soup or chili, fill the fridge with lots of quick-fix stuff, and hope nobody will die of monotony or starvation. So far, I'm lucky--there have been few complaints. That's because anybody who complains gets to take care of whatever he's complaining about, himself.

I have been invited by two magazines to submit my article ideas--so let's hope I actually get published. One of my articles is a nostalgic piece about the swamp in our forest in New York, and how today's children can make their own swamp on a large, cookie baking tin--using instant chocolate pudding for mud, covering it with a layer of pistachio pudding slime, and hiding creepy gummi-crawlers under a third layer of English muffin/crackers "rocks." Doesn't that sound exciting? So, I invited over my Primary class of seven-year-olds for a "swamp party," and took lots of photos to submit with my article. Spencer (Hall) came over, too, and demonstrated the joys of toe painting (in his case, foot painting) in chocolate pudding on butcher paper. I got a good shot of him holding his gooey foot up by his head--which I am submitting with the article. If it doesn't get published, now you'll know why. Spencer will affirm, the kids had a blast. Of course it took two hours to clean up the mess, and I am still recovering. But we won't tell about that part. As you can see, I am really into deep, profound stuff here. We talked with Joe Cannon, miracle worker at Geneva Steel, twenty minutes at the end of the FARMS banquet, and he says he is interested in my article about the Gold Standard case--so I've got to get that finished soon too.

Mom is having the college kids over to dinner Sunday night (I keep telling her I'm now a college kid, but she exercises age discrimination and won't let me come). After they leave to hear Elder Packer talk at the Marriott Center devotional at 7, I'm bringing over tapes and getting caught up on Mom and Dad's last 15 years (since we did the last 17 tapes)--all in one hour, mind you, for my Family History class. It takes 5 or 6 hours to transcribe one hour of taping, so I will have a busy Monday to get it in on time for Tuesday. I did a piece about Dad picking up acorns on campus for his tree farm (for my Magazine Writing Class last week) -- a lot of fun. We were supposed to describe a scene in very real fashion, so the reader would feel he was right there, and include lots of narrative. For sure, the "Grandpa Hall" in this family is a NUT, himself. a c-o-r-n!

It is getting cold, here. Daniel has been helping me move all the boxes out of the garage into the family room, downstairs, so we can make room for our two cars before it starts to snow. There's no use unpacking all the stuff, because until we get some bookshelves and other storage, there's no place to put it. I try to look at the positive side--if the power goes off we'll have so much kindling!

Well, our prayers are with all you missionaries in the family.. 'Just knowing you are there makes us want to serve better here. HAPPY THANKSGIVING TO ALL OF YOU! I am trying to talk Dan into Chuckorama on Thanksgiving, but I think Mom Bartholomew has other ideas--last I heard. I'm trying to talk her into my salubrious swamp swirl for dessert, but she has no imagination. I hear Sara Lee makes a good pumpkin pie these days. We can be thankful for THAT, this season. Love and hugs, Sherlene (Certified Swamp Sleuth)

Sherlene

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