

SEPT 3, 1994

Dear Family,

I am typing this letter on an Epson Equity III+ Computer with a 640 Mb hard drive, color monitor, two expanded keyboards (though I am only using one at the moment) and an Epson LQ 510 dot matrix printer which I purchased at an estate sale yesterday. With it I got these programs: Forms Maker, Bank Street Writer Plus, Pacioli 2000 (accounting), MyMailList, and Rolodex Live. I was quite pleased with the \$350 price tag, though one of you will probably write to me and tell me you could have picked up the same arrangement for \$100 in Utah. At the same sale I picked up a six drawer lateral file for \$50, two legal-size two drawer files for \$25 each and two brand-new oriental design, all wool matching carpets (one 8 x 11, one 6 x 8) for \$325. So, I totally shot the money (and a little more) I made on the five piece bedroom set I bought, refinished, painted, stenciled, and sold several weeks ago. But, I got a computer that is the same model as Barry's, and that the children and I can work on without dangerously imperiling his genealogy programs. *(ACTUALLY VIRGINIA WIPED OUT HER OWN GENEALOGY, TOO, WHEN TRYING TO LOAD A PROGRAM ON MY MACHINE A WHILE BACK.)*

This was a very interesting estate sale. When I first entered the apartment (quite a large space for an apartment) my eyes fell upon rows of framed, autographed pictures and invitations from various local and national dignitaries including one each of the last four presidents, signed with a little personal note attached to each. I was surprised to see the prices quite low for signed and framed autographs by such illustrious persons, but upon closer inspection, the estate agent pointed out to me (she's seen me at prior sales) that they were all signed in the same hand by the person whose estate was being sold. I can't imagine where he came up with all the invitations and greetings. There was a lot of Harvard stuff around the apartment and great deal of congressional stuff and ministerial materials. I got the idea that he was a former member of congress (Hibbs was the name), retired (or replaced?) who had become a minister and then a judge or the other way round. There were several framed gavels with notes of commendation on them from various legal agencies. As I was paying for my purchases, the agent informed me that the whole set-up was a scam. This guy (Hibbs) invented all these titles and associations to enhance his image and promote a number of varied companies of which he was sole owner and which he received varied donations for. He was estranged from his mother, and the heir named in his will had declined to accept the estate. I don't know if she was handling the sale of the estate for the state or for some other next-of-kin, but it was

*(THE ESTATE AGENT,  
NOT MRS. HIBBS, MÈRE)*

*ED, NOTE. THE BANK ST. WRITER PROGRAM IS NOT GOOD ON PAGINATION (OR SOME OTHER THINGS). I AM GOING TO PUT WORD PERFECT ON THE EPSON SO GINGER WONT GET FRUSTRATED WHILE PROCESSING WORDS.*



quite an eye-opener. -

I told her I would like to keep all the hanging folders and supplies in the files if I could, and she said as long as I emptied out all the information from them that would be fine with her. When I was finished, I had six large garbage bags of information, and had I really read everything in the files or even a part of them, could have written quite a book on how to set up successful business scams. I threw out past IRS filings, lists of contacts, birth certificates, (his said he was 42), and reams and reams and reams of AIDS-related literature. This was obviously a very literate, bright fellow, but what a waste of talent. The agent said he was not a priest or minister, not a graduate of, nor associated with Harvard, not a member of Congress, nor any of the other half a dozen things he represented himself to be.

Had I known a little more about this fellow before I wrote the check, I think I may have considered a little more carefully the propriety or bringing home items that may have been bought at the cost of other people's unwitting acceptance and perhaps unhappiness. I console myself with the thought that the items I bought will find happy and useful ends in this noisy, needful home and somebody somewhere will benefit from the settlement of this troubled person's estate.

This has set me to thinking about the astounding past that is tied up in the purchases and finds that have made this house a home. If you were to go room to room in this house, you would find that most of it has been furnished from other people's cast-offs and garage sales and estate settlements. I have always just breezily assumed that these items have a useful and happy past, but looking about I wonder. For instance, in this room (our mostly unfurnished formal living room) we have a rug purchased from Dee Jacobs who sold it along with a bedroom set when he and Kay went to serve as President of the Denmark mission. It still looks wonderful (a 100% Karastan wool oriental design rug in blue that hides everything.)

There's the 1890ish baby grand piano that sounded incredible when we heard it played in a self-storage shed (that should have been a clue) and looked beautiful (still does) when we bought it for the incredible to us sum of \$1300. This was shortly after we had just purchased our first home and money was very tight. It held a tune for about two weeks. The fellow who sold it had spray-painted the sound board a beautiful gold color to get the pegs to stay tight long enough to get it sold. Oh the things we've learned along the way. I've found a reputable source who could rebuild it to the tune of about \$5,000 which we don't at this time in our lives have. So it



sits here non-functional but beautiful and a visual lesson for us all on a daily basis. Meanwhile, our two girls do their daily practice on an ugly, but functioning upright (steel sound board, weighs a ton) piano that Belle Cluff sold to us for \$25. So our two pianos are a daily reminder that beauty is not only in the eye of the beholder, but that it shouldn't be only skin deep.

Also in this room is our organ, purchased by following up a lead in a newspaper ad touting an organ fit for a small church or funeral parlor. Well, we've held church choir here now on a regular basis for some time, but no funerals in the parlor. The lovely older woman who sold it to us would cringe at the nicks and scrapes on her lovely Conn organ, but she's safely tucked away in a ~~residence~~ retirement home. We had said we'd invite her over to hear Barry play on her organ in its new setting, but we never followed through and she's probably wondering still today if her organ really did find a happy home. NO! SHE HAD FAITH THAT IT WOULD, AND IT DID!

There's the rocker we bought, along with a corner cupboard, our first antique purchase in our new home near the nation's capital. When we proudly proclaimed our antique purchases to Barry's father over the phone he exclaimed with some surprise, "You mean you're buying used furniture!" The kindly gentleman from whom we bought them had a whole yard full of antiques. He had been a sort-of dealer over the years and was moving to a smaller house and was ridding himself of a considerable collection. To our newly married eyes the prices were beyond reach, but now we wished we'd bought the whole collection, though our little one-bedroom ~~home~~ <sup>apartment</sup> would never have contained the lot anyway.

Near a window is the wedgewood blue shaker-style cupboard with punched-tin panels which I found on the street waiting for the garbage collector while out trick-or-treating for the first time with Nathan and Warren. It was a ghastly fake-antiqued streaky brown thing and the tin panels were rusting and blackened. But, it had nice lines and I had seen Mom transform enough derelict items to have some hope for it. We also had more space in our home than money to fill it, so the price was right. I got the OK from the former owner and managed (by myself as Barry was putting in long long hours at Kirkland and Ellis in those days) to get it into the back of our horrible yellow station wagon and cart it home to hearth and hope. It has survived several settings and numerous uses, but is still one of my favorite pieces. It now houses my sheet music collection.

On the shelf below the music sits one of two phones I dug out of an across-the-street-rental's garbage. This home was



rented by two or three college-going girls who, when they left, left most of their possessions behind on the street edge. I found the phones when I followed the line back to a trash-bag. Next to the phone whose line I followed, was another brand-new, in-box AT&T phone that they were too tired or too lazy or too crazy to move. Maybe there was just too much money from Mom and Dad. I won't go into the other incredible things their garbage gave up except to say that I won't need to buy any make-up, beauty creams, or nail polish for some time. It was mostly unopened. My neighbors are by now used to the sight of me or Barry pawing through their garbages. *(This is an exaggeration. But people here put out to the curb some nice things in the expectation that who-*

Next to the cupboard is a box about half the size of an old fashioned pine coffin with a large wooden red cross on the top. I got it near the Methodist Church on Glebe road from a little shed back of an older frame house. A family was cleaning out their shed and came upon it and let me have it for three dollars. She thought it had belonged to her grandfather who served as a medic in WWI. It was a lovely shade of army-issue green and had a cracked and crazed finish on it. I know that refinished items lose their value, but there's just something about army green that sets me off. I left the raised red cross intact as it was, but sanded down the worst of the flaking paint and got out my can of trusty Williamsburg blue paint. I spray painted the hardware gold and it is now home to some old quilt tops I've acquired through the years. I almost sold it at a garage sale some months ago prior to its renovation, but when someone showed some real interest in it, I told her I already had an interested party and put it back in the garage. It, too, has become a favorite piece. I've wondered what stories that trunk has seen, and can imagine that it has seen pain and sorrow and relief and repair at its arrival those many decades ago.

*ever needs them will take them. I got a working sewing machine for Sarah in a nice finished walnut stand a few months back, with a perfectly nice lamp + shade.)*

Well, there's really not that much furniture in this room and I'm not nearly half-way done. However, I'm sure you may be weary reliving my furniture's past. Used things find good use here, and while I sometimes day-dream about going into one of the better showrooms and picking out the pieces I like without regard to price, I'm sure frugality and the hunt will always lead me past the show-room door to the next estate sale and my neighborhood's cast-aways.

Our children don't begin school until the 8th of September. August was a busy month. Will things slow down or pick-up with the start of school? Any pretending of a schedule this summer would be a lie. I can't imagine the kids being able to get up for Seminary which starts at 6:15 a.m. Today I was so busy that it was 8 p.m. before I realized I hadn't fixed a thing for anybody to eat all day. I think they all survived, though Nathan did wander through about 8:15 and complain about



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ED. NOTE: OUR FRONT YARD LOOKS PRETTY GOOD THIS YEAR ON ACCT. OF NOT GOING WEST THIS SUMMER - I HAD TIME (OR STOLE TIME) TO KEEP THE WEEDS DOWN AND SINK POTS WITH ABOUT 40 HOME-ROOTED SALMON GERANIUMS AND, ON THE WEST, SOME RED ONES. THAT W/ RED DIANTHUS (AND RED IMPATIENS) <sup>ARE</sup> SET AMONG THE WHITE QUARTZITE ROCKS. BLUE AGERATUM IN THE MIDDLE, AND A BANK OF PURPLE IMPATIENS, SET THE GERANIUMS OFF TO ADVANTAGE. OUR DENTIST'S WIFE, WHO CAME BY TO BORROW OUR CAMCORDER THIS A.M.,

the lack of preparation of food. But then a friend called him and he didn't stick around to wolf down a little Kraft Cheese and Macaroni. Ah well.

PRONOUNCED IT ALL "STUNNING."

Sarah entered a local competition for "Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?," She had the five necessary correct responses on her paper, so her name was put in the pot from which they chose ten contestants. Then they had a run-off and interview session from which she emerged as one of the three finalists. On Wednesday of last week she appeared on the stage set in one of our local malls with one of the stars of the PBS series. In the end she was edged out by a young man who risked 50 crime dollars as opposed to only 30 crime dollars risked by Sarah which put them into a tie-breaking round. He beat her out by a heartbeat when he buzzed in first to answer what state Des Moines was in. Our local PBS station taped the show and interviewed her and the other two afterwards on video tape for some local hyping of the show. I don't believe they intend to rebroadcast the whole competition. My battery went dead just into the program and Jonathan had forgotten to bring the back-up which he had been recharging for me earlier in the day. Hopefully, we can catch her on some of the local ads for PBS which they will be running soon.

Nathan got his patriarchal blessing later that same evening. Bob Wolthuis is from the same Wolthuis clan that occupied Marriott in years that coincided with the Hall years in Marriot, Utah, I think. They are moving back to the Ogden area in a few weeks, so we encouraged Nathan to get his blessing while Bob was still in our ward. It was a very moving blessing. He has much potential both in his life and within the Church. He's been a good and obedient son, though he really didn't mow the front yard with too much enthusiasm today. How much can a parent expect, anyway? Well, at least he did mow it.

Sorry <sup>about the five pages but</sup> this tome makes up for months of silence. We hope you are all well and happy in the lives you lead and are coping with the challenges you face.

Love,

Virginia