

July 2, 1995 4510 N. 35th St., Arl. 22207 (703) 243-3690

Dear Family,

I started a letter several days ago, but it has disappeared somewhere into the recesses of this computer where I can no longer retrieve it. I tried looking at the files on both the C and D drives and it is nowhere to be found. Ah well. The young, cheap computer help I have been using is leaving on a mission next week, so I am going to have to stand on my own two feet for the next two years I guess. I enjoyed employing Gerrit. He had a lot of confidence and plenty of smarts, but was very humble and wasn't afraid to say when he didn't know the solution to something. He'll be a great missionary.

I think I'm a little stressed out. Part of this stems from the fact that we have had almost non-stop visitors for the past month and a very busy three months prior to that trying to finish up the basement. There's still a lot to be done. I haven't put the finish coat on any of the chair rail or baseboard and have several doors that need a second coat and a pair of doors that are totally unfinished.

Our first visitors were a family of five from Arizona. What great visitors they were. They stayed for a week and I was sorry to see them go. They tidied up every day, helped get meals on, offered dollars to help with groceries, and were very generous with both their thanks and their praise. Roland has had such a fun time the last month. Everybody who doesn't have to live around him for a long time is charmed by his precocious behavior and non-stop talking. He calls them all THE VISITORS as though they dropped in from outer space.

Our second set of visitors were just like our family (though there were only seven instead of nine of them). Dayton Call married Ilene Swenson who used to teach Kindergarten across the hall from me when I taught first grade at Maeser. She really introduced me to Barry, as she talked me into going with her to her ward and gave Barry my phone number afterwards. Dayton was a former roommate of Barry's at the Y. So we have known them doubly well. Dayton is a personal injury lawyer (yikes) in California.

They were here on business and a tour of the East coast along the way. Our kids had a great time as their ages matched exactly except they didn't have an oldest and a youngest to match ours. They were here for only three days as they were delayed in Williamsburg when their twelve year old boy spent two days in the hospital for what turned out to be salmonella poisoning. This is one illness that the Department of Health tracks and they figure that it probably originated at a Denny's restaurant. Denny's has no idea that they dodged a silver bullet when Dayton decided it wasn't worth his time and energy to pursue it legally. He may change his mind when he gets the hospital bill. We had lots of fun with the Calls, though it was a little bit like a non-stop three day slumber party. The children never wanted to go to bed and the noise of twelve children is a lot more than the noise of seven children. It made me a little more aware of what it's like when

we descend on Mom Hall or Wood for a visit (non-stop chaos).

In spite of how much fun we all had I was glad to see them leave. I know Barry will just roll his eyes when he sees this. He would love to put them all up for a month or two at a time. He loves having lots of people around, never counts the cost in terms of time, energy, or money, and thoroughly enjoys a new face in the crowd dining at our table. I wish I could relax a little and be more like him in this respect. It is a wonderful quality.

Jonathan and Warren just returned from Kirtland, Ohio, where our Stake youth went for an activity. They left early Thursday morning and returned Saturday evening. Warren bore his testimony today in Sacrament Mtg. He said that nearly every place they stopped and visited they were told about this heavenly visit or that heavenly visit which led him to conclude that God lives in Kirtland, or at least did, though now he supposes that he spends most of his time in Utah. He didn't mean it in a irreverent way, but rather that these events they learn about in their Church classes and in Seminary are real events that really happened and he felt it in a very real sense while they were there.

Unfortunately, some parts of their trip were spoiled by kids who couldn't set silliness aside. The RLDS Church let our Stake hold a meeting in the Kirtland Temple which our Stake President conducted. Warren sat right in front of a group of kids who persisted in doing things like singing the songs in silly voices and acting in other inappropriate ways. Some of the kids from our ward were throwing water balloons inside the dorm rooms where they were staying and knocking on doors waking everyone up at early hours of the morning. Good grief! It's a wonder that they let the Mormons come back again after things like that occur. I can only wonder if they get worse from other groups. I doubt it. I sometimes wonder if our kids do these things as an outlet for "wickedness" which they otherwise eschew. If water balloons is as bad as it gets, I guess I should count my blessings. Still, teaching reverence for sacred things is so difficult. Some kids seem to have such a hard time learning it.

I am very grateful that my own children seem to know when silliness is OK and when it needs to be set aside. For a while in Primary Jonathan was giving them fits. Fortunately, he seemed to grow out of it, though it appears that Roland may have picked up the torch. Roland has to make a remark for every question, whether he is called on or not, and the Primary President has resorted to calling his name out before she asks the question as in "Now Roland may know why ..., but I wonder if somebody else could tell me ...?" I give her points for trying, but it doesn't appear to be working. She has started a little Primary Star program in which she identifies qualities and facts about a certain child and the others try to identify who it is. If she says, "This child likes ice cream." Roland responds with (out loud of course) "Well, I like ice cream." Even when something isn't true, he finds a way to hedge and is convinced that she must be talking about him. Today she said, "This child likes to swim." Roland doesn't much care for swimming, especially if his face gets wet. He did respond, however by saying, "Well, my Mom did get me a new swimming pool." It was news to me, but he was sure she was talking about him. She had him

stumped today though as she said, "This child has red hair." Roland put his hands to his head, started to open his mouth and realized he had no answer for that one. I was just waiting for him to say, "Well, my hair used to be red," or something else, but he just couldn't justify it. If she's really smart, she'll do Roland next week and then he can't pester her every week with a running commentary (though he may find a way to do so anyway).

We are pleased with how well the children did in school this year. Sarah ended up with straight A's this quarter which pleased her Papa so much. I was glad to see the school year come to an end. I don't think I would like year-round school. Usually, after a week or so of summer I decide school sounds pretty good. The children are growing older and while I spend lots more time in the car I also enjoy having them around. It's interesting to see them develop their interests and personalities and talents. I've been surprised at how much I am liking my older children. I'm already missing Nathan, though he doesn't leave for almost two months.

The yard has been really lovely this year. Barry has spent hours and hours and hours on it. Yesterday he hand picked more than 350 slugs off of and around his plants. He throws them in the street to be run over by cars. I don't know if this is because he can't stand to dispatch them himself, or if he thinks that way they are good and dead. UGH, SLUGS!

Nathan had his high school graduation exercises in Constitution Hall at the DAR in Washington, D.C. It was a very nice event. I'm afraid that all my still pictures got ruined when Rose-Ellen dropped the camera and the film was exposed. We did take some video film of the event, so we should at least have some record of his graduation.

(5th of July cont.) Yesterday at our annual 4th of July flag-raising one of the sisters in our ward told Barry that we have the nicest boys in the ward. She said, "not just the nicest boys now, but the nicest boys we've ever had in the ward." She asked how we accomplished this. I think kids become what they are in spite of their upbringing sometimes. I also think the blessings of children being born in the covenant are very real. We have been blessed with good kids. I have at times bemoaned the fact that Nathan was the only LDS boy in his senior class. Still, he has had to decide to stand up for his beliefs which has proved to be a valuable experience for him. There are two LDS girls who graduated with him.

The Wood family reunion is going ^{not} to be in Moorhead, Iowa this year from July 21st to 24th. We're driving out for it. I don't know how many of the older boys are going. Warren's taking Driver's Ed., Nathan is working, and Jonathan has a regular part-time baby sitting job, so I guess he may not go either. The kids get picked off one by one by outside activities.

We look forward to hearing how you are all getting on. We keep you all in our thoughts and prayers and look forward to seeing you all in the flesh before the year is over. Thanks for all the missionary updates. What good kids these are!

Love,
Virginia
(+ troupe)