

March 18, 1996

Bartholomew

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Dear Family,

We do enjoy your letters. So I guess I'd better get in our news, so I can keep enjoying yours. Except that we don't have any news. Pretty boring around here. Basically, the same old stuff.

Laura was among the forty students invited to an interview to see if she gets into graduate school in Social Work at BYU. They will eliminate one-third of those interviewed--so that was her hairy experience for the month. She was put in a circle with six other applicants, and each was given a different question, which was the main object in this evaluation. Wouldn't you know, Laura got the one on feminism. "What do you think about the feminist movement." Since I have trained my daughters to be so docile and submissive, and since she has always been so docile and submissive I'm sure her answer went over big with the male interviewers. Not exactly the party line--I think she said something about organizing a sit-in at the administrative building until Cecilia Farr comes back. Two of the males interviewed gave really dumb answers, but since one was black and the other was male, and they have more women interviewees than men, Laura figures they both got in. Then there was the single woman with three children, who visibly shook through the whole experience, so Laura's sure she got in on grounds of need and pity. The other two women were much older than Laura. One of them presented herself very well and impressed Laura enough that she feels certain that one was chosen on merit. The other was another single woman, this time with five children, who did not present herself very well, but had had a lot more experience, Laura thinks, so that by contrast Laura looked like the only "kid" in the group. It will be interesting to see what happens. Laura is anxious enough about this to definitely request family concern and prayers. She has applied to some other schools in hostile, gentile places like New York and California, and I am having a hard time in my prayers saying, "Thy will be done."

I can't tell you about D & L's social life, especially after the good job I did last time, so I won't tell you that I can't tell you anything, which sort of says there's something to tell, but can't. On threat of death. Let us just say that Laura has been found by another reason to stick around BYU for graduate school, and THAT UNMENTIONABLY NAMED SON of ours is still dating sweet young things, instead of all those fabulous returned LMs Laura and I keep pointing out, so he's in the doghouse with both of us. He also keeps dating SHORT, sweet things, which was always one of my pet gripes--any guy who is over 6 feet has his nerve not dating tall women. I have always been in favor of parent-matchmaking systems, and I cannot for the life of me figure out why my children don't cooperate.

My traumas for the month were my thesis presentation--which actually went quite well, if you don't take into consideration the fact that my committee told me to rewrite the whole thing, in contradiction to the principles laid down by the director of the Kennedy Center program. If I ever get my M.A., you'll know I've just qualified as a politician, more than anything. Anyway, I learned what crumpets are. In a fit of extravagance, I wrote little invitations to everybody involved, inviting them to crumpets and tea before my presentation. Only I didn't know at the time what crumpets are. They are sort of a flat cake, baked on both sides, like scones--a brand of homemade "English muffins." Tossing scones for twenty-five sounded like too much of a juggling act, so I got a bunch of store-bought English muffins, Mom donated some of her famous, frozen strawberry and apricot jam, and I made some lemon, poppyseed American muffins as alternative, since I am exploring degrees of British and American influence on poor Helon Henry Tracy. The American muffins definitely won the class vote and went much faster than my exquisite crumpets.

Last week we were visited by Alan Trachtenberg, a rather famous Americanist who writes about bridges and barns and other trivia, as key to an understanding of the American past. He is a bleeding-heart liberal if there ever was one, but when I learned ~~when~~ he was from New Haven (a Yale man), I decided now was NOT a good time for me to argue politics. I smiled a lot and then handed him a packet of materials about our ancestral New Havenites. To make sure he would read it, I



assured him ahead of time that it was definitely X-rated--you know--the Pinions, Humphrevilles, Hall Curtises--that family that had one son who was hanged for bestiality and included one ancestor who was accused of killing four CHICKENS, after he beat his wife and made her miscarry. One of our more distinguished Hall lines. After I printed off all this sizzling material, I enclosed it in a stamped, self-addressed envelope, so he could enclose all the juicy material I know he is going to find about these people, as he is minutely researching local records, anyway. He was so fascinated with what he read, he agreed to keep the envelope--just in case--and, in return, I told him I would research what interested him at the FHL, if he ever had a question. Ah, the power of Elijah. Somebody like me making friends with such a wild-eyed socialist. He was asking how Mormons compare with other religions, and I made the mistake, after listing off some comparisons with other Christians, of saying that there are now as many or more Mormons in the U.S. as there are Jews. That almost lost me my well-placed SASE. He was horribly offended that I considered Judaism to be a religion. He seemed to think ALL Jews are agnostics like him and that Judaism is, at this point, strictly a cultural phenomenon. Breaks your heart. But can you believe, this famous Americanist knew absolutely NOTHING about the Book of Mormon and was, in fact, shocked that some of its authors represented the "imaginary" Indians he based several lectures on. He acted like he was the savior of the red-man championing them among Mormon Indian killers and was, in fact, amazed to learn that Mormons thought Native Americans (a term he did not use) had any sort of covenant destiny or honorable origin. And this so called Indian-lover exposed his real feeling when I started talking about "blood" connections of Mormons, as one of the tribes of Israel, with two other tribes of Israel--the Jews and Indians. All of a sudden he did not at all like being considered THAT CLOSE to the Indians, never mind MORMONS. Oh well, at least he knows one thing now about Mormons. Our ancestor were all perverts and wife beaters.

Michael, Mom called, wanting to know what Massachusetts ancestors of ours lived near New Bedford and Cape Cod, where you are now working. So I ran off some pedigrees and family groups about the Carters and Coffins, which are more appropriate reading material for a missionary and am sending them along. I didn't even have to censor it. Also on Dad's line, which must be a comfort to him at this point. These people were even landed in England. Those of you who took home the disk I passed out at the family reunion, ought to look these people up and especially read their notes. Thomas and Samuel Carter and Tristram Coffin. Tristram Coffin owned a huge estate in Devon County, England, but when the king started taxing him so much it wasn't worth collecting rents anymore, he emigrated. He bought all that area now known as Haverhill, Massachusetts and later bought the whole island of Nantucket. Would I ever love to get rich and sponsor the whole family at a reunion in Nantucket. He was an interesting, autocratic sort of character. Had 14 children, I think, and ran the island as KING. He raised sheep in Nantucket, loving the fact that there were no wolves, and the ocean was a natural fence. Also, there was no lumber on the island, and all the settlers he invited to join him on the island had to get their lumber from his mills he operated from the mainland. So he had a corner on that business and prospered exceedingly. Some of the family's original homes have been preserved.

Thomas and Samuel Carter were father and son ministers and you will see by their notes, they were honorable, deeply-committed, sweet, humble Christian leaders. The kind we like to call "family" but who would not have been very interesting to somebody like Alan Trachtenberg.

I spoke at three fifty-minute sessions on family history this week--Thursday night at the homemaking meeting of our BYU ward and twice, Saturday, at our Orem multi-stake "Family History Fair." I ate some creamed soup at the Cougareat on Wednesday and had VIOLENT intestinal repercussions all that night and right up the minute it was supposed to leave to give my first talk. It was one time I was very glad I had prepared early, but I did not know if I dared leave from my station just outside the bathroom door. I had had two scary incidents during the day and was extra rattled, anyway. I have a hiatal hernia, which means that I have to chew my food very slowly and carefully and wash it down with extra liquid. I guess I was in a hurry and the food got stuck halfway down my esophagus and the liquid I tried to rinse it down with just piled up, instead of rinsing. Just before things went black, I took another big gulp which did not do anything until I had gasped and sunk and