

Date: Tuesday, February 4, 1997 4:12:37 PM
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Subj: Monthly Letter from us'ns:
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>To: daniel bartholomew <osdhallb@spinach.mscs.huji.ac.il>
>From: drb@itsnet.com (Dan Bartholomew)
>Subject: Monthly Letter from us'ns:

>Dear Family

Sun 2/2/97

>[from Dan, except what's in brackets is Sherlene's uninvited, but
invaluable commentary]

>

>It was fun to have Ralph and Victor drop by New Year's morning and visit
a
bit [Yeah, and to see the rest of you at the two family Christmas parties.]

>

And then, even Sherlene got involved in BYU's New Year's Day Cotton Bowl
game. It was hard to imagine a more exciting game than BYU's last-
minutes

WAC championship football victory in Las Vegas. After what happened in
the

middle portions of the game, we felt justified in praying [fervent stuff,
mind you when it's something so important] some for the BYU team. And
then

the last minute miracles came in that game too. I think a lot of people
were praying as that game progressed. The other team just didn't see the
angels (with swords) on the field.

>

[P.S. from Sherlene--Tonight we watched a program on KBYU TV, taped
from the

Salt Palace that featured athletes Dale Murphy, Danny Ainge and Steve
Young

and a local composer named John Schmid--really outstanding. We had wanted to attend the fireside with Pres. Hinckley tonight at the Marriott Center, but we made the mistake of lying down and both zonked out and didn't wake up in time--hope that got taped, so we can see a rerun.]

>

>Laura and Brandon, instead of watching the game in Dallas, where they were for all the holiday season, watched in on TV in a hotel room in San Antonio.

What slackers! (I believe the Woodruff's had their San Antonio reservations before the Cotton Bowl came into the picture). [But we got to talk with them right after the game--a bunch of happy people.]

>

[Just got off the phone talking with Laura--she is very happily married--what a joy this is to parents. Brandon's back is giving him a bad time tonight, but other than that, all seems to be going very well for them.

Brandon changed his major to computer science and has definitely found his groove. Laura says he's thrilled about his classes. His brother Todd is getting married March 1, so we're getting geared up for that. Brandon's folks are flying Laura and Brandon out for the festivities there in Texas--which will be fun for them.]

>

>During the holidays I enjoyed attending our home ward with Sherlene for a change [yeah, I liked that too--I get tired of being a Sunday widow. There are some perks to his call, though. The 14th Stake Leadership social will be a Valentine's bash (dance, food) at the Ashton "barn" at Thanksgiving Point, Feb. 14.] I am spending Sunday at the BYU Harman Building and Conference Center helping in the 14th Stake there. There are great people and a great spirit there to enjoy too, but it's nice to come home at times. [Well, that's good news. I'll see if I can help him sound a little more interested in that aspect of his life in his next letter.] It was fun to attend the language residence ward conference in early Jan. with a Sunday School lesson in German.

>

[I don't know why Dan is talking about the holidays in the past tense. Our Christmas tree is still up, along with all the other decorations. We got a lovely tree from Mom and Dad Thanksgiving afternoon, cut that day on their

tree farm, and it still hasn't shed one of its long needles. Since it's all white and red and lacey, I figure it will be just right for Valentine's. Who knows? Maybe we can keep it alive all year and not have to put it up again next Christmas! We could always add some blue streamers for the Fourth of July.]

>

Sunday morning Jan 5, we had special visitors ring the bell at 4:30am. They

were on their way home from a red-eye flight from Dallas and had their first

look under our Christmas tree. I guess that's a normal time for kids to rouse parents on Christmas morning. Even at that time it was good to see Laura and Brandon again. [Oh, yeah? Just try that again, kids!]

»

>We had a nice Christmas tree with Sherlene's ancestor pictures and stories

on the tree, and Sherlene got a Christmas letter out to a LARGE number of friends and family [it's a good thing, because next Christmas I'll be finishing my senior seminar (York's--will be a killer--ten textbooks, with two papers do each week), plus I'll have my M.A. orals and be finishing off my thesis. There will be NO Christmas cards next year, unless Dan catches

the spirit. Laura? Brandon? Daniel? Oh, well.] We enjoyed a bit of Christmas visiting with most of the local family. I really enjoyed Christmas this year.

>

[I'm giving a family history presentation at Relief Society homemaking this

Thursday--since they asked me to tell about this tree, there is hope I might

have to start taking it down in order to show them the ancestral-photo-history ornaments.]

>

During January Sherlene continued work with Br. Richard Cracroft of BYU's

English Department (and Center for Christian Values) on their Bibliograph
of
Mormon Humor, climaxing in a Feb. 1. meeting the the Association of
Mormon

Letters. Many long days and much late-hour work were involved. The
night

before the conference, Sherlene hardly slept (once more), and Brother
Cracroft didn't even lie down. Old students don't reform; they just _____
_____ (fill in the blanks with such possibilites as "get worse," but don't
quote me). Brother Cracroft conducted the introductory session (where
Sherlene passed out the current version of the bibli.) of that all-day

conference, giving a survey of the Bibliography and field of humorous
Mormon

literature in his remarks and then introducing a panel that included
columnist Robert Kirby and two other interesting writers and Mormon
humorists. It was very good and very interesting. We'll try to share at
opportunity some of the tidbits of that perspective-giving and leavening
humor that Sherlene has become familiar with.

>

Daniel had a busy finals week or two (I think in mid-January) at Hebrew
University and applied for an Ullpan (an intensive Hebrew language study
workshop for several weeks; I think the classes ran about half-day, maybe
four hours, each day). Daniel needed money for the Ullpan and Laura and
Brandon needed some money for books (you know how book prices break
the bank

nowadays). We were lucky to have some savings bonds around that we had
purchased in their name through monthly payroll deductions back during
our

years with AT&T. There were just enough mature bonds to help out.

Blessings come in many ways. Daniel starts his new semester some time
in

February, and the Ullpan is a between semesters thing, although there
might

be a little overlap (I hope not much). Daniel apparently still had papers
to finish, too, between semesters. [We just got his Christmas package.
Great Valentine! Carved bust (olive wood) of Jesus--and something else
very

nice for Brandon and Laura, which is still a surprise. So you'll all have
to come and see it. I don't always like those olive wood carvings from

Jerusalem area, but this piece brings a beautiful feeling with it.]

>

Laura and Brandon had some good Holidays in Texas and are back into school,

work, and the winter weather we've been hit with at times. I hope we can get them to share some of their recent highlights, and Daniel too. I have been reading another Wilford Woodruff biography, this one by Thomas Alexander. I hope someone figures out the connection between Wilford's extended family and Brandon and his family.

>

I finished by end of January a WordCruncher programming project to

support

SMGL (it stands for something like Standard Markup ? Language; it defines a

standard way for formatting documents for publication, including lots of text style features such as bold, italics, fonts, margins, etc.). It is very attractive to electronic text publishers who can format their texts in

a standard way and not have to reformat them for a particular software system.

>

It's taken some time to finish this project with other software changes being needed on a fairly regular basis and not only interrupting work on the

SGML project, but requiring ongoing merges of changes into two or more versions of the software. I felt the benefit of help and blessings in these efforts and put in some good hours during the month while Sherlene was slugging away at her bibliography. I'm continuing to visit a first-year Russian course and play some basketball each week. My feet had been hurting

a lot, and I realized it wasn't just due to basketball. I got several new pair of shoes, and realized that my sore foot for the last 6-months (and really last two years) was partly due to the lumpy, hard 15-yr old shoes I had resoled and resoled and resoled. I took back one new pair that was almost as bad as the old shoes and kept several pair that are wonderfully comfortable.

>

We got to help celebrate Linda's birthday the evening of Jan 11. I'm still curious as to how surprised Linda was by the party. It was FUN! I was

thinking some, too, about Dad on his Jan. 8 birthday. Mom (June) Bartholomew has been wonderfully organizing his pictures and papers in a book she showed me this afternoon (and in other files and folders, too). She talked some about reviving our Bartholomew family letter as a monthly, first Sunday of the month activity for all those who would like to do it. We also talked about the possibility of getting her set up with email, meaning probably some kind of computer update for her.

>

OOPS! How did this get so long? [If he didn't have so much to say]. I guess you're stuck with it (if you choose to read).

>

Love, Dan (& Sherlene) [This letter was supposed to be Dan's to his family--but I'm sending it along as our Hallmanack, too, with my additions.

I put off so many things for this next week, trying to meet the AML deadline

with that Humor Bibl., that I won't get any letter off, if I don't send this. Love, Sherlene]

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Here are some thoughts that came to me in a powerful way, early New Year's

Day, on The Book of Mormon:

> (1) It is attested by multiple time-tested witness:

>- three plus eight who were faithful, lifelong, to their formal witness, in and out of the Church;

>- informal but powerful witnesses who were close participants in the Book's

history: Joseph's mother, wife, Joseph Knight, Sr., Sister Whitmer.

>- internal witnesses: Hebrew elements ("and it came to pass", chiasmus and

other Hebrew parallel and literary forms, the land of Jershon as a land of "inheritance"--the meaning of Jershon in Hebrew, and others.

> (2) It is Christ-centered throughout, from Lehi's vision in Chapter one, through Moroni's promise and farewell in the last chapter.

> (3) It is a Born-Again reference manual: defines, describes (and demands)

a lasting change of heart and desires, humbling of spirit, cleansing of soul, enduring life of service and obedience. enduring life of service and

obedience.

> (4) It is utterly simple and utterly profound: an almost naive commentary

interlaced with deep truths of eternity (opposites in all things, good and evil, free will; pre-mortal existence, the atonement, death and resurrection; repentance, salvation).

>

[I love the Book of Mormon, too, and love Dan for loving it. I'm studying the Doctrine and Covenants now on a daily basis (I have this great study guide I use along with it), but I must say I feel an even better spirit when I'm studying the Book of Mormon. Maybe I can get better organized and do

both.]

>

>P.S. Sherlene's P.S. on the Mormon Humor Bibliography / Mormon Letters Conference:

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Dr. Cracroft invited me to take five minutes on the panel program and give a

talk, along with his 15 min. introduction--but as our work to meet the deadline met a feverish pitch, I backed off and told him to cover for me. He did insist my name be on the Bibl. as co-author, which I really appreciate, because I need some publishing credits on my resume. It also puts you in jeopardy, though, when authors don't like what you said in your review or don't like being left out because you didn't think they were humorous. I think he really wants to share the blame--we let readers know

if it was bright or dark humor, uplifting or mordant, hopeful or depressed, bitter or loving, funny, supposed-to-be, or not-intended. We included a very broad range of humor, but also sent up signals, holding a line that Mormon writers should attune to what Dr. Cracroft in a classic essay called

an "authentic Mormon voice" (not Sophic). We have a lot of "Mormon" authors

who aren't really Mormons in spirit, but try to pose as Mormon authors, because they can't really make it in a broader market and want to please eastern critics who want them to be critical of Mormons, so will buy into their literature and give them good reviews. Still, I think we were generous in most of our annotations and tried hard to extend a hand, so to speak, to writers who are on the fringes--not quite in or out and

struggling. It's a hard line to tread, but we did our best. You all know how brief I am, anyway. Can you imagine what I went through, trying to annotate these entries and tell in three short lines the essence of a book? There's nothing harder than writing concisely. It's much harder to write a short letter than a long one, in other words--in case you haven't noticed. In some ways, too, I think we stuck out our necks in ways that might invite

some axing Chop, chop. Bleed, bleed. We passed out 80 copies of our Bibl. We made far more copies than we expected to need, and it turned out there were 100 people there from all over Utah for our forum at 8:00 in the morning (Westminster College, Salt Lake). I'd like you to think it was our

Bibl. they were after--but Robert Kirby's presence might have mattered just a little.

>

We had five divisions in our Table of Contents: I) Humor in Mormon Fiction:

Imaginative Lightning-Up; II) Humor in Mormon Non-Fiction: General Lightning-Up; III) Mormon Criticism: Assessing "Inside Humor"; IV) Gentile

Criticism: Assessing the Saints' Humor; V. Gentile Humor About Mormons: "Out in Utah They all Marry Young"; and VI. Mormon Criticism: Assessing Gentile Humor. So you all, if you find anything on those subjects, let us know. Reid, bless him, came up with a little humor collection by Davis Bitton we had entirely missed (I gave it to Br. Cr., Reid, and he says "Thanks." We are not through, yet, by any means. We let the group know that this is a "Work in progress: emendations solicited!" Those of you who

think there's not much Mormon humor might be interested to know that I annotated about 250 items, and I have a whole stack of children's books I collected Friday that still have to be done--that's just part of what's still waiting. It has been a job--but a lot of fun along the way. And I really enjoy working with Dr. Cracroft. I thought his talk at the AML (Assoc. of Mormon Letters) was excellent, and he is a Mantic through and through (emphasizes the Spirit), without being a judgmental bigot. He's very generous and understanding. A good man and great mentor (as well as a

merciless editor Chop, chop chop, again. Aggcchhhh!

>

Robert Kirby was a kick at this convention. The other panelists included Kathryn Kidd, who wrote the whacky novel, Paradise Vue. She told how she lost all her friends and almost her family, because everybody thought she was writing about them in this novel. She warned prospective Mormon novelists not to try writing unless they were prepared to be hated. We were digesting all her illustrations of that theme, when Robert Kirby got up and said, "With all due respect to Kathryn Kidd, that's what I LIKE about writing! I THRIVE on making readers mad." It was wonderful. He's about the only columnist around who can make me laugh out loud. He constantly lampoons the idiosyncracies in our culture and has probably done more to reform us than all the general authorities combined.

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>He said that he had sat through another boring Sacrament meeting and had had a terribly frustrating week putting up with some of the Latter-day Aints

of his acquaintance and was driving to Salt Lake, seriously considering his great temptation to go inactive in the Church--really wondering if it was all worth it. He said while he was in deep mediation about this, he had a spiritual experience. He said the Lord spoke his language to him, and in essence said, "Why don't you hang in there, but get even!" He said it was a real Hallelujah moment--he's been lampooning the Saints ever since. And because he's not one of these pious types with the long face and dark suit, he can relate to all the non-Mormons around and helps them be able to laugh

at what they have to suffer here in Mormon culture. I think he's wonderful.

>

Kirby said he wrote a column a while back, in which he reported that the way most members sing hymns, it reminds him of sounds from an anesthetized dairy herd. Well, this lady called him up and was just furious! Told him he had to have an apostate spirit to say such a thing, and he was either an excommunicate or on his way there to say such things about God's true Church. Well, during the course of the conversation, he recognized her name as one he had seen as a new move-in to his ward. When she got through

fuming, he said, "Well, Sister so-and-so, didn't you just move in to such and such a street?" She wondered how he knew. "Oh, I just want to welcome you into our ward and introduce myself as a member of your bishopric." At that point, she backtracked quite fast and got off the phone. Then it got even better. She called him back and said she had just read the column again, and she guessed it was pretty funny. He said the tragedy was that somewhere in our system, we got the idea as a culture that we had to have some sort of authoritative permission to laugh.

>

He may be a little rough around the edges sometimes, but I do think his columns do us a great service. We were sad when the Utah County Journal dropped his column. But Dan found out how to get his Tribune column on the internet, so we checked it out Sat. night. It was a hoot. He once wrote an essay about five kinds of Mormons. This time he talked about the five kinds of testimony bearers in Church, including the one who feels she has to get up there every time. It will do more to improve our future testimony meetings than all the directives from Salt Lake. Our lesson in R.S. was on "Bearing witness of Christ," and I thought: "Wow, Kirby of all people now even correlates his columns to Church themes of the week--best sermons of all, from our local bard-preacher. I think that Hallelujah moment of his really was from the Lord--although Kirby was willing to admit it might have been the Devil.

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There are two other books of Mormon humor that made me laugh so much I could hardly breathe (this is, of course, about 11 p.m. at the JKHB, when I tend to get a little crazy, anyway). There's a spoof on the inanity of a lot of our Relief Society meetings by a Laurie Mecham Johnson, now available at bookstores (I even saw some at BYU bookstore) called "Special Living Lessons for RS Sisters, by Sister Fonda Alamde. By Signature Books, Salt Lake City.

Tortuously funny photos accompany the text, which is supposed to be a collection of typical Relief Society newsletters. I kid you not--these

newsletters sounds a lot like some meetings I've endured--especially when we were out living in more rural areas.

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The other one you have to see is by Roger Salazar and Michael Wightman.

"No

Man Knows My Pastries. The Secret (Not Sacred) Recipes of Sister Enid Christensen." Also Signature Books. It's a parody of Mormon cookbooks and

Mormon food tastes. A riot. Also has accompanying photos where Salazar dresses up as a R.S. sister and Roger is her spouse--both working around

the

kitchen (I suspect the two are gay in more ways than one). Recipes are in chapters with titles like "In-Bread" and "Just Desserts," and include recipes with names like "Legrand Ricky," "Endowmints," "Artie's Choke Chicken Salad," and "Franked Corn Things." Dan is telling me it's time for bed--I think he's really just worried that I'm ruining his letter--Oh, what fun it is to ride . . . good night.

>

----- Headers -----

From drb@itsnet.com Tue Feb 4 17:12:28 1997

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