

Date: Monday, January 26, 1998 11:34:56 AM
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Dear Family,

Thank you all for your e-mail notes, cards, letters, and gifts to remind me that I am indeed getting OLD. Sherlene didn't know how prescient she was when she sent me a Clinton card that said, "Another birthday and you look fantastic! Hey. . . Have I ever lied to you?" It's nice to be remembered. Almost everybody but Mom remembered. This proves, of course, that women eventually do forget all about the pain and anguish of childbirth. I'm glad, MOM, that all your hard work in getting me here in this world is finally forgotten.

We spent five days in New Orleans this past week. We left last Saturday and returned on Thursday evening. It was quite an adventure. It was also quite a hassle getting things together so that we could get away for a few days. I'd arranged for a new couple in the ward to supervise the kids and keep things going while I was gone. The problem was, four days before I was due to leave the wife got a full-time job that required her to be on the job before the younger children left for school. So, I did a little scrambling and ended up getting Belin Rodas, a college student whose Mom is our R.S. Pres., to watch the kids while we were gone. Amherst is on the quarter system, so she didn't have to leave for Massachusetts until Thursday morning. I arranged for Roland and Christian to go over early to Elliot's home to catch the bus that morning, so that Belin could make her plane in plenty of time.

Barry arranged for us to stay in the Cornstalk Hotel in the French Quarter. This is the old part of New Orleans that the French settled in several hundred years ago. The place is teeming with wrought iron balconies, fun places to eat, and lots of shops and things to see. It is also full of adult

bookstores, and other things related to sin, mostly centered on Bourbon Street in the Quarter. While we did have to pass through the Bourbon Street corridor to get from her to there occasionally, we did NOT spend any time there! The Cornstalk Hotel is so named for its large wrought iron fence in front of the hotel that is in the shape of stalks of corn all in a row, complete with ears of corn and pumpkins at its base. It was ordered by the husband of a woman who was from Iowa. She fell ill and had to travel to Philadelphia for some treatment. While she was gone, he had the fence commissioned, so that when she returned she would feel "more at home" as she gazed out her front windows and saw the green stalks and

yellow ears of corn just outside her own door. I think that is a wonderfully romantic story. The hotel was decorated beautifully. Our room had about 20 foot ceilings, a marble fireplace, long velvet draperies, and antiques that included a very old four poster bed draped with a canopy. It was so high off the ground that I had to "hitch up" just to get into it. Unfortunately, the bathroom was also somewhat of an antique. We had to get in early enough to shower so that all the hot water wasn't used by other hotel visitors. You also couldn't add any cold water to the shower water, or it would only be cold. There were only two choices--hot or cold. Barry about went crazy with their antiquated phone system. He had a terrible time getting an outside, long-distance connection. Still, it was quite a bit of fun. We were told that Uncle Tom's Cabin was written there when the author stayed there for a time, that "Elvis slept here" and that Charles Bronson filmed part of one of his movies with the hotel as a backdrop. Just so that we'd be part of the excitement connected with the place, some drunk came inside the famous fence Tuesday night, toppled their courtyard fountain and slashed all the tires on all the rental cars parked inside the fence (about eight cars). Fortunately, we didn't have a rental car.

Monday was spent entirely at the NAPTE conference which actually was the reason we went. NAPTE stands for National Association of

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