

September 20, 1988
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Dear Brothers and Sisters, Nieces and Nephews,

I thought it might be a good thing to write about this while Mom and Dad are in China.

This is to remind all of you that Mom and Dad's 50th wedding anniversary will be on September 24, 1991, three years from now. Shortly after the reunion Barry and Virginia and I and, later, David and Karen and Marty when they visited, talked about the possibility of paying for their tickets to Hawaii and having a couples-only celebration in Hawaii or some other exotic place. But I have since talked with Mom and Dad and they definitely want a traditional reception. They want to invite all their friends and have their grandchildren there and have a reception at the Church. Last night we went back to Westchester Ward in Scarsdale for a reception for the David Hamblins, who are moving to Provo, and it seemed like a taste of heaven to see all our friends who we loved so much all at once. It really was a love feast. I can empathize with their desire to have that kind of reunion with their family and friends.

So, since it is quite an expense for some of us to get to Provo, I thought I'd alert all of you to put the week of their anniversary on your vacation calendars and save and think towards that event.

The little genealogy trip I took before the reunion with Mom and Dad will always be a sweet memory. It was exciting to visit places where our ancestors lived in Wallingford and Norwich and other places, see their churches, gravestones, visit libraries, and review their histories while we drove along. Some incredible connections were made with local genealogists, libraries, and points of interest--it was obvious to me that we were being helped in ways which were not coincidental.

But the most important genealogy I witnessed was the sweet relationship Mom and Dad have built over the years. They were so sweet with each other--so willing to sacrifice their own interests for the need of the other--so delighted and laughing and cute with each other. In my memory, they have almost always been that way with each other--but it seems to have even increased in later years--when most people only get more grouchy.

For example, Mom made up her mind that we were not going to Norwich. I had planned that as an important part of the trip and argued with her a little. But she made up her mind and let me know in no uncertain terms that the trip was over as far as she was concerned, and she proceeded to plan the next day in other directions (my arguing to no avail). So, what was my surprise the next day when Dad got in the car and headed toward Norwich. Now if it had been I, I would have been upset. Mom did take a deep breath. But seeing the excitement in Dad's eye, she quickly acquiesced and immediately changed gears and got into the excitement, herself. She wouldn't have done it for me--but her gears change smoothly for the man in her life. On the other side, Dad put up with our excitement with library and courthouse searches, even though he wasn't (with his eye problems) ready for research. But he was so gracious, watching the car and meters and surprising us by walking miles while we searched to find us rice paper and chalk for tombstone rubbings or copying keys or doing other helpful things we did not request, but which he anticipated. He was there for Mom and me with so many thoughtful, Christian acts--Christian things which were twice as meaningful because he anticipated our needs and did not wait to be asked. They were both so solicitous of each

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other's desires and needs and willing to compromise to make the other happy. I guess for me, the other real joy of the trip was the realization that my parents really accept and love me. It must be oldest-daughter syndrome, but somehow I have always felt like I had to earn, especially my mother's, acceptance and somehow always felt a little short. I think, possibly, Mom's feelings haven't changed at all, but I have just grown up a bit so I can accept myself better and therefore believe that my mother, who has always seemed so much more capable in so many ways, can also love and accept me. But I realized as we were driving along that we were not only parents and daughter, but mutually respecting, loving, and accepting brothers and sisters, and a whole lot of things in my emotional psychology came together. We had so much fun. I just kept wishing that we could all go on a trip like that. Barry said he wants to plan a trip to perhaps England for all those adults in the family who could seriously enjoy a carefully-planned genealogy trip to search out family ancestors there. This would be real genealogy with library and cemetery stops. Please, all of you, get interested in genealogy. If you can get the spirit of it--I can guarantee it is the best way to get close to each other--because there is a spirit in this work that definitely binds and seals--not only the dead to the living, but also the living to the living. I just can't say what that genealogy trip with Mom and Dad did for me. I think they had a ball, too.

I hurt my back just as Dan got over his bad back and had to spend much of three weeks down flat. The one position the Dr. prescribed was one in which I could hand-copy genealogy while the heavy binders pressed the small of my back into the mattress and my knees were propped up into a lap-desk--so I finally hand-copied all the family group sheets I've collected onto 35 connected pedigree sheets. I was only covering the Hall side because the research lines are more convenient to where we live, and I got into 80 surnames, which I have alphabetized and keyed to the 35 charts. It doesn't probably match your lineup, David--but I couldn't get down to the computer and just lined them up in the way that was most convenient at the time. I am now typing my scribbles and will send you a copy. Dan is going to a Hewlett Packard printer demonstration today, and I will probably meet him--don't give up Marty--we heard about a less expensive printer model that is supposed to be as good as the laser-jet, but a lot less expensive--and we are checking it out to see if it really is that good. As soon as we get the printer ordered, then I am going to computerize all my genealogy. However, it will be slower because I am only going to put in data which I have personally verified as to documentation and each date inserted will be tied to that data. So the sheets I'm working on now are collections of others' research and my own for use as worksheets--my goal is to document each date--which may take a while, so bear with me.

I propose that each of us decides what we can do to prepare for the 50th anniversary and volunteer early, so we can be well organized. Since we're not on-location, I volunteer to handle cost and printing of announcements and invitations, plus addressing and mailing of them. I can get Dad to send me the addresses a couple of months in advance. I realize some of the children will be in school then--but Mom and Dad seemed to want it on the real anniversary. I'm sure there will be lots of details to iron out. I hope everybody who possibly can will plan to be there.

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So Mom and Dad are having their anniversary in China this year! I wonder what they're doing. At the reception last night, we talked with the Stones and Ricks families, who both went to China last year (Betsy asked about you, Virginia). They said Mom and Dad will lose a lot of weight because the food is so awful there they fasted a lot.

I hope all is well with you. Thanks again, Barry and Virginia, for hosting the reunion. It's funny how after time passes, your mind sifts out an experience at a reunion and what things you remember best. I find myself most often looking back on the little, often funny personal interactions--like when Emily, Carli, and Laura short-sheeted my bed and I crawled in, but crawled on top, thinking the bedspread was my top sheet. They kept coming in with such concern that I wasn't under my sheets! Then there was the delighted look on Doug's face when he got to join me making the rounds of local garage sales when he thought he was just hitching a ride to the supermarket (that was the morning we didn't go because it was my turn to cook). At one of those sales I picked up a book on how to flatten your stomach (I got inspired every time I saw Nancy). When Laura and I got home, we decided to work a miracle. We used that book and exercised every day. Well, Laura lost 22 pounds and looks absolutely gorgeous. I worked harder than she did and ate less and lost 6 pounds. Those exercises did flatten my stomach, but gave me a hump-back! It is really hard to grow old!

We have been blessed incredibly. I just can't say how happy I feel right now. Thank you, each of you, for your prayers through my hard years, which I know helped bring me to this point. The builder put in our grass--lousy job--but the rains have been perfect and at least it looks green, instead of muddy out there! The dust has settled and we are starting to really enjoy our home. We had choir practice with 27 people in our livingroom last week and it sounded marvelous! We had a hairy week last month when Dan's division announced an additional 300 layoffs (650 total in the last few months). Dan got on the initiative and interviewed for an opening in another division he heard about and got the job. God is in his heaven. This job is a great opportunity and is in Morristown, which is as far the other direction as Bedminster has been. So our home was nicely located right in the middle and life will go on without a move. He was at the end of his Quality Control contract and I was just hoping he'd find something interesting. He'll be supervising the putting-together of bids on equipment sales to the government and others and will broaden his experience in ways which will better enable a jump to other industry if AT&T keeps going down the drain. However, his new division is the one which is not projecting any layoffs and is, in fact, hiring--so maybe we can at least stay here until the kids are out the door and Ridge High.

I got a new Church call--Beehive advisor. Ho, ho. I was Rosie Hamblin's Beehive teacher 25 years ago--then when they moved to Westchester Ward, Rosie was Laura's Beehive teacher (did I feel old), and now at age 45, they think I can start all over. I must say I'm a more humbled version as Beehive advisor. When I was 20, I couldn't understand why those girls could not get along with their mothers: "When I have a teenager, we're going to be BEST FRIENDS ALWAYS." Now when my girls tell me how awful their mothers are, I will say, "Good, you are normal. Now get abnormal and learn to love your mother, poor thing!"

Ah, life can be SOOOO sweet! We love you all. Forgot to tell how we met David, Karen, and family at Pageant so we could get rained out together. But the worship services Sunday on the hill with Elder Hickley were wonderful and we had some fun touring. Love you and miss you.

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Laura had a wonderful sweet sixteen last week. She looks so pretty--did she ever get herself into shape! She had a job taking care of a 4 yr. old girl much of the summer, and they loved her so much, they invited her to go with them on their vacation to Florida (they would pay all her expenses and even pay her--but emphasized this was a gift to her, and she would not be expected to babysit!) Can you believe, she turned it down to accept a job offered her to clean house for a senior citizens' complex near here. She thought the pay was \$8 an hr., but they only pay new people \$7. an hr.--but she is not complaining. She worked full time, including Saturdays and I took her to Flemington and you should see her wardrobe. Charlotte, I wish I had known about the clothing outlets at Flemington when you were here. All of you come and see me and we'll go shopping at Flemington (about a 40 min. drive from here--it is really a fun place to visit and spend money!) At school, Laura's friends really made a big deal of her turning sixteen (since they thought I was an ogre not to let her date last year--which she managed to do "in groups" anyway). They decorated her locker with balloons and streamers, brought her posters, and put signs all over the school announcing this sacred Mormon event! That evening, her MiaMaid class came over and totally surprised her, kidnapping her off to Friendly's for ice-cream. The ladies at RidgeOak love Laura and keep bribing her to quit working and sit down and talk with them. They are lonely and seem to have a lot of questions about the Church. Laura still works there two hours a day after school.

Daniel also works two hrs. after school, doing office work. It's so convenient because both can walk to work and back from home and make it back with Dan just in time for dinner. Daniel's boss told me a "whole new light enters the building when your son arrives." He gets \$5. an hr. and also devours all the food they constantly bring him. I'm sure they all think he is so thin because his mother starves him. The fact is, he is starving me, but I don't show it. I buy what I think is two weeks worth of food, and he opens the fridge door, inhales, and it's gone in two days! He has made some changes recently which have put us into a state of shock. We thought it must be some new phase, which Laura calls "weird," and which we have been asking for but don't know quite how to handle now that it's here! He listens to CLASSICAL music--and likes it enough to really study it! He has taken up not only regular piano practicing and lessons, but now also trumpet and clarinet. He reads scriptures and gives serious family home evening lessons encouraging us with all energy of soul to increase our goals. He embraces his father and tells us how much he respects and loves us and even asks us for advice. I have heard the speaking of tongues (this has to be the real thing when he says "Mom, can I help you with something?") He goes to New York City on his way to visit friends in White Plains and gives all his hard-earned pay away to beggars. He worries about having time to clean his bedroom. I have to learn a whole new language, too. I don't know how to talk to him if I'm not nagging! The bishop says this is also normal. "It usually hits," he says, "about one year before they realize they're going to leave home and go on a mission." It feels good.

As for Dan and me, we only fight when all this harmony gets too boring. We have given out two cases of Books of Mormons. Last week I gave one to each member of the Presbyterian Women's Bible study group and they were excited to get them. This Friday we are having the local Presbyterian minister to dinner, along with the Wood family (Stake President). This minister has read the Book of Mormon, knows it is true, and told his congregation to listen to the missionaries.

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