

Dear Family,

May 11, 1995

We fully enjoyed Mary's homecoming two Sundays ago, including her talk and testimony focusing on Christ and first gospel principles, as she experienced them during her mission. She is beautiful--as are all her sisters. Zina also graduated from BYU with a B.A. and got special honors for the David O. McKay essay contest--she placed as a winner and got big bucks for it. I entered the same contest and didn't place at all. 'Have since submitted my essay to "This People"--we'll see if they use it--it's kind of long for a magazine. It's about prejudice and our experience trying to adopt Andy. I had not planned to publish it at all, but Dr. Cracroft, who encouraged me to write it in the first place and enter the contest, thought I should swallow my concerns and publish it in the name of trying to prevent our propensity for prejudice. That's what Zina's essay was about, too--about experiences Betsy had with a Jewish friend. Zina, why don't you give us all a copy of your essay? I don't want to wait a year 'til it gets published.

Getting back to the homecoming, the music was divine, as usual (a medley of hymns by sibling quartet and a duet by Mary and a friend: "The King of Love My Shepherd Is"). There was more exquisite harmony at the family gathering later in the afternoon, but we left early with the Inouyes (Dillon thinks that we're supposed to have all the answers for the people in his ward with marriage problems--so we had a counseling date with this family he home teaches. This experience only convinced us that each circumstance is so individual, it's pretty useless to try to apply your own experience to someone else's, except to maybe try to convince them of the Savior's power and give some hope that change is possible--even in your forties and fifties. Come to think of it, that's all people need to hear, anyway.) At any rate, we enjoyed our time with Tracy's family that Sunday. Thank You! By the way, Tracy, we're praying that job in Phoenix materializes (Daniel said they flew you out for an interview last week). Tracy's hip seems to be healing nicely, though he still has to get around on crutches. Dad hurt his back out on the farm (overworking, trying to catch up after all that flu), so we loaned him Dan's crutches, from which he hangs his spine for his bad back, so now we have two Tracy Halls on crutches. It was good to see Stephen back from Japan, also--his homecoming's coming up, and we have also since been to one for Janet Bartholomew. We have four weddings this month--last week Dan and I went to a reception in Salt Lake for Dee and Anne (Thurston) Johnston's daughter. Remember them? (He was my first date at age sixteen--ho!) It's hard to believe we're old enough to have children getting married.

It's quiet around here! Daniel is in the language house, rooming with Arabic students and supposedly speaking only Arabic. A requirement for living there is that they eat their evening meal together each day and practice Arabic over the meal, as well as practice cooking that group meal once a week. Daniel says some of the girls can really cook! He borrowed our crock-pot for a meal his roommate helped plan last week--wonder how that went--ho! Daniel did exceptionally well with his two Hebrew, Arabic, and English classes last semester and is now talking about adding Greek. He also has a new part-time job (abt. 10 hrs. a week) as a student-aide for two professors in the religion department and seems to be enjoying it.

Laura is rooming with dear friends in an apartment down by McDonald's and also got a new job doing some occasional ushering at the Marriott Center. She describes it as the ideal job--her first assignment was to usher at the opening session of the BYU/RS Women's Conference, so got to hear some marvelous talks and my closing prayer (how lucky can she get). Jeannie Inouye planned it again this year and did an incredible job of lining up speakers. I was so knocked out, winding up both the class I taught and the one I took, I had planned to stay home that week and sleep in every day. But when Jeannie called, offering a free ticket for just saying a prayer--hey! I was so glad I went. One of those sessions was probably the best meeting I have attended in my entire life. Jeannie and I treated ourselves to ice-cream when it was all over and then decided we ought to get some nutrition, so brought our husbands along for Chinese food that evening. Jeannie also invited me to the prayer meeting before Conference--it was fun to meet Sisters Jack and Okazaki--definitely two of my heroines. They are as fantastic in real life as they appear on the screen. It was great having Liz here that week--we got in some fun catch-up chats. By the way, Liz, I told Jeannie what I thought about the winners of the RS music

competition and told her all about your music talents. She agrees with our taste in Church music and thinks you should enter next year's contest. We considered plotting with Mike Moody, an old friend who runs the contest, to get him to rope you in, but that might be stacking the deck, since I think he judges the contest. So, just DO IT! I bragged to Jeannie about your operatic voice, too--so keep practicing. You may be getting a call, if Jeannie ends up doing next year's Conference, too.

It was a lot of fun to see "To Rejoice as Women" (I can't find the underline key on Dan's computer) finally come out. I love the front cover and took out a day to read the other talks, including Betsy's marvelous contribution on family scripture reading. Besides the thrill of finally having something published in hardback, I felt honored to be rubbing pages, so to speak, with the other women in that book. I think it's a gutsy, real-life, shed-the-pretense kind of a book, which I hope will be of comfort to many of our sisters as they face trials we too often think the "others" out there don't have to deal with. The BYU bookstore told me they ordered 500 copies and they sold out in one week (which is not hard to believe, since 8,000 women attended the Conference). I mailed a copy to those of you who live out of town and intended to get them for the rest of my sisters and in-laws on both sides, too, as well as our mothers, but will have to wait until more come in. Since I'm not very organized about birthdays, I hope you enjoy the "unbirthdays" I try to send along from time to time. My family sure was sweet about this latest birthday of mine. Sometimes getting older ain't so bad, after all.

Laura is back in school now with Social Work classes. She quit the telephone survey job and is wrapping up her challenging and often messy job at Mesa Vista (a private facility for the "mentally challenged"). She has had some gruesome tasks, changing diapers on adult men, cleaning up vomit and feces, etc. and etc., but her genuine enthusiasm for helping those who need her overrides any complaints. My mother's heart swells when I see my children really caring about their fellow-man--the Lord blessed us with children who have so much to teach their mother in this respect. There are some things I don't miss about their being gone (like we're finally getting some sleep), but in general I REALLY miss my kids. They are a lot of fun to have around. There are certain things they apparently miss about us, too--they show up often enough do laundry and raid our storage room, fridge, wallets, garage of cars, and in Laura's case, my clothing and other closets. Their jobs don't really pay for this housing, so we are praying our house rents soon. Our renters asked for a month's extension, so we have until July 1 to rent or sell it. It's frightening--we've been advertising six weeks and only had a couple of bites. Usually people who can afford that kind of rent would rather buy and don't want to live on a main road like that. Anyway, we need to consult Karen and find out what the laws are about turning over rental properties. Our home teacher suggested we sell it as a rental property and turn it over into Provo rental apartments--it had not occurred to us that capital gains laws would allow that--but now that we've rented that house 2 1/2 years, we ought to be getting rental "tenure," so to speak. Dan said he heard something about how we have to have three agents to handle it, and the timing has to be just right to accommodate the c. gains laws. Do you know how this works, Karen? By the way, Karen just hired on a full-time accountant for her business and seems to be really enjoying her work. Her best work, of course, is that handsome/beautiful family she's raising. When they all filed by at Mary's homecoming, it was IMPRESSIVE! That family has got HEIGHT! David recommended his bishop (who wrote a book about teaching like the Master) to Dan, as a speaker for his next teacher development meeting. Last night when I went for my temple recommend interview, Richard Adams, our first counsellor, said he made the customary call to David's new stake president, checking this speaker out to make sure he wasn't going to say anything dangerous. David's stake president not only gave him an affirmative vote, but asked if he could come and hear the talk-- I'd say we're in for a good evening. The meetings Dan plans are the most interesting teacher-preparation sessions I've ever attended. Word has got around about them--he gets a terrific turnout.

Dan is currently finishing the programming for running the Word Cruncher text indexing and text linking software in a batch mode, allowing multiple texts to be processed unattended (sounds to me like he's working himself out of a job). He is also sitting in on a Computer Science course ("Artificial Intelligence") and a weight (strength) training course while still fitting in some weekly basketball. There was a big conference in Jerusalem a

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couple of weeks ago, where scholars all over the world saw a demonstration of what BYU has been doing on the Dead Sea Scroll project, so Dan was up many nights and worked many Saturdays getting things ready for that deadline. I attended a FARMS brown-bag lunch session, where the delights of this program were demonstrated to faculty here. Noel Reynolds, our academic V.P., got all tearful describing the dedication of people on BYU's project team--said BYU is the only place in the world where people can work together like this to get a job done, because they don't care who gets the credit and don't insist on getting rich doing it (understatement of the year). Anyway, I felt very grateful because I can't think of anything I would rather have Dan devoting his energies to (I learned in my American Usage class that it's now OK to end a sentence with a preposition. Most of our split infinitives are all right, too.) I really think they should have brought Dan and his wife along on that trip to Jerusalem, but we weren't invited. I suppose it wouldn't have worked out, anyway--this was during the weeks the rest of us in the family were doing finals and research papers--a crazy time at home!

I had quite an adventure last semester teaching family history. Actually, I did more hand-holding than teaching. You would not believe what was going on in the personal lives of each of my eight students! Not one of them was what I could even remotely consider a serious student. Three had transferred over from Ricks, and one was a freshman who obviously bluffed her way to get through high school. I don't know how they ever got to BYU. When I heard Nathan didn't get into BYU, I really gave it to them about the seats they were filling. Two of my students were from Alabama--I don't care what anybody says, I do think they just let some students in so they can say every state is represented. I felt like I was spoon-feeding a bunch of whiners and sissies. I think there must be something about students who sign up for 4 p.m. religion classes. The ones with get up and go to early classes and work afternoons--or plan to be home fixing dinner. The only way most of them passed was by my letting them hand in everything late (at first I lowered them a half-grade for each late day--but I would have had to flunk the whole class. These kids really didn't care!) But I think the Lord helped me in working with them--they seemed to catch on about half-way through the term. All but one of their final projects were really outstanding--reading them made it seem worth all the effort. On April 3, the anniversary of Elijah's coming, I held a Seder meal in class (with the help of an old friend, Vic Ludlow, who demonstrates this to about 1,000 students a year). And we had a pizza party at Mom's after their final. When it was all over, I actually went into withdrawal--something I would not have imagined all those times I said, "Never Again." I ended up giving three B+s, two Bs, one B-, one C+ and one C--, and considering that most of them started out as D students, I felt pretty good about that. I think they did, too--I really do think they will continue doing family history and do it with enthusiasm. All except for the freshman. She got a D+ on her project and came to the pizza party in tears, using that stage to try to turn Mom, Dan, and Daniel against this merciless teacher. Later she came to me, apologized, admitted that she'd spent the semester doing her cross-stitching and anything else but study, and thanked me for teaching her early that she can't get away with that anymore. Ah, the joys of teaching! One of the students came to me after grades were out and told me I had changed her life, was the only person on campus she felt really cared about her, and that when she started the class she felt she had lost her testimony and now she wants to go on a mission. One of my students had poor English skills, but great math skills, so I encouraged him to do a computer project. He created a database for plotting genealogical maps showing ancestral migration routes, ancestral concentrations (for plotting central places for family reunions, etc.) and really did some beautiful things, turning out maps illustrating his wife's Hungarian roots. His accompanying text was so bad, I edited it all in green ink, so it wouldn't scare him to death--but he seemed grateful for the editing, incorporated it, and turned out a great project. I had to have Dan look his project over, because I don't understand this stuff, and he was impressed, too. This young man got into graduate school at the "U" and has decided to place some ads in genealogical journals and see if he can turn mapping people's genealogy into a side business. So there are some rewards in this work.

I am taking the spring and summer off and need to, after nearly three years of going straight through. I'm bushed. This week I spent catching up on long-procastinated activities (like mailing wedding gifts, going to the temple and actually attending Homemaking Meeting)--but the rest of the time I hope to clean house and maybe even empty some of those moving boxes. I'm supposed to be getting a head start on my thesis, but can't get up

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steam for that yet. I have been doing a little genealogy--found some new detail on the (West) Virginia William Hall family. Found out William's son Richard (who was probably named after Hannah Richardson's father, since she had a brother named Richard) married a Sarah West. She is probably of the same family as the Barbara West who married William, the son of Richard's brother, Anthony (our ancestor), who ended up in Ohio. I have been chasing those Richardsons until I am blue in the teeth. I thought I was on an exciting trail all last week--couldn't sleep for all the excitement, but can't prove anything yet.

Yesterday evening Dan and I went to give blood. At the Women's Conference, Brother Merrill Bateman told us he got a call from Elizabeth Dole, wife of the Senator (who is probably a relative--we have a Dole line). She is head of the Red Cross and told him they have been noticing that whenever there is a national disaster, the Mormons are the first ones on the scene with concrete help and also the best organized. She asked that the Church come and tell about our welfare program and how it operates. Then she told him they needed the Mormons for something else, too. She said we are the last available pool of clean blood in the entire world, and our blood is desperately needed. I had not realized until I went to give blood last night and went through all their layers to weed out potential AIDS doners that there is a period of time when AIDS tests do not pick up signals of the disease, so if a person lies about his potential for having AIDS, he could contribute blood and give someone the disease. It makes me wonder if we should have a family blood bank for emergencies such as Tracy's hip surgery. When I read the long list of other ways a person can be disqualified from giving blood, I thought what a blessing it is that Dan and I were even able to volunteer blood in the first place, as part of a ward project which is probably going on now throughout the Church, in response to Mrs. Dole's request. Anyway, you know me. I can't do anything without a little drama. I've given blood at least ten times and never had this happen before (I hadn't eaten much during the day, and I think that was the problem). I was doing fine--my pint was just about full. Dan was sitting a ways away, waiting for his turn, and my nurse was helping somebody else. All of a sudden I felt myself going under. I was afraid I was going to faint and fall off the recliner, so yelled for Dan to come over, and when he acted like he had all the time in the world to uncross his legs and get over there (for his birthday, I'm giving him a panic button), I yelled for the nurse. She told me to cough a lot, to get my blood circulating. So there I was, coughing away while they lowered my head and put up my legs (I had a skirt on, of course--for the earlier recommend interview). Anyway, it must have been quite a scene--one of the sisters later told me it reminded her of when she had her first baby. I had to stick around about an hour, because every time I stood up, I felt faint again. I guess I'm getting too old to give blood. The old gray mare. . . which reminds me, I spent \$35 getting my hair highlighted last week and Dan still hasn't noticed. That's good, because then I didn't have to tell him about the \$35.

We are having a very (very) wet, very green (i.e. moldy) spring. And it has been cold. Next week it will probably turn to a sudden 100 degrees, and we won't even know we had a spring. The mountains have never been so green. The paper says with the new reservoirs, we don't need to worry about flooding--hope they're right. The two dogwoods & redbud Dan planted last year are now in bloom. The flower crab apple should bloom next year. Last week I planted rhubarb and two kinds of parsley all around our yard, which Mom gave me as starts from her garden, and Dan bought some trees to replace some we lost last year.

Well, this started out as a 2/3 page family letter Dan wrote. Aren't you glad I was so busy last year and let him do most of the writing! Charlotte, these five pages just make up for all the pages I didn't write last! year. Be good. Write long letters. Have fun. Love from Sherlene and family.

*I can't believe this! Now it's SNOWING outside!  
Anybody want to visit Utah?*