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January 12, 1996--Neil family letter (Note from Charlotte: This letter came through the FAX too light so I retyped it. Any errors, I'm sure, are mine!!)

Dear Family,

Well, the kids are all back to school and things are getting back to normal around here. I got used to sleeping in more during vacation and now that Seminary is on again I'm feeling a bit tired. (My friend Pat and I speed-walk in the neighborhoods around the church after we take our kids to Seminary.) In taking down the Christmas decorations, I got the organizing bug and went down to Target and purchased several see-through Rubbermaid plastic storage cases, and threw out all the dilapidated cardboard boxes I have stored things in for years. Nothing thrills me more than to look up in the cupboards and see neatly stacked, identically colored and sorted boxes. Doesn't take much to please this housewife! (Just kidding.)

Emily is feeling better from her third bout with influenza or flu-like viruses. She was very sick the entire week after Christmas, but started feeling stronger after New Year's. I took her to the doctor twice because I was so worried about her--especially since she was sick the entire Fall Semester. I think she's stronger, now. Fortunately, the rest of us have not caught the bug that she had--just little colds and sore throats.

Tryouts are on for the stake youth musical extravaganza that I am musical director for. It's always lots of fun. Try telling that to John, though, He's not much into musical extravaganzas. Basketball is going well for him, though. Pinewood has won all of their league games so far.

Marty and I went to a car show at the San Jose Convention Center to pick out our next car. Not that we're going to buy on any time soon--but we can dream can't we? Marty picked out just the one for me--a Nissan 300zx sports car. Dark metallic green. Says I look terrific in it. Says I'll love the stick shift. Says I'll love the wind in my hair as I drive it down the country roads at 70 MPH. Right. I told him I'd love to buy *him* a new electronic keyboard. He came right home and got on-line to look up the car up in Consumer Reports--"Recommended" it says. "Everything a sports car should be--smooth and easy to drive." Just the encouragement Marty needs!

I cornered Marty into helping me strip wallpaper of our kitchen walls when he was home on vacation after Christmas. We had to strip off two layers that took it down to a paint layer that is over two other layers of wallpaper. (Follow?) We can go no further than the paints. While we were doing it--which took all day and a lot more elbow grease than expected--Marty ventured, "Why don't we just redo the whole kitchen?" Well, it doesn't take much more than that to get me dreaming. So I called in the same contractor guy who helped us with our family room last year, and he and a cabinet maker came in to take measurements. We should be getting their estimate any day now. We'll see if this is really feasible for us. We really want to get into a new house--but that doesn't look promising right now, so we may just finish fixing this one up and sell it in a few years--right about when our last child

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leaves home. Makes sense, huh? Oh well, they'll have a nice place to come home and visit.

It's skunk mating season and we seem to have some that come around our house frequently. They say Los Altos is a skunk-friendly place. Phew! it's often very smelly around the neighborhood in the morning. I almost hit one on the road Sunday night. They don't seem to know about cars.

Here's our latest movie recommendation--"Sense and Sensibility?" We loved it. Also like "Persuasion," which is another Jan Austen adaptation like "Sense.". Also, "The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill and Came Down a Mountain" is out on video now. Very amusing!

Well, take it easy. We love you.  
Liz

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Dear Family,

Well, SURPRISE, SURPRISE! I finally decided to write. ...well, that's not true, I've decided to write at least once every month, I just haven't gotten around to it. Sorry! Charlotte is just too good! She should send me her long distance bill, don't you think?

Here's the latest: (Hope you have a strong stomach.... do not read this if you are eating!)

Doug:

11/8/95

First diagnosis: 6 x 6 cm skin and subcutaneous tissue necrosis anterior right foot ankle area. (Necrosis means "dead.")

Operation performed: Extensor digitorum brevis and extensor hallucis brevis island muscle flap to the right anterior ankle defect with split thickness skin graft coverage after debridement.

Interpretation: Apply a tourniquet, scrape out dead stuff down to the bone, retract non significant surrounding muscle tissue in foot and pull across hole. Attach and cover with thigh skin that has been removed with a turf cutter type tool. Secure with staples. Remove tourniquet...tourniquet time was 90 - 120 minutes. Blood loss was minimal.

Outcome: Surgery failed due to chronic wound and ulcer including necrosis over bone joint.

11/30/95

Second surgery:

Operation performed: Right partial rectus abdominis muscle free flap to right anterior ankle and foot with 8 x 15 cm meshed skin graft. Excision of chronic wound and ulcer. Estimated time of surgery is 5 1/2 hours.

Interpretation: Start all over. Scrape icky stuff down to bone. Chisel bone off to get a good clean surface. Next, a midline incision from belly button to pubic area was made. The right anterior rectus fascia (13 inches of table muscle) was carefully dissected free and carefully positioned onto the foot and sutured in place. Then the vessels and arteries were sutured together, and everything was covered with another patch of thigh skin. Blood loss: 400 ml. (significant!)

This pulsating plump chunk of muscle created quite a defect to Doug's foot, which the doctor anticipated would shrink 1/3 in size within 5 months, and then could be injected with steroids to further atrophy the muscle to a more normal size. It was anticipated that it would be a year before he could wear a shoe, and then with the tongue of the shoe removed.

Outcome: Failed free flap (Dead jerky)

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12/6/95

Third surgery:

Operation performed: Explore and debride failed rectus abdominis muscle free flap with burring of exposed bone and split thickness skin graft of the defect. The defect was now approximately 6 x 10 cm.

When the doc began to dissect down the muscle, it had lived just long enough to attach itself to the foot, creating it's own vascular system. When the doc got down to good bleeding tissue, he decided to graft skin over the tissue, and wait to see what would happen. This surgery is hopefully the last. His foot seems to be healing slowly but surely. The doctors had decided to do what called a "cross graft" which would have involved attaching his bad foot to the calf of his good leg and casting him into this position for 4 weeks, at which time they would detach the muscle from his calf to the top of his foot, and skin graft once again over that. We expected Doug to come wheeling out of surgery in this condition, but were happily surprised with the outcome.

His wound is currently healing nicely and has decreased in size a good 25%. He has been instructed to continue elevating the foot, keep it warm, keep from bumping or rubbing the wound, and begin positioning the foot to a 90 degree angle. The bone is fusing itself.

Prognosis: His ankle will probably be arthritic and painful. He will most likely walk with a limp. He could probably ski, however the doctor is worried about the strength of the soft tissues on his foot, and is worried that any pressure or rubbing may further break down the tissues on top of his foot. He won't win any races, or swim suit contests (incisions on abdomen, grafts on thigh) . . . but we're all just tickled that he's getting back to his old self again. He still has one surgery on his left eye due to a macular pucker (scarring from previous surgeries). Hopefully his vision will improve within 4-6 months. He has a damaged nerve on his elbow that will probably bother him for the rest of his life unless he allows Dr. Howard Reichman (Dad's back doctor) to move it around to the other side of his bone, which he doesn't really want to do.

An independent accident research company investigated the accident and determined that brake failure was the main cause, and blamed the federal government for failure to maintain the trucks properly. They also cited that the government has poor training programs for their heavy equipment operators. We have not retained an attorney at this point, but have given it allot of thought. We hope to have your support if we decide to do so, and hope none of you will reject us for making such a decision. We can't really go after the government, but there was a third party involved that instructed.

Doug to go ahead and drive the truck without his Jake brake. He would be liable in this case.

The worker's comp. nurse has given us allot of hassle. They are very anxious for Doug to return to work, even it means that he does paperwork and phone calls from home. Doug's not quite as anxious. He has allot of mixed feelings about going back.

Other news:

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I had a level 2 ultrasound on Jan. 2nd which revealed a baby girl. We are happy that all seems well with her. They checked just about everything they could check. They measured the eye sockets and there appears to be a globe in each socket. She is due to arrive on May 27th... preschool will barely have ended. I sold all my baby stuff at a garage sale this summer, including the crib. But a neighbor friend has offered to throw a shower for us in April. Every time I look in the mirror I feel so weird. I can't believe this is happening to us again... 10 years later. Doug seems content with the pregnancy although I'm still a little shocked. We're open for name suggestions. We were thinking of these: Halla (it means "unexpected gift"...and it has my maiden name in it) or Kestle (pronounced Kess lee) and is kind of a mix between Carli & Chelsey. We're really having a hard time finding one we all like, so any input would be appreciated.

Our family went on a winter ski weekend to Targhee Wyoming with 42 other families we know, including 2 of Doug's doctors. We went on a horse drawn sleigh after dark, through the forest, to a tent-like structure called a "Yurt" (spelling?) where 20 of us sat and ate a chuck wagon style dinner of steak, chicken, fried taters, vegies, dessert, & hot cocoa. It was really a memorable experience. ...Especially afterwards when my eyes swelled up, I sneezed & had asthma from the hay & horses. It was worth it, anyway. I actually skied one day (till I fell down a steep hill --- it shook me up pretty good.). My belly throws me off balance.

We have a new car. We leased a White Mitsubishi Montero. It comfortably seats 7 with seatbelts, and has room in the back for D.J.'s wheelchair without folding it up. Now we just need a lift.

Carli continues to work as an assistant in a dental office. She's been tied up every night going to meetings for a multi level marketing group she joined. She has visions of wealth. Actually, her boyfriend is doing very well in this program. I hope they can at least retrieve the money they invested to begin with.

Chelsey is a busy teen. She takes cheerleading & gymnastic classes twice a week. She still has all but one of her bunnies, who we think died of old age... but Carli thinks the bunny was murdered with a stick. (How gruesome). She is the president of her young women's group.

D.J. has had fun lately recording his voice. I came downstairs during my lunch time between preschool sessions to feed him lunch. (He was home sick this day) He had been recording himself all morning. I decided to see what he'd been saying. He begged me not to listen to the tape, which made me naturally suspicious. Whoa! He had recorded every swear word he'd ever heard in his entire life, and said them with magnificent enthusiasm. We've got to stop renting movies with bad language. He's picked up some words I didn't know he knew. ...Outta the mouths of babes, huh?! So then he wanted to spell the word V-I-N-E-G-A-R on his tape... I wonder why?

Sunday, Carli and I attended a special meeting given by the first ward. They had invited a couple from Bountiful to speak who had written a book called "When Life Doesn't Seem Fair". (Erickson is their last name.) Anyway, this couple had 3 healthy girls, then had 2 seemingly healthy girls and a seemingly healthy boy. In all 3 of the last births, at about 9 months of age, their children suddenly developed cerebral palsy. The children became ~~seriously~~ <sup>seriously</sup> handicapped, practically helpless, needing to be hand fed, diapered, bathed - everything. Their lives were stressful beyond anyone's belief. The

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parents were close to divorce for 20 years. They had faced bankruptcy several times. The mother found peace through the countenance and spirituality of her children, and through the charity of others and through scripture reading and prayers. The father experienced a different side to all the adversity. He was bitter. He couldn't understand why this could happen to him although he served his church callings, payed his tithing and worked hard to support his family. He thought he was doing everything he should, and resented the testimony of others when they told accounts of blessings and miracals in their lives. Finally he had some experiences that humbled him, and led to his repentance. He felt he had been selfish and asserted his priesthood wrongly in the family setting. He talked about how to find peace among adversity. It was such a great boost for me. There wasn't a dry eye in the entire chapel. The least they could have done was pass out tissue before the meeting! Kurt Bestor played his own rendition of "There is Sunshine in my Life Today", and the little boy with cerebral palsy sang "I am a child of god". It was very touching. I ran home and hugged D.J. and kissed him all over! If any of you are feeling any twangs of adversity, I would recommend this book to you.

Hope you are all healthy and happy! We love you very much! Thanks for all your fasting & prayers, your calls & cards, and flowers!

Love Doug & Nancy & Family

**Bryan Weight Family letter, January 20, 1996**

We attended some one act plays at the high school last night. Sarah has the lead in one of the plays called Ledge, Ledger and the Legend. She plays a girl about to commit suicide and has a man come along who is in the business of teaching people how to do it right. I didn't like the idea of the play to begin with but after I read the script I saw that it is really a very funny play. It was Sarah's first drama experience and she did a great job!! She was loud and clear (some of the plays were hard to hear) and she did a convincing job (it all took place on a narrow window ledge and she had to pretend to almost fall several times--she never does jump!).

We survived the big wind storm. Two neighbors whose homes were threatened spent one night with us. We had a house full but had fun. Both families brought food with them so we had a great buffet--one family even brought appetizers so we ate in style by candle light!! Our power was only out for about 17 hours but others were not so lucky. I had friends who were out for 8 days. A few came over to our house to do wash, shower or just to hang out in a warm house! We forget so easily how dependant we are on electricity!! The children missed 4 days of school due to the outages.

We gave Hyrum a remote control car for Christmas. It was the kind that you have to put together yourself. The salesman at the hobby shop warned me that it would take him two weeks to assemble and it did!! He learned a lot along the way and he knows how to take it apart and fix it if anything goes wrong.

Bryan is fully engaged in the scouting program. The scouts went to a lodge on the backside of Mt. Hood over the holidays for an overnigher. They had plenty of snow. The young women drove up during the day and joined them for tubing. They had a great time!! Bryan is working with boys on merit badges.

I worked with the Webelos on their Craftsman badge. Nobody lost any fingers--that's what I always worry about!! One boy cut himself during a whittling project but it wasn't too serious--just scared him and the den mothers! The Pinewood Derby is in a couple of weeks and Willis has his car designed and partially cut out. He's adjusting to the new 10 speed he received for Christmas. He's been riding an undersized bike for so long that this bike looks huge for him but it's really just right and he's getting used to the hand breaks and gears. He invited Mom to bike to school with him one day. I noticed half way there that he had forgotten his backpack and used that for an excuse to turn around and go back home (I am so out of shape--I was about ready to kill over). I told him to continue on and I would deliver it to him by car!

I was having a terrible time finding something to give Hannah for Christmas. I went out one day just a few days before the big day on a prayer that I could find something just perfect for her and Hyrum. Neither of them could give us any ideas of what they wanted for Christmas. I stopped to grab a sandwich at a Subway shop

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and was sitting in front of a window and when I looked up I saw a letterman's jacket in the window of a small sportswear shop. I said to myself--"There it is!!" She earned her cross country letter in the fall and I had called to see if I could get her a jacket but they told me it was going to take six weeks to arrive. I went into the store and the salesman said that they had ordered one jacket and the company made a mistake and sent two. It had the wrong year sewn on so he took that off and said I could return it if it didn't fit her right. She was really surprised on Christmas morning and the jacket fit. (actually I think it's too big but that's the way they like to wear things now!)

Our ward had a fast for a sister who has been battling cancer for about 3 years. She had an intestinal blockage and the Drs. presumed that it was due to a tumor. They were going to put a shunt in and send her home with a short time to live. Our former bishop, who is a surgeon and friends with her Drs., persuaded them to do surgery even though this course usually does not help and just makes the patient worse off. They listened to him and found during surgery that the blockage was not due to cancer and that the cancer remaining was not as large or as bad as they had predicted. We were really grateful and felt our fasting and prayers were directly answered. Her son just left on a mission and her husband was called as a counselor in the new bishopric just a few days before they did the surgery. Some people questioned the wisdom of the calling but the bishop told the stake president that he felt strongly that this brother was to be his counselor.

We were so grateful to hear that Doug is doing a little bit better. Another answer to prayer. We're excited that Nancy is expecting a baby girl!

That's all the news from here!!

Love, Charlotte and family



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From a phone conversation with Barry--January 20, 1995

Nathan went back to Ricks two days late. The airports were closed because of the big storm. We got him off on a plane on Wednesday morning and after that the airports were closed again.

A few days we had a furious lightning storm. I was outside and Virginia ordered me in the house. It was 60 degrees when I took the kids to seminary. It was pouring down rain--I measured 1 inch in 10 minutes. I saw water flowing toward the house and I wondered what was going on. I had just fixed a downspout that had blown off the house. It turned out that an ice dam has formed to the east of our house where the water usually drains. It was like Niagara pouring down into our basement. Virginia went down stairs and started screaming. We just spent thousands of dollars fixing up the basement and hundreds of gallons of muddy water was pouring in through the window well. I made channels through the ice dam and then started helping Virginia inside. We have spent the last 27 hours bailing out. We had a carpet cleaning machine sucking up water and fans and a dehumidifier. We are hopeful that the clean up will be enough and that we will not have to replace carpets.

I go to Las Vegas on Monday for NATPE convention. Fares to Utah from D.C. are incredible low right not--\$75 for a round trip. We might take Rose Ellen to Utah for her birthday.

Does anyone know anything about a George Milligan on Dad's line that was married in NW Ohio in 1827.

From telephone conversation with Carli on January 20, 1996.

Dad is doing pretty good. The skin graft took but he is still on crutches. He is going to therapy and things are looking up now. It is looking good for now. Nancy has been sick with a cold. We found out she is having a girl. She is due in the middle of May. She is farther along than they originally thought. They might name her Kastle but they have been looking through books of names. Nancy found on--Halla and she thought about naming her that since her maiden name it hall and it means unexpected gift. But they are not sure yet what her name will be.

Telephone conversation with Mom, Jan 20, 1996

I had a little cancer removed from the side of my eye. I've had the same place treated 4 times. The Dr. did a biopsy and it came back cancerous but it was a surface kind or cancer. He burned it and then scraped it. The skin where the cancer is if softer and scrapes off. He did that three times and it will take three weeks to heal and then I'll have a red spot there for awhile.

Dad is spending a lot of time down at David's business working on a patten. He had to pay \$400 to get an extension and now he is making a working model hoping that the patten agent will see that it is a new design.

(Dad just called me from his cellular phone from his BYU office. It was nice and clear--simply amazing!!)

His office is in the new \$50 million dollar, 200,000 square foot chemistry and bio-chem building. It is the southernmost building on campus and overlooks the south west and east valley. It has a great view. He shares an office with another professor but he is rarely there so he has a nice quiet space. He thinks the model of the new press he's working on will be done in a couple of months.

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From a phone conversation with David.

Stephen is getting married on Wednesday, Feb 14th in the Jordan River Temple to Kelly Towsey. Mark is getting married to Aleah Shutt on April 13th.

Michael is in a new area in Mass--Cape Cod. Karen is busy trying to hire more people. We have a brand new phone system with 12 different extensions and 4 different line. The downstairs rooms are all made into offices. Everything is connected together we can to conference calling, voice mail etc. (He even has caller I.D. because I didn't leave a message but he knew I had called and called me back. All these new electronic tricks!!)

Emily and Barbara are both doing volleyball.

Business is slowly improving for David. Dad is down Novatek working on his new press design.

**Michael's new address:**

**111 Summer Street #5**

**New Bedford, Mass 02904**

NEWS FROM BETSY:

I had some people look at the house today. It isn't on the market yet, they just heard about it word of mouth. There's a lot to do and I'm plodding away at it. Tracy will be home for a week around the 3rd of February. Zina is planning a trip to Europe. She is going in March--saving up her vacation time and looking at the fare wars hoping to get a good fare. She be in France, England and Belgium. Part of the time she will be with a former missionary companion and her mother and with other friends for a couple of weeks. Mary cut her hair short and it looks really cute. We hope to have e-mail soon. Tracy and Mary expect to graduate in April. Tracy may do a master degree in Math at BYU. Robert has been doing some work for the BYU studios taking sets down--it is a good paying job. Alex is looking for a job, he just finished a play at Christmas time. It was a community theater version of It's a Wonderful Life. The play that Mary was in was great! The play ended the day before Susanna wedding! Spencer just came back from an overnigher with the scouts. They camped in snow caves and he loved it!

NEWS FROM SHERLENE:

School is a hassle!! Luckily my family isn't complaining and I'm hanging in there. I definitely recommend that people do this before they are 50! But it is an opportunity that I need to take or I would probably regret it later.

Daniel and Laura are doing great. Daniel is dating a girl that is leaving for Germany. He always seems to date girls that are leaving to go somewhere else. Laura is applying for graduate school and is getting some wonderful letters of recommendation from organizations where she has done volunteer work.