

Subj: Brandon's surgery, etc.
Date: Mon, Feb 17, 1997 3:02 AM EDT
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Dear Family,

Laura has asked that we remember Brandon this coming Sunday--I told her I would let you know. He is scheduled for surgery a week from tomorrow (3 hr. operation on Monday, three days in the hospital, and possibly three months' recovery, though of course we are hoping it will take less). They have both been real troopers through all this, but it hasn't been easy. We are going over there this evening, as they have both requested a blessing. Laura says she is going to feed us some baked Ziti--which I used as my excuse not to cook at all today. Thanks! Laura says she knows next Sunday is not Fast Sunday, when she is planning a special fast--so prayers are also very much appreciated for those not looking for excuse to shed a few.

Brandon's parents are flying in for the surgery and will be here until Brandon's brother Todd marries on March 1, after which they are doing a reception for them in Texas--if Brandon does not have any complications--in which case they told Todd Brandon would become their priority. We are going to Logan for the wedding ceremony and luncheon and will be taking notes for Laura and Brandon. I am trying to wrap up my Bibl. of Mormon Humor (a

project that has mushroomed), so I can help Laura care for Brandon, if insurance does not provide a nurse and after his parents leave, so she doesn't have to drop her M.A. studies this semester. I have been practicing my singing because I know Brandon looks forward to soothing lullabies from his mother-in-law.

Brandon had to drop out of school a second semester--so he has now lost a year of schooling; he also really enjoyed working for David's company and feels bad about missing so much work--says they have been been wonderful

through all this--but he is anxious to get back. We are just praying that Brandon's surgery is very successful and his discomfort will be over soon. They have over-nighted his MRI results to the Dr. O'Leary in NYC who did such a good job on Dan's back, so will be getting a second opinion, for which we are grateful. The surgery is scheduled with an orthopedist who went back for two years' special training and now does only backs. Dr. Baco

is talking about taking bone from Brandon's pelvis to help repair two fractures in his spine and a damaged disk. Right now he hardly move, and can often only sleep with medication--so pray for him (until I get there with my soothing crooning, of course). At first he only seemed to be having

severe neck pain, so we hoped his back was not affected--but apparently his neck pain was just evidence of his collapsing spine, as the fractures gave way.

Dr. Bacon said he did surgery on a very similar case just a couple of weeks ago with great success, so they are feeling quite hopeful. They have an attorney who is trying to get Jones Paint and Glass' insurance to cover their medical costs. Dr. Bacon says there is no question that the accident (which was not Brandon's fault--the other driver was driving a Jones car with a trailer behind it and turned in front of Brandon, without leaving enough time for the trailer to get through or for Brandon to stop without totalling his car). Anyway, because of some law, their attorney was reluctant to press charges until they had \$3,000 in medical bills--which has

now compiled. Dr. Bacon says the MRI proves that recent accident damage has compounded a condition Brandon could cope with before without surgery and has made surgery absolutely essential. So he is quite confident that they will get a good insurance settlement to at least cover some medical costs. Jones' insurance did already replace their car (with another used car--but one that is in good condition).

I just about had an accident last week. I was coming home late from work and did not see a huge deer until it was before me. I instinctively swerved and fortunately traffic accommodated that and the car behind me was alert and fast on the brake. The deer made it across the other lane, but we saw a big deer dead along the road the next day and wondered if it was the same one. We've had so much snow, I think they're coming down lower than usual.

We learned last week that Dan's project is being farmed out by BYU for additional development and marketing--BYU will retain ownership of WordCruncher. The firm buying the development rights hired away Jason, the young whipper-snapper kid on this project who just graduated, so the three other gray-hairs on this project were suddenly without work--at least on this project. It was a little hairy there with our NJ renters asking for a two-year extension and our not knowing if we were going to need to seek work in that area and move into that home again ourselves.

A couple of days later BYU came to Dan with a new project, which will involve training in at least one and probably two cutting-edge new languages. He will retain full salary and on top of that can consult up to 20% of his time (probably Saturdays) for this "farm out" firm and can set his own fees there. The budget needs to be cleared by BYU admin. every single year, so there is no guarantee--but when Jim called us in last week

to finalize Dan's continuance at BYU, he said it looks to him like a project that could last up to a decade--maybe indefinitely. Involves new educational possibilities through improved electronic communications at BYU.

Some hopes are to arrange e-mail access by students to get professors' syllabi before they even enroll for a course; e-mail access between students and their professors; and group electronic communication among students in any given class. Some other projects on the boards are still confidential. Dan will be learning Java and some other language and is "on loan" from his current department for this assignment, so may even keep his same office--at least for a while. It will open up his sphere of activity a lot--he'll get all over and around campus on this one.

Also, Pres. Ashton called Dan to an earlier Sunday meeting last week and asked him to again be on the 14th Stake High Council. He will retain his Exec. Sec. duties, as well, but this will not be much more responsibility because he is not being assigned to a specific ward, as he was before (there is an extra H.C. member). Since he attends all the High Council meetings anyway, it is not much of a change--at least so far. An old friend of ours from back East, Burt Hoffmann, was just called to be a Stake Patriarch--which left a vacancy. His wife was telling me how sobered he felt before giving his first patriarchal blessing last week. I find it sobering to realize that peers of ours can get called to be patriarchs. Life keeps making its point.

This job change scared us enough, we decided to let our renters have another two year contract. Nothing signed yet--but that's our thinking now. Let's just hope our 11 and 12 yr. old cars can hang in there another two years. We have some friends who have retired to a beautiful home right next to the new Orlando temple. They have invited us to come and visit, so we're thinking we'll wait until this semester ends, then go see what condition

our

NJ home is in before we sign another contract with our renters, and then go

visit in Florida. From there I would like to go to England to do genealogy research with Dan in Leicester County, where we both have ancestors--but

that's still very much up in the air. For now, I am relieved to be able to finish up my MA; Dan is excited about his new work; and we are both happy

to be able to stay at BYU where the big pay comes in terms of benefits (my free tuition), atmosphere and convenience. For example, the song fest last week was terrific. I can't believe the talent of these young people and of their leaders. I was on the edge of my seat for the entire concert--and of course the real perk was seeing Hunt Tracy, Emily, and Erin singing, each in

a separate choir. It was fun to have Liz here--sounds like she got in some performances involving her children beyond what we saw. She brought some

homemade chocolates with her that were not exactly fat-free. But what a way

to go. They could not have looked more professional--Liz, you could go into

the business. Yummm!

Well, I finally took down our Christmas tree, and now we know why it was doing so well. It had not dropped a needle. Since it looked happy, and my decorations are in dark red ribbon and white lace, the tree looked like one big Valentine, anyway, so I figured I might as well leave it up. I had to take part of it down for a Homemaking demonstration and finally finished yesterday. It looked so happy and pretty there, even with no decorations, I was seriously considering hanging some Easter eggs on it. But Dan didn't read my mind and decided to drag it out of here. And guess what! It was sprouting roots. REALLY! I put Miracle Gro in the water, and it was before sheer curtains and our large liv. rm. window, so got enough light, I guess. Well, the ground is still too frozen to plant it, so Dan stuck it in a bank of snow--I don't know if it will make it now. My plan is to plant it as soon as we can and see if we can cut it down and then re-grow it again next

year! It was a beautiful tree. Thanks, Dad.

I guess you all know Dad has been nominated for a FABULOUS award--I forget the name of it--involves three chemical engineers, one named Draper, I think. I'm sure they'll tell you more. It's pretty inspiring to read the letters of recommendation that have been coming in since he got the nomination. I just hope he gets it. If not, we at least have some fascinating letters telling about Dad's contributions through the years. If they do get it, it will definitely add fluff to their old age Social True Security pension--especially after their royalties stop coming in a couple of years. And it's tax free, no strings attached. I'd tell you the amount, \$450,000, but you'd never believe it. The scientist who nominated him wanted Dad to get the award, but did not want all the paperwork involved in follow-up. So

Dad has to send all that material, arrange all the letters, etc.--so he has been very busy getting that together this past week. It was fun to open up the "Y" paper last week and see that some professor is here on campus in the "H. Tracy Hall" chair. This has drained most of their cash and also involves their deeding the farm over to BYU, so I am really hoping they get this award--they deserve it. I know it has been a dream of Dad's to establish this chair for a long time--I'm glad it happened in their lifetime.

The BYU 14th Stake had a Valentine's dinner and dance at Pres. Alan Ashton's barn at Thanksgiving Point on Valentine's Eve. Karen Ashton never made it because some convict escaped, and she got trapped up in Sundance--the police wouldn't let anyone in or out. He has since been captured. The food was fabulous and the line dancing, killing. I didn't realize how out of shape I am. I dropped out in a hurry. I've been rationalizing that the mat exercising I was doing was sufficient, but I guess I definitely need something more than just flexibility work--some major aerobics. I used to

be able to dance all night and not get winded. I'm so sore today, you'd think I danced a week. Dan had to be gone for much of it, bringing in and

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Sherlene gets a little off course occasionally, we are sending you a copy of the nomination papers. might come in handy for science reports for the kids!

taking away chairs, tables, etc., but we got in on some nice, slow dances at the end. The live music was outstanding. Quite an evening. Before we left, we took Laura and Brandon over a Valentine's meal for her to cook--the works: T-bone steaks, shrimp and cocktail sauce, spinach (we're building up his blood), other fruits and vegies, a cherry pie, and balloons. I wanted to bring them liver and onions, but I didn't think that would go over quite so well. Laura came home just as I got there--she had been to an all day career fair, was dressed in a suit her in-laws bought her for Christmas, and did she ever look professional! It never ceases to amaze me that these children of ours really have grown up.

We got e-mail from Daniel that he had a good Valentine's Day, too. 'Took Lisa, an LDS grad. student there at Hebrew U. (who has pretty much been his steady girl since school started) to dinner at a Chinese restaurant (can you imagine? Chinese food in Israel--I guess he's tired of falafels)--and they celebrated his finishing up his Ullpan training and her getting back from three days in Jordan. From all I hear about her, I am hoping this works out--though they are taking it slow. For one thing, she is there for a one-year M.A. and has applied to all these big schools for her Ph.D. work, and he is there for a two-year program, so something's going to give as soon as she decides for sure what her plans are. It looks like his LDS roommate is dropping out of school and going back to BYU--which is sad--I guess he wants more Valentines in his life. So now there will only be three LDS students on campus--there is another woman RM, about age 28 on campus. Daniel is now teaching a Primary class and has some little monsters to deal with (justice returns), but seems to be having fun with it.

Are you all watching the "Ancestry" series showing at 8 p.m. Sunday nights and other times on KBYU?

It's a BYU production that is being shown nationally. I think they do a pretty good job of making an ancestral search look non-threatening. Dan has been showing me how to get around better on the internet, and I'm a little bit afraid of it. It's very intoxicating. I could quit school and spend my whole life penpalling with other genealogists all over the place. I just may do that. I miss being able to do more actual research. Dan and I went to the Mt. Timp. temple last Sat. night, and I would have enjoyed it more if I weren't thinking about those hundreds of names sitting in my computer that I haven't processed yet through TempleReady. We went through without taking any family names, because I couldn't find the one disk of twenty names I did process. It was lovely, though. What a beautiful place and feeling. We had not eaten since breakfast and stopped to eat some Tacos on the way home--a mistake. My stomach was in uproar all night.

As long as I'm discussing uproars: I just got bragging to myself that I was one of those few women who was not going to get hot flashes--then they started last week. You men don't know what you're missing. I have always been one who had freezing feet even in summer, so laughed when women talked about racing to windows to cool off their flaming extremities. Well, I'm not laughing any more. I'm the one always adding covers, and now in the middle of the night, I'm throwing them off like they're going to bake me. This all sweetly contributes to Dan's peaceful sleep. Just ask him how much he loves this, too!

I had always heard they especially came when you were under stress--like starting to give a Sunday School lesson or something. Well, they'll hit me when I'm lying there half asleep in the morning, deciding if I'm going to get up. I guess I think it's stressful to get up period. But in my mind, that's my most relaxed time. Weird, weird, weird. Well, for the record, dear sisters, they started for me at almost age 54. It feels hotter than anything you would imagine. You really think you're going to burn right up. So the rest of you have a few years of joyful anticipation. And you

thought

those offensive commercials about personal concerns were only on TV and billboards. Just wait 'til I get on the internet! I'll be sure to tell the world that you are all my relatives.

Well, that's it for now. Let's remember Tracy and Betsy and family, too, in our prayers and fasting. It looks like some circumstances with them are also coming to a head.

Love, Sherlene

----- Headers -----
From drb@itsnet.com Mon Feb 17 02:02:02 1997
Return-Path: drb@itsnet.com
Received: from scratchy.itsnet.com (scratchy.itsnet.com [192.41.96.2]) by emin33.mail.aol.com (8.6.12/8.6.12) with ESMTP id CAA02262; Mon, 17 Feb 1997 02:01:59 -0500
Received: from D.BARTHO (dialup-170.byu.itsnet.com [192.41.69.170]) by scratchy.itsnet.com (8.8.5/8.7.3) with SMTP id CAA25631; Mon, 17 Feb 1997 02:12:07 -0700 (MST)
Message-Id: <199702170912.CAA25631@scratchy.itsnet.com>
X-Sender: drb@pop.itsnet.com
X-Mailer: Windows Eudora Version 1.4.4
Mime-Version: 1.0