

October 5, 1990, Basking Ridge, NJ

Dearest Family,

'Sorry I missed last month, but it was just a little crazy. Onalee Wood called to say her dau. Michelle just landed a great job and would I like to take her place driving Lori and her car out to BYU and take Michelle's plane ticket back two weeks later? As if she didn't know the answer--I had been whining about cabin fever and homesickness all week!

So, 30 hours later we were on our way to Utah and had a gorgeous drive and fun time together. Lori got a speeding ticket for \$117 right away and a \$25 car repair a little later, so I decided I had better plan on paying the rest of the drive, so she could stay in school. My total costs for gas, tolls, food (most from grocery), and two cheap motel nights was \$220. The Super Saver round-trip flight, of which I used half, amounted to \$260--130 for my share, which the Wood family covered. Does that tell us something? A little planning ahead for cheap rates can not only save a lot of time and strain, but expense. Moral: Laura, watch the specials and arrange your plane tickets EARLY. We already got her round-trip for Christmas, but did not get the best rates because we missed the early deadline. The airlines are going to force us to plan ahead--a drastic turn of events in our family.

The above info. is also for Mom and Dad, who actually considered driving out here on the way to Dad's Canada venture to be at Virginia's for Sarah's baptism and No-name's blessing. I told Mom to forget it and call the airlines--even if it's too late for cheap fares. 'Hope they come. The leaves are just starting to turn here, and the weather these last two weeks of Indian Summer has been absolutely spectacular. By Oct. 14, the date of the blessing and baptism, the trees will be glorious! COME, COME, COME! What a time to go exploring MA and VT and all these great genealogical haunts!

It was great to be home in Provo. I hate to admit it, but the sun does bounce brighter off the mountains out thar'. B.Y.U. never looked more beautiful. The mountains were indeed awesome. The melons and tomatoes, etc., etc. from Mom and Dad's farm tasted so-o-o-o GOOD! I probably gained five pounds eating that whole wheat bread they have in Provo which is made without ANY oil through some incredible process--tastes like Mom slaved over it all day long. That as toast with Mom's homemade apricot and strawberry jam definitely must be added to the list of balms from heaven.

I tried to get the secret out of the employees at that bread store, telling them I was from New Jersey where such does not exist and how people in Utah were supposed to have charity for deprived Easterners. It didn't work. Their blond employee sniffed, "Utahn's are charitable, but certainly not STUPID!" Oh, well, I tried. I asked her what would happen if I just left the oil out of my usual homemade bread recipe and several employees listening in had a good laugh.

Best of all was being there with FAMILY! It is good I have a bad memory. I cannot visualize things when I close my eyes, so since I don't remember Provo very clearly when I leave it, and since I keep very busy, anyway, I don't get homesick very often. But when I get out there and see it all so brightly, I get very emotional. 'Sort of like making up months and months of homesickness, if you know what I mean. You don't?

It was great to see Laura, too. I think I saw her back once as she was rushing between classes and heard her voice over one phone call about 1 a.m. on a weekend between social events. If she hadn't had her birthday so I could lure her and the rest of the family over to the house for cake and ice-cream, I might have forgotten how she looks, too! (It wasn't quite that bad--we actually had some great chats. Fortunately she needed my help unpacking the boxes I had mailed and buying hangers, boxes, etc. to get her settled--and she was more than willing to go shopping for a birthday outfit, so we did have SOME time together.)

It was heart-warming to meet Laura's new friends and also get to know some of her cousins better. They were in and out her door (and ground-floor windows) day and night, every other minute, it seemed. Her phone rang constantly. When we walked past the dorms, friends opened windows to shout out at her or ran across squares to talk with us. I'm glad she went summer term--she met so many good friends, she's hardly a stranger now. Makes a Mom feel very happy to see such lovely friends and cousins and aunts and uncles, and grandparents, too, helping her feel at home in Provo. Thanks! It looks like they are also concerned about her health. Some friends posted a huge sign over her door the other day: "CONDEMNED AREA. ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK!!!"

I had been kind of worried about Mom and those numb spells up half her body. I foolishly anticipated finding her lying down, pale on a pillow, and feeling awful.

Well, she should have been lying down pale on a pillow--but she was up early every morning canning peaches, picking fruit at the farm, and making flower baskets, holiday wreaths and other creative items for her Tulip Cottage (when she wasn't doing the payroll for the 75-90 odd homemakers who consign crafts).

I also caught her doing such things as making arrangements for Relief Society (she's Homemaking Leader--she spent hours quilting, and in one week the women in her ward produced 3 gorgeous tied quilts, bound and finished, for the Romanian orphans). Other times she was putting pamphlets in the gazebo as part of her Payson community service, feeding her cats (and five new kittens) out on the farm, tending D.J. so Nancy and Doug could go out on a Friday, carting one of her orchids and a monstrous decorative kale Dad grew, along with a cake, to the annual ward picnic (the horticulture was used as table decorations and also judged, producing a blue ribbon 1st prize for Dad and a purple ribbon--I can't remember what prize--for Mom).

I tried to be as helpful as possible, but I must admit it wore me out trying to keep up with her. It did dawn on me that she might be knocking herself out so I'd be assured she was healthy and independent and maybe she would slow down if I got out of there. But then I remembered that she has always been that way. To quote her: "If I'm going to die, I'm going to die in my boots." (If the boots don't wear out, first!)

The first Sunday, after she had one of her numb seizures (one that lasted more than 24 hours--more like 2 1/1 days), we got our dates mixed up, and I came home from Church to find Mom and Dad gone. I thought for sure something awful had happened, since I thought they were staying home to take it easy. Turns out it was a doctor's appointment I had said I would drive her to, but which I thought was on Monday! (Things don't change much through the years!) I think if David and Karen had not come over to hold my hand, I would have had a seizure myself, I was so worried.

I did go with Mom to her neurologist and to get an MRI while I was out there and also arranged for Mom and Dad to get some blood tests at the County Health (you should all arrange that when you go to Utah--you can get a full blood/cholesterol profile for all of \$17--here it costs \$85! All three of us checked out to be "High Risk" for heart attacks. Very encouraging. We are now in the process of becoming vegetarians--which not only cuts down on fat (if you can eliminate the butter), but sheds pounds fast.

Dad hasn't changed much. He still goes quietly about his much business and resists getting roped into as many of my projects as possible. He still has the kindest, wisest look on his face--I liked to sit in the congregation when Dad was bishop because I just liked to look at his smile. I still think he was one of the world's best bishops and, certainly my "world's-best" father. He was spending his time going to Salt Lake to get equipment for his tractors on the farm or for his scientific projects at the shed, watering his trees that he's growing from seed (by the time I roused myself out of bed, he had already walked over to B.Y.U. to harvest seeds from their collection of exotic trees to grow himself), weeding, watering, and harvesting at the farm, doing the ward newsletter (has a different format for each edition) and collecting reports all week from ward members, playing the piano (we had some fun singing together--though I pitied him that it wasn't Liz singing over his shoulder), doing computer projects (composing music, etc.) on his great equipment, and running errands (he bought a year's supply of cookies when it looked like our large birthday cake was going to run out).

He gave us a scare, too. I thought I'd take a first sneak over to the BYU genealogy library during the B.Y.U. game. Figured I could walk home after dark and time it for when the kids got out of the game, so I'd have lots of company on the way home. You should have heard the crowd roar during that Miami game! It was literally earth-trembling. Someone said the decibels at one of those games is worse than if some jets were down there. Talk about ENTHUSIASM! They won, but when I got home, the mood was not as boisterous. Dad had just had the too-familiar experience of seeing sparks out of the side of his eyes and then having black, wavy lines obscure his vision. This was in his good eye (the other eye had two retinal tears surgeries, but is mostly blind because of massive hemorrhaging in that eye). We were scared. The bishop came right over and gave him and Mom both blessings. Dad was told that he had sufficient testimony and faith for healing and that miracles can still happen. Mom was told that she would be able to do what she wants to do--which she later said was the best thing she could have been told. Cousin Alan Hall's blond, red-headed, and beautiful children joined us for the blessing--they had parked their car in our drive so they could roar at the game, too.

When Dad went in for his exam after that, the Dr. decided he did not need laser surgery, after all--that, in fact, the retina was removed from the wall, but it had not torn. Some blood vessels had torn, but it was good because it released pressure and meant the retina was in more stable territory than previous. The

blood dissipated, and his vision cleared. As usual, the Lord provides that such could be dismissed as a coincidence, but I feel it was an evidence of Priesthood power and feel very grateful.

I had a few anxious moments there, wondering what might happen if Mom had a stroke and Dad was blind. I am a big baby who has a hard time facing the fact that parents can get sick and are not going to be eternally around. I was trying to get them to make some decisions about living wills, cemetery plots, and such--all subjects which need to be tackled but are not the most pleasant. BY THE WAY, MOM AND DAD, DID YOU DO ANYTHING ABOUT THOSE ITEMS!?!?

If you don't, I don't want any complaints in the next life about how your children handled it! Nag, nag. (Now who taught me to do that?)

I got Mom and Dad Bartholomew to come with me to the Provo City Cemetery (Mom and Dad Hall were "too busy"), and they bought 3 lots and Dan and I bought 2 lots (enough for 4 graves--one for Dan and me and two for his next two wives) right next to them. For the record, we got NE 1/4 of Lot 18B and SE 1/4 of Lot 18B--some of the last lots in the cemetery where you can have upright markers. These lots are not cheap--talk about expensive real estate--can't even afford to die any more! They are supposed to extend the cemetery across the road from our plots in the future, and I am hoping all the rest of you will buy nearby, so we can all be together in Hell on 2nd Resurrection Day. A woman is trying to sell 5-6 old lots she bought in the middle of the cemetery (where they also allow tall markers) and Mom and Dad Hall were thinking of buying those. You have to ask about resales because the cemetery would rather sell you new plots which cost more.

Some other fun memories were going to Chuckarama for dinner and a "Family Reunion" play with Mom and Dad Hall (their early anniversary celebration)--and David and Karen and family (after that, any family reunion we have will be perfect!); getting a perm for Mom and "highlighting" for me from Nancy and seeing the gorgeous home she and Doug have built and are now trying to sell and astounding that Carli is a teen already; laughing (and wanting to weep) over photos Betsy brought over which Hunt Tracy sent from his mission; going to the "Onion" (really!) festival in Payson on Labor Day (the only onions we could find in the place were in little relish packets to go on hot-dogs)--and seeing DJ so excited to go on the rides; solving all the world and Church problems one night when David and Karen dropped by; having dinner with BriAnne and Jeff at Bartholomews (they are going to live there while Mom and Dad B. are on their Family History Mission in Germany (their farewell was last Sunday)); other chats with the Bartholomews at their home and at ours; blowing my gift budget for the next 5 years at the tulip cottage--I got baby quilts for Virginia and Amy and a Halloween witch for my door like you bought, Liz--what a fun place! a spontaneous Family Home Evening at Bishop Free's when they came over to invite us in for a "chat."--We had a great couple of hours talking about Armageddon and the end of the world, etc., etc. while Mom played her usual game of making us look up every scripture to prove our suppositions (remember how she used to make us interrupt our dinner to go look up something in the dictionary?).

It was fun having over both sides of the family for a birthday get-together Sept. 13 on Laura's birthday. I wondered if I had ordered too-large a cake. Ha! I kept slicing the cake smaller and smaller--some got about two crumbs! What a great family to take time from busy, busy schedules to be together. Laura was astounded at the turnout, and it was great to see some I might not have been able, otherwise, to greet. Liz, Greg came over and did not seem to mind being surrounded by adoring blond cousins and also-adoring roommates of Laura's. It was fun to see all those cousins from both sides and compare features--all handsome and beautiful, of course!

It was also memorable to visit our old ward and see so many familiar faces. Here in the East our wards are so transient. It amazes me when I go home and see so many of the same faces. What an incredible ward we have! I still think that chapel is one of the most beautiful in which to worship--not to mention all the love from so many dear friends who always make me feel remembered and welcome.

I did get over to the B.Y.U. library with the goal of using their new computer system to download whatever information patrons have sent into Salt Lake in the Family Search Program. I got there and did get one of their five computers, but they had a new librarian who was as stuck as I, at times. After an hour it was time for me to leave the computer to someone else. I felt very discouraged, knowing this was my last chance. Just then, this man named David Burdick sat down next to me. He was downloading for his father-in-law and knew the system well enough to help me download my information while he did his own. He was fabulous! He knew the librarians and suggested they let me have the computer, since I was out of town. So they juggled the other computers among the other patrons (who were locals), and for three hours this dear man coached me at the computer. He showed me how to follow alternate lineages (when patrons send in three different sets of parents on the same line) and

how to get all the notes, etc. I got four disks filled with every bit of information Salt Lake has on all the Hall and Langford lines. The angels were definitely hovering to send him to sit by me. 'Turns out, he is a professor who teaches classes on how to use the PAF genealogy programs. He had an interview that afternoon, as he is now looking for a job as a librarian--you had better believe I have prayed for his job-search, as that was all he would let me do to show my appreciation. A truly good man. Mom B. said she has had him do some of her genealogy and was very pleased with the results.

Then I felt extra blessed to find a young man at the Copy Center downstairs in the library who was willing to help me through the long, intricate process of converting my IBM-compatible disks to McIntosh so Mom and Dad Hall could use the information on their computers (fortunately, I hear Mom is now getting a computer which is IBM compatible--you in the family who want to share genealogy, be sure any new equipment you get is IBM compatible--it could save you a LOT of typing and inputting, as that is all I'm doing these days). We were at the library until close to midnight when Mom and Dad came and got me. This young man had a date that night, supposedly to a dance--but he actually got her watching a video downstairs and then he would hop up and down all the flights of stairs to keep checking on the process--I tell you, the angels were watching to get all that genealogy done for us.

Another very sweet experience was going with Mom's cousin, Joanne Coombs, Tracy Jr., David, and Mom and Dad to the Provo Temple to do some sealings. Mom and Joanne did the research and Mom submitted the names--it was a beautiful feeling to be able to seal Samuel Smith, our direct ancestor, to the wife we are descended from and do some other family sealings. Joanne Coombs is a lovely person--she is descended from Grandpa Langford's half-sister's daughter (did I get that straight)? Anyway, she's descended from James Harvey Langford Jr.'s other polygamous wife, who was our ancestor's sister. Max Rogers, who was Chairman of the Language Dept. at BYU and was my boss most of the years I was in college (worked half-days as his secretary) showed up as the temple worker to do the sealings. He told of some inspirational temple experiences he has had and brought a special feeling I thought. He was the kindest boss I have ever had--always so gracious and appreciative--though the pay was awful (not his fault). I was a stupid youth, flying to Boston and sometimes to another job I thought paid better, but when I got tired of those, he would always take me back again. He and his wife have been on a couple of German-speaking missions in the last decade--what a beautiful feeling it was to be together in that room and share that sacred experience!

I flew home Sunday night, just kept my bags packed, said "Hello and Goodbye" to Dan (who, bless him, had maintained things beautifully while I was gone) and then left Tuesday morning, driving to Arlington to be in on the excitement of No-Name's arrival. I took my first "rest stop" in the 5 hr. drive at the temple and took in a temple session which was delayed because after being closed since Saturday noon, still only 14 people showed up for a session and they had to wait for enough to arrive. So sad!

No-name is one sweet and alert little baby. Besides, I can tell he likes his Aunt Sherlene, which always prejudices me in their favor. So patient. So willing to accept the rumbles and tumbles of being at the bottom of such a big heap. So lucky to belong to such amazing parents and adoring brothers and sisters. Virginia had the baby early, and I'm afraid by the time I got there the hardest part for her was over. I was impressed at how her non-Mormon neighbors brought over breads and casseroles, as well as all her LDS friends. I hardly had to cook all week, and Virginia said it extended through the week after I left. Really a testimony to how well Virginia and Barry care for their neighbors--every time I'm over there she's preparing some dish for this or that family.

Barry does all the laundry--which is a lot of laundry! Very impressive, considering his busy schedule and limited hours at home. When I got there the house was so clean and organized (all the clothes folded perfectly in all the drawers) and shock on shock, I saw children making an effort to keep them that way! The Lord definitely sent the right people the big family. It was never that organized around here for two children! My Wood nieces and nephews were so sweet and helpful--really a joy to be around.

At Virginia's urging, I dropped by the Archives after taking Barry to work three mornings. There have been times when I drove around one hour before finding a parking place. I had decided I didn't want to be gone more than two hours and if I didn't find a place, I wouldn't stay. Do you know, three mornings in a row, there was a place right there by the Archives with a two-hour meter--just as though another angel had preserved it for me. I got some fabulous papers--I collected enough stuff last month to keep me busy inputting and verifying the next few years!

I took the winding, PA route home, going first to the Frederick MD courthouse. I got there at 4:15 to learn it closed at 4:30. I needed to copy out all the Staley, Simmons, and Richardson names from the female marriage register (I did the males last trip). Just then another librarian showed up and, seeing my dilemma, said she had late research to do and I could stay with her. She stayed until 6:30, long enough for me to copy out the whole register. Just as I said, angels are watching! I love that particular drive home through Pennsylvania--winding hills, peaceful farms, lots of ancestral scenery. I drove 65 m.p.h. much of the way and was home by 10:00.

Since then, I've just been trying to catch up. Two new renters to get ready for. I weeded the whole garden and all the flower beds before I left, and you'd never know it. One thing we have in the East is rain and weeds. It must have rained the whole time I was gone--though we've had incredibly beautiful days since I got here. We have two new boarders who are very pleasant and at a time when we can use some dollars. It has been hairy these past few days finding out if Dan still has a job (he was told his job is at risk--which he has, with his boss'encouragement appealed).

The VP of his division overspent his budget and was told he would get cut if he did not get solvent. Well, he doesn't want to admit it's a budget issue, so he's claiming his goal is to match people better to their jobs and get rid of those whose backgrounds don't match their specific task. That helps him get rid of half his force because none of them match their jobs--they were refunnelled after the last cut. But he really doesn't have a case because Dan more than met the goals given him for his 3 quarters in the job--he has in fact received a bonus for getting such good results. It's pretty hard to prove he's not qualified for the work he's doing--even if his background credentials would not point to his current position with the Company. Plus, he met all these goals while he was supposed to be disabled from eye surgery (he kept up by having our home wired so he could fax and receive messages and has a better communication system here than he yet has at his new office in New York. By the way, in typical AT&T fashion, this news of his possible job cut came the week after the Company had spent a fortune remodeling a floor in the City for Dan's office and then moving him in. Really bright! Well, there's nothing we can do except keep a bright eye for other possibilities and see what happens! For sure, we're not happy at the prospect of having to move any time soon.

I am still working in the Stake Family History Center and have recently been going through some films I ordered from Salt Lake on the Hungerfords--am trying to get it into my computer--I need twice as many hours in every day.

I also got a new job at the ward level--after Conference I'll start teaching a 12-week course of "Teacher Training" which will be taught Tuesday nights at the Church. I would find that subject very intimidating, but I am getting around it by arranging for the class members to do the teaching (they don't know it yet). That takes the pressure off me and gives them experience--the best teacher of all!

We are looking forward to General Conference and are planning to view all of the Saturday and Sunday sessions (we go to the stake center in Morristown, since we don't have that Utah luxury of just turning on the living room tube). We are having a brunch here at 10:30 a.m. Sunday for the local missionaries and for our boarders, Blair Jensen and Kathy Mayette (who is here while looking for a home and will be joined by her husband in a week). Then we'll go over to Conference at 12:00 and again at 4. Dan has meetings in-between, so that was the only time we could all be at the table.

We are all praying for President Benson's recovery and looking forward to the spiritual boost we always get this time of year. WE LOVE AND MISS YOU. Thanks for all you did to make my recent visits in Provo and Arlington so pleasant. Much love,

♡ Love, Sherlene - (This ain't so bad for
two months! 😊)