

March 12, 1991

Dear Family:

I've got a new companion again. His name is Elder Morin and he comes from Maine. He came into the country while I was in the office. Elder Barnard is still here, with Elder Wright who has one month in the country and comes from Delta. He was going to UVCC before he came here, and working as a machinist at an ammunition shop. The missionaries are really thinly spread with the reduced numbers, but President Andrus decided to take two more from P-Au-P to put here, not only for the work, but for security reasons. It's a good thing, too--but we'll get to that later.

The ZL's called us last Wed and told us we'd be getting two more the next day, and also that the DPs would be doing a fireside for the branch and showing a session of conference in Creole--the first time they've done that for the branches. Wednesday we rode around telling a few church members and Thursday evening there were more people in the church than I had ever seen. It was very good. They showed the session which started with President Hinckley's talk "Mormon means Good." Ellens Port (?) did some of the translating. They've translated sessions before, but this is the first time they've shown something here in Haiti. They kept opening more sections all the way back. If we could only get that kind of turnout on a Sunday morning at 9:00.

Saturday night a thief tried to break into the house. Actually it was Sunday morning about 5:00. They were having terrible problems with thieves several months before I got here, but I was here for two months without losing anything but an umbrella left hanging just inside an open window. Of course, it's been dry, and they like to come while it's raining, because there's nobody outside and the noise of it masks theirs. Elder Morin had heard all of the voleur stories (voleur=thief) and he woke up because it was raining hard and he was worried. And he heard a noise, distinctly, three times, panes being slid out of a louvered window. He woke the two others (I slept) and they walked into the other room to investigate, iron bars in hand. There's a place in the second-story in back where the ironwork over the window is weak, and thieves, or burglars, I guess, had entered there before. As they came to the doorway and looked in, they saw a man with his torso inside the house, removing the last pane of glass. Elder Morin took two steps towards him before he looked up and saw him. What woke me up was Elder Morin screaming at him at the top of his lungs. He didn't take his time in getting away; thieves caught in the act are usually lynched pretty brutally here. The members who sleep out back (who couldn't hear because of the rain on their tin roof) say they would be much more humane: they would only beat them up, break both of their legs, and then turn them over to the authorities. Elder Mergens witnessed a mob cutting off a living man's head with a hacksaw. "What did he do?" he asked. "I don't know, but it must have been pretty bad."

Anyway, we slept very lightly Sunday night, and then yesterday morning hired some welders to weld iron bars over any possibly weak spots. I don't think anyone's going to get into the house now without making a lot of noise. At any rate, I'm sleeping better.

Elder Mergens also had a good story about his and Elder Cope's trip up to Port-de-Paix. The branch there is practically if not yet officially apostate now. They openly defied the instructions President Andrus sent up with Mergens and Cope. As a matter of fact, well, get Elder Mergens to tell the story some time. There's also another, somewhat related, story about a former investigator/con artist (Creol: magwiye) who managed to get several thousand dollars out of the members up there by convincing them that he could visas for them. He disappeared probably to the States with a stolen passport. The poorest Haitian can get you a hundred dollars by tomorrow if they think it will get them through US customs. You can't find someone who doesn't have a relative in Miami, New York, or Boston. If there's a stumbling block as great as the impression that he hand out money, it's that we hand out visas. Early in the history of the mission, there were some Haitian elders, called to Haiti, who escaped from the MTCV. As a result, no Haitian missionaries since have had a chance to go there. I heard that one of them is now a Baptist minister somewhere in the South, making good money.

There was also once a Haitian elder, on church support who was released a

month early (honorably I think) and turned around and sued the church for his "last month's pay." On the other hand, there are many Haitian elders who served with all of the hearts and are now working hard to help the Church progress here. President Vercella, for example, and Osmick Julien, of the St Marc ? Branch.

With seventeen months onto my mission, I'm just starting to understand what it's all about. Most of my investigators right now have some problem which has kept them from progressing or being baptized. But it's in overcoming these problems that people can start to gain a testimony, and learn to sacrifice, which is what's needed if they are to remain active.

Bye now. I love you all. I love Saint Marc. I love being a missionary. They've been giving us a lot of electricity just lately with only a few outages, and it's making me sort of vaguely uneasy. Too good to last, you know..... Anyway,

Elder Tracy Hall. Note: I typed this but did not proofread it, so.....

Mom Hall

Note to the missionaries: Action like the missionary's suing the church are somewhat typical of third-world country mentalities. They just don't think the same way we do, and I guess we shouldn't expect them to. One of our native missionaries wrote to S.L demanding that the church pay his father for the loss of his wages while he was on a mission. The same missionary was complaining that he wasn't getting paid enough to keep up with the white missionaries, but at the same time he was sending his future father-in-law monthly labola (bride price) for his future wife. *Cost of money the church was paying for his mission expenses.*

When you get back you will find that the majority of letters you get from members and investigators will be dunning letters. It makes you feel guilty because we have so much and they have so little, but to fill one dunn brings on an onslaught of new letters. We even get long distance calls. One member wanted us to send him a VCR because he had just got himself a new TV. At the same time he and his wife and child were living with his parents, and I doubt he had a job.

But like you say, one good family or even sometimes one good convert is worth it all. Love, Grandmom