

Letter arrived August 16, 1990 from Elder Daniel Hall Bartholomew

Dear Mom and Dad, Hello from Esquipulas, Guatemala!

I can't write much about what you guys have written me because here we only receive the letters you send us about once per month. That's OK. Keep sending once a week because when I get 'em, I'm going to need 'em.

I really love Esquipulas. As I told you earlier, this is Catholic town. Apparently when they first came here, they really wanted to make an impression. Esquipulas is surrounded by mountains, and it seems like there's an abnormally large chapel built on top of each one. Then you come into town. There's one huge central road that's paved. On both sides there's stores and then when you reach the end, there's the biggest cathedral I've ever seen. It's probably twice as big (perhaps more) as the one in N.Y.C. I mean it. IT IS HUGE. Sometimes I'm walking down that road, and I feel like I'm in OZ or something ("the Emerald City"). (Draws big face with tongue hanging out). Just felt like drawing that [he's just jealous 'cuz it isn't the Washington Temple.]

Anyway, it's a beautiful building. You walk out of hut where you've taught a discussion, and there it is--this huge white building. I try to imagine what the Indians must have thought when they first saw it after it was constructed. Imagine some woman who's just ground her corn on some rock, munching on her tortilla, stepping out of her humble little home and seeing a Marriott Hotel. Weird. It had to have been like that.

Then you step in. Huge glass chandeliers. A vaulted ceiling with a dome. Lots of wooden saints and a live-size dying Christ. It's so white and beautiful on the outside, but it's very very dark and black inside. Over the ages the paintings inside have darkened to the point where one can hardly tell what's been painted. Even the Christ is black. And the feeling inside isn't much different.

Well, there's other news in town. The place where we had been eating, they had only been giving us beans and a small piece of chicken or egg when we ate. It took them 4-5 days to wash my laundry. And the man of the house, Ivan Antonio, tried to order me to come in at 7:00 p.m. for dinner.

I explained we had a rule not to come in until 9:30 from work and that I was going to obey the rule. Juan said, "You're coming in at 7:00." I said, "We're coming in at 9:30 or 10:00, we've got work to do." He said, "I have to get up at 4:30 in the morning to go to work." I said: "I'm getting up at 5:30, and you aren't cooking the food--feel free to go to bed."

Needless to say, feelings weren't too great in the house. I felt they were cheating the elders--350 quetz a month, and we were living on beans. I was paying 300 in my last area and I was eating pancakes, oatmeal, Chow Mein on Sundays, and I got my laundry the

next day. I guess us New Yorkers are too direct when we talk. Here, when you argue, it's kind of like this:

Landlord: "You guys are coming in at 7:00 to eat dinner, right?"

My comp. (latin): "Well, we sort of shouldn't do that because we sort of have need to work seeing as how that's the one time during the day we can find people."

Elder Bartholomew: "No, we're coming in at 9:30 or 10. That's the rule we have."

Anyway, I found a new place to eat. I found a new lady who does laundry. I offered Juan Antonio 50 quetz from each of us to use the same house we were living in (what we were paying before, the person before us lived there alone and paid 30 quetz--but I liked where it was situated, and we were living in a different house from the landlord).

Before I offered that price, he explained to us how if we didn't eat there and do our laundry there, we couldn't live there and also threatened to leave the Church (he came once a month if at all and he drinks--big deal).

He thought we wouldn't have an option for living. I basically said: "Fine, we can live in the chapel," (many of the Elders in Guat. do), and we moved to the chapel the next day. I've got to tell you, the ladies who live in the same house were laughing their heads off. He must run his house the same way, and I guess he's used to having things done his way.

So now we live in the chapel. Same services (cold shower and toilet), and it costs NOTHING. We're paying 250 each for food next month, and the food is awesome--this lady cooks good (we gave her a list--at her request--of what we like). We pay 30 quetz a month (each) for our laundry. I dropped off a huge bag of laundry yesterday, and the lady said, "If there's water tomorrow, you can pick up your clean clothes at 6:00." That's amazing. I was expecting another day wait.

Needless to say, we're much happier. We can work until 9:30 or 10:00, as well, before dinner--without problems--because the lady who cooks our food runs a store that's open very late.

Last Sunday was my first, and it was a shocker. When we started meeting (a half hour late) there were 8 people (including us). By the time we finished, 13 people were there. This Saturday, we're having a ward activity to help the members together [sic]. We're also assigning the few actives we have to pick up the other families. Maybe some day, we'll have Priesthood and Relief Society.

The work is going well. We're teaching 6 different individuals or families. We've baptized one person since I came here, and we're headed for more.

I got a letter from Tracy. It came in the very end of July, and I think he wrote it to me my first month here in Guat. Thanks Tracy! I've got to find a place that sends letters to Haiti.

What's going on in the world? I heard Ezra Taft Benson is really sick. Is it true? We don't hear anything here. Let me know what's up.

By the way, Mom, with the basket, skip the potato chips and put in another bag of Snickers. One bag here costs 90 quetzales. My comp here (Jose, isn't official elder, but lives with us and is our best member by far) earns 4 quetzales a day working on a farm. He has never tasted a Snickers. My official comp--Elder Terron--who's from Mexico, has never tasted a Snickers bar, either. Another important thing. Please throw in my Messiah tapes and some English Book of Mormon tapes to listen to or some General Conference tapes.

I'm saving to buy a Walkman. It shouldn't take me more than two months. I'm fiddling around with the idea of sending you guys a "cassette letter" once a month. First I have to find out how much it costs.

Speaking of bucks, I'll give you my monthly plan for the next month, money-wise (I'm finally getting organized):

250 quetzales - comida (food); 30, laundry; 20, fast offering; 50, travel; 50, emergency [Snickers, snicker]; 10, water/electricity; 10, telephone; 35 letters; 50, past debts from first month; 20, machete (this is for Jose--if he has one, he'll be able to earn more than 4 quetzales a day); 50--I'm going to try to save 50 for the Sony walkman--don't worry--it's fine, as long as I only listen to classical or Church tapes--feel free to send me a big bunch in the basket; 15, roll of film. Total: 590. Considering I started with 650, I have 60 quetzales left to pay for Church activities (we're going to try to hold one each week, Saturday night), sodas, pills, paperwork (I need to buy a hole puncher), oh yeah--add about 5 quetzales for new thongs (I wore mine out), shoe reconstruction, etc.

Anyway, things are all right. Keep sending, though. I need at least 650 a month to keep everything running and to stay out of debt in the future. If you send me \$170 a month, it should cover it. The problem right now is that everything is rising in price. Especially the price of beans. When the price of the food staple goes up--everything goes!

Speaking of \$, it appears we have a diezmo (tithing) problem here. We're supposed to have something like 220 quetzales in tithing here in the till, and we have 100. Another serious problem is that there is no record of tithing (the white slips we're supposed to keep) for all of July. Needless to say, it's a problem, but we'll figure it all out. I hate dealing with things like this. Is this long enough?! I've got to run. I love you. I miss you. Elder B. (Smiley face).

This letter arrived August 17, 1990--unheard of two letters in two days!

Dear Mom and Dad, How are you?

I'm sitting in a "Zapateria" (shoe and boot-making shop) gabbing it up with the guys. They're a fun bunch. Some of them are members of the Church. I like to watch them make shoes.

Anyway, they like to talk and ask questions, and it's a fun time. Today's lesson was on polygamy. Hot topic. Second time in two days that's come up. It all started with the question: "Is it true you guys used to practice polygamy?" Of course there're relatively new members listening in, and the answer might mean giving the baby a Big Mac; but personally, I feel that when one asks a question, he's ready for the answer.

First, we got to explain what polygamy is. One of my choice members offers an interesting definition: "Isn't that when you've got one wife, and I've got one wife, and we live itogether?" So, I explain that it means nothing more than a man who has more than one wife. Now the answer:

Yes, we practiced it in the beginning. It was a small group with many enemies, and the Lord commanded them to, so that they'd survive. If we remember, Abraham, David, and Solomon had more than one wife, and this is only justifiable when commanded by God. Today, if I had more than one wife, I'd be excommunicated because it's against the law, and we're extremely righteous, beautiful, intelligent, family-oriented, Christ-centered, law-abiding citizens (draws smiley face).

Then one of them (the same guy who asked the question) brought up Lot and the daughters and alcoholic beverages and something that happened with the combination of the three. I was quick to mention something to the effect that: "That was pretty darn sick of them, wasn't it?"--but perhaps justifiable [just what did he mean by that?--obviously he did not yet receive my last two letters where I told him a few things about asking the lady missionaries to bake chocolate chip cookies and choosing his wife by how fat her mother is--without thinking first about how fat his own mother isn't! and that ridiculous comment about how he wanted a wife who could cook more than beans and eggs, without stopping to think about what he could cook and offer his bride--and about expecting the women to do his laundry when he should set the brethren an example and do his own--however, I'll bend on that, since the women obviously need the employment--as long as he's paying them--I obviously have raised an MCP, who is going to get pickled pigs feet instead of chocolate chips in his basket!]

Course I had to match this idea with another logical idea: Adam and Eve began it all. They had children...and I gues in the beginning, there wasn't much choice, but to marry your sister or

brother [still going on--I've been doing New England genealogy and can't believe how many of those people were marrying cousins.]

Then the guy who asked the question came up with a very nice sum of the facts: "I guess you guys just did it for numbers, huh?" (I can live without even though there's a lot more details [sic].) Exactly....whoops, gotta run. Tomorrow's question will probably be about calling and elections made sure.

How's the work going? O.K. I'm not satisfied. I haven't found the future leaders of the Church here yet, though. Do you think you guys could send down the Garff family or the Freedman's? Where does one find these type of people here in Esquipulas, Guatemala? Or are they the result of well-bred Mormons? (Bishop Gene, would you care to straighten him out on that one?) There has got to be some. Pray for the people here, please. Pray that we'll find and recognize someone who's looking for the truth, intelligent, capable, and who can be trusted with tithing.

How am I doing? Pretty well. I'm becoming well acquainted with diarrhea, though. The water here isn't very thrilling. Yesterday, I was visiting with someone, and they had the radio on. Phil Collins started up, and I suddenly was very, very baggy. The desire to come home, get in the Stanza Wagon and just drive, drive, drive hit me like a ton of bricks. I'd be lying if I said that I'm always happy to be here. 95% of the time I'm very stable, and I don't think of home much. It's only when I hear an old song or have to face beans for breakfast that it hits. Don't take this the wrong idea [sic]. I love to work. I love to serve the Lord, and I would not go home if Moroni came and offered me heavenly transport. I imagine it is how you two must feel when you see mountains.

I'm on top, and I'm serving, and I'm thinking seriously of asking for a one-month extension. I changed my mind about wanting you guys to come here on vacation, though. This isn't exactly Haiti, but things do happen once in a while. In a store here in Esquipulas, two men got mad, pulled out their guns and shot each other. Both very good shots. Both very dead. The people here don't go out much at night, and when they see gringos, the first thing they think of is DOLLARS. I'm safe. No one has threatened me, but I want to keep Mom and Pop in New Jersey, right where they are.

This Saturday is audit day. I'm taking all the records over to my District Leader (a member, not a missionary), and he's going to help me come up with concrete numbers. I sincerely hope that no one has been borrowing or stealing and that I'm just stupid and looking over something.

Please send me a bunch of goodies in this basket. Lots of candy bars will suffice. If you just pick up three bags of

Snickers, three of Three Musketeers (and don't forget those chocolate chips) and three of another, it should last a while. Am I getting greedy? Oh, yeah, I still want the peanut butter and raspberry jam. And church tapes to listen to. I'm going to buy that Sony in a month or two. One of my gringo friends says it costs 10 quetzales to send a cassette home by King Express (5 days service). That's the company I use to send my letters, and as far as I can tell, they're reliable. Let me know if you're not receiving one letter a week. Sometimes it takes me 2 or 3 days to get it in the mail, but I'm sending one each week.

I get your letters once a month now because we live five hours away from the capital. Don't let that stop you. I'm sending her a letter, but tell Laura I love her and miss her, anyway.

Stay cool. Keep loving each other and Dad....don't forget to take Mom out once a week [Don't worry--I take him out!] Careful with that eye. Don't mow the lawn. Just wait 'till I get Home. (Smiley face, ha ha ha). Love you to bits, Your son, Elder Bartholomew (sticks on a decal that shows Garfield romping with a dog, with the caption "Es Agradable tu forma de Ser!--whatever that means!)

Daniel's address (permanent for Guatemala--the DLs distribute them):

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