

Miracles still happen--he dated it! Wed 15 de Aug 1990:

Dear Dad and Mom,

I'm writing this on a Pullman bus on the way home from a mission conference (arrow to side and note: This was to explain why this writing is going to be so messy). Today is P-day and it's been one of the best P-days I've ever had.

My first couple of weeks in Esquipulas were pretty rough on me. The people here are so Catholic! They've really been poisoned by the false doctrine. This is good for me because it brings it all right in front of my face. My love and necessity for the clarity and plainness of the restored gospel has grown. It's absolutely amazing how these same truths were twisted around to get people to do exactly what was originally prohibited. Idolatry is strong here. In fact, the image of the Black Christ is what makes it famous. I was speaking to one of the sisters of a member here about it, and she said that they don't worship it--they just venerate it. Thus the Catholic Church deceives the minds of many. Even then, all one has to do is understand the Catholic Church isn't true is to read the Bible. For the Bible says: "Thou shalt not bow down before images neither honor them. Explain the difference between honor and venerate and whatever other synonyms one can find. There isn't an honest way to get around it.

On top of that, I've been putting up with amoebas and bacterial problems ever since I came here. I'm going to have to buy some chloro and explain to the lady who makes our meals how to clean our water for us. Anyway, Sunday (12th of August) nite I couldn't sleep and came down with a fever and had to use the bathroom several times, and it was pretty much the same thing I had that landed me in the hospital after my first month. This time I knew what pills to take, to drink lots of liquids and to rest. I stayed in bed all that day and took it easy. I was pretty sick.

Tuesday, I still had diarrhea, but I felt good enough to walk around. I honestly think the thing I'll be most grateful for when returning is being able to safely drink straight from the tap [oh yeah? Our water is so awful, I've started paying for bottled water--Dan still drinks tap water, though. Actually, as far as I know, New Jersey water doesn't give us amoebas--just cancer.]

This morning Elder Terron and I had to get up at 1:00 in the morning to catch a 2:00 a.m. bus for the city of Guatemala (it's a 5-hour trip, if it's a good bus). By the time we got to our meetings with the President, I guess I could say I was quite thrashed. It was wonderful to get the letters. I got 2 from you guys. One from Laura. I loved the pictures, by the way. I was so proud to show you guys off to my buds in the office. Really finky--those pictures! I like 'em better that way. I was also happy to have the picture of Teddy. I jokingly told the guys it was a picture of my girlfriend. Oh, yeah. Just one to bug you. I got a letter from a lady friend who will remain unnamed (draws smiley face).

Laura sounds OK. I guess I nag, too (smiley face with tongue hanging out), Mom. She made a point of telling me she could "take care of herself." Apparently she's lost weight. Not that she's proud or anything. She's also made some friends, male and female, it appears (again, names unsaid--I'll let her tell you; but she didn't mention any romantic interests. Just names (another smiley face)).

Like I said, I was pretty thrashed (slang: tired, wiped out). We had some very helpful meetings in which the President and his assistants taught us how to challenge and to baptize, etc. After about 2 meetings, I was sitting there right in front, and I suddenly started tearing. I was so exhausted physically, mentally, and spiritually, I almost started to weep, but I prayed hard for strength and just wiped those couple of tears out quick.

Afterwards (we had been separated in 4 large groups by zones--my zone name is Chiquimulja (Cheek-ee-moola), we were all brought together in the chapel for more instruction. Elder Amada of the Seventy stood up to speak. After a couple of minutes again the urge came to just weep. I held those tears back, though, as best I could, and asked a friend for a handkerchief--"I've got a cold," I said.

Anyway, Elder Amado has an ability from God to speak or something. I've seen him speak twice before, and I must confess I didn't enjoy it too much, but this time I was very humble, and the Lord blessed me. He spoke for two hours or more, and I hung on to every word, and I was renewed and refreshed. After those two hours or so, I left invigorated and refreshed and with a new store of faith. It just goes to show that the Lord provides for his missionaries. I don't believe I was the only one who was so weary, and I think He inspired the Conference because it hadn't been originally planned for that date. I feel the Lord knew we were very tired and that we needed a spiritual and mental lift. After all, if I'm not spiritually healthy, how can I impart to others spiritually? It's kind of like erosion. You teach day in and day out and give, give, give, and just when you're ready to break down, the Lord lifts you up. It's also a time when He reminds you about all those skills you learned about in the MTC that you've gradually forgotten.

Tomorrow, it's back to the gridiron. Hopefully we've got two baptisms tomorrow.

Right now I'm financially stable. Thanks for the \$25. check. I'm going to cash it and send it all to Hugo Rolando [we had sent \$10 for Daniel to eat better and \$15 for a wedding gift for Hugo]. From what I hear he's lost the old job and has a new one, but I know he can use it. I'm planning on him going to the temple. Pray for him.

Pray for my comp, as well. Elder Terion is a wonderful guy. His father ran off (from what I understand) when he was a kid, and

his Mom died, and he's got no family or friends writing him. He's one of those souls who's pretty much alone in the world. He's from Mexico. He's also only 16 yrs. old. He basically was supporting himself, and considering a house costs like 40 million pesos, I doubt he was doing too well. He's a very good missionary. I could tell he was very sad to pass another month without mail (oh, yeah, he got one dinky note from some amigo who didn't say much more than "hello" and "goodbye"). It's got to be hard to have a gringo comp. with pictures of a smiling and healthy and well-off family. Anyway, I'm treating him to banana splits one in a while, and I really try hard to make up for lacks.

Right now we're passing all kinds of beautiful scenery. Even though my stomach feels like jelly after 5 hours on the bus, I really dig this scenery. It's absolutely amazing. This place is so green and lush. Gotta run [amoebas will do that to you!].

Love you guys,
Elder Bartholomew (draws big
smiley face with caption "Still grinning.")

P.S. If there's still time, when that basket comes, put something inside, wrapped up with the name "Elder Terron on Amor de Sherlene & Dan" in it. It'd mean a lot.