

*'Just for memories' sake! I'll send a shorter version for the Hallmark!*  
*B. Tom Shulman B*

Monday, October 14, 1990 - 180 N. Maple, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Dear Elder Chocoholic,

It was fun to get your letter just before we drove off to spend the weekend with Virginia and Barry and our remarkable nieces and nephews. Mom and Dad Hall flew in Friday, too, and we had a great time together. I brought your letter with me, and found out when we got there that you had written a great letter to Nathan--which he just got! He was delighted. I thought your letter to him was perfect--fun, and inspiring without being preachy. 'Thoughtful of you to send him that scripture-reading chart.

We had a marvelous experience at the temple. I always put your name on the prayer roll just in case you got the amoeba again and I don't know it yet. Actually, this time it was extra urgent because I had just learned you're planning to do your own cooking now! Honest! I take back everything I ever said about not expecting women to do your cooking for you. I do want you to return alive, and then there is always your poor companion to think about--probably a nice guy, too!

'Glad you got the package all right. No, I didn't forget to put in the light-weight, bond paper. It's just that your friend took so long to call, I kept borrowing back what I had put in to write you letters. It's hard to find a place around here where you can stand to spend the money. I finally got a ream of 500 sheets at \$13.00--and that was after I Mormoned the guy down because the packaging was torn and a couple of the sheets were rumpled! I'll bet you can do better than that there. Don't you have a U.S. base there or something? I thought Guatamala had some civilized areas. Anyway, I'll send you a spare page now and then in your letters, if I think I'm low on weight for the postage and can get away with it. You did not mention Mars Bars or plain M&Ms. Did customs eat them? 'Glad the whirly-gigs I sent you were a hit--I figured that was one of my better inspirations!

So glad you got a good companion this round. We are praying for both of you. I just can't tell you what a lift each letter you send gives!

Oh, as I was saying about the temple, we got in a session Friday night and came home absolutely exhausted. Just as I was sinking into my pillow, Dan said: "I'm so glad you're joining me at 6 a.m. for another temple session." I told him he was absolutely nuts and I hoped he enjoyed going alone. Then I heard him trying to be quiet at 6 a.m., had a guilt-trip thinking about all the Guatemalans who starve themselves a month to get to the temple, and dragged my bones out of the pit.

The temple was absolutely jammed. We didn't get there until 10 a.m. anyway, and then the session filled just four persons before we got in line, so we had to wait another twenty minutes. I was lucky to find a seat along the line and sat there half-dazed. The woman sitting next to me (among those hundreds) saw me yawn and said, "You must have been up as early as I this morning." I was not in the mood for conversation, but managed to say it wasn't so much the time of morning as the lateness of evening. I asked where she was from, and she said this little town near Richmond. "Oh," sez I, "I'm going to come and see you. I've been dying to get down to that State Library in Richmond to do some genealogy research. Except I ought to go see my uncle who lives down there. Do you, by any chance, know Delbert Hall?" "Oh," sez she, "As a matter of fact, I do--in fact, see that man standing over there--that's his son!"

"Oh, yeah?" sez I--that must be my cousin--introduce me--I never knew my cousins from Delbert and Carlin very well because they lived in Richmond and I lived in Utah."

Well, she introduced me, we talked a while about how Grandma and Grandpa Hall (Howard) schemed this whole thing from the spirit world--he walked back and got in line, and was I ever glad I didn't comment to her about what a weird cousin I had because she finally told me about fifteen minutes later that she was his wife! She is a real character--I truly think she was just waiting to see what I would say about my uncle or her husband--what a character!

Anyway, I really like them. Turns out they just got sealed in the temple last month, themselves. She (Susan) is a real social animal--she was running all over the temple talking to this friend and that, while her husband sat around like a Hall, analyzing things.

Well, Dan and I sat right behind them through the temple session, and then we went up with some friends of theirs for some sealings. Then we went to lunch together (I treated them--and got another little lecture from Dad about conserving our stewardship and not necessarily always having to give it all away) and then we had them follow us to Virginia and Barry's so they could talk with Mom and Dad while your father practiced the piano accompaniment for the song Warren was supposed to sing as a duet with his mother at the baptism (he chickened out last minute, so Barry filled in).

Sarah's baptism was lovely. And you should have heard their song. Made me cry. Virginia led the singing--she is the best! While waiting for the others to dress, Sarah requested that same song be sung by all, so Warren got his chance to carry the melody above the crowd and sort of redeem himself for skunking out. He has a marvelous voice--he should have done the duet--the idgit!

Sarah looked like Snow White with her dark hair, white dress, fair skin, and rosy cheeks. I kept looking around for a dwarf and actually saw a lot of them! At homemaking mtg. I learned how to make these darling beribboned barrettes and made them all the drive up to Arlington for Sarah and Rose Ellen (I had called their Mom to find out what dresses to match). I made a white one to go with Sarah's baptismal dress, and a pink one for the dress Rose Ellen wore (among others), and they looked so cute, if I might say so. Sarah was the first one up to bear her testimony in testimony meeting Sunday--I thought she looked like an angel. I also thought it surely was just yesterday that you and Laura were getting baptized. Where did the years go?

Sunday morning Virginia suggested we go for a walk in the forest along a creek near their home. It was a beautiful day! The boys didn't choose to come and Barry's mother, who had also come for the blessing, stayed with No-Name (who is such an intelligent, sensible, adorable baby)! We had a great hike, crossing the stream several times over wet rocks and trying not to trip and fall. Mom did suffer a bad fall when she refused to take our hands and insisted on making a leap alone over the creek. This is definitely symbolic of what old age with her is going to be like. She likes to be in control and on her own! Well, she fell and skinned her leg and hand and could have broken a hip or something. I hope she learned a lesson.

Your father also took a spill. Dummy. He and Barry decided the rest of us could stick to our sedate path--they, great adventurers, would scale the cliffs down toward the great (muddy) Potomac and go for real adventure! Did it matter that Dan could hardly walk the path in the first place because his back was out of joint? So he fell and got water in the lens of his video camera and Barry, after seeing he was basically intact and more worried about his camera than anything, ran ahead to tell us not to ride off without them, inasmuch as Dan might be more interested in a ride than more hiking.

When your father finally caught up with us (limpingly), he was greeted with the tender words of his caring and devoted wife: "So, you think I'm going to give you some sympathy?!?#\*!\*!\*@! He burst out laughing and said, "Oh, please, never--spare me THAT!!!"

Sunday, Barry named and blessed Rowland David Spencer Wood in a marvelous blessing with too many big words (I was trying to keep up with my rusty shorthand), and also confirmed Sarah (with too many big words). He gave enough names that we can all pretty well take our pick. I call him David. Laura says she will call him "Spence." At least the suSpence is over!

I watched my husband and father up there, too, through misty eyes, my heart swelling with appreciation and love for the worthy Priesthood holders in our family. Also part of the circle was Lincoln Oliphant, their home teacher and one of the behind-the-scenes movers and shakers in Washington (on the Conservative Front). He was very helpful to me in some of my earlier radical skirmishes on ERA, abortion, and other issues in Westchester, NY and once arranged a meeting for me with Senator Orrin Hatch when I was in D.C. with Susan Roylance. This next year he is going to again be assisting Senator Garn from Utah, who by now has some important committee assignments. I tell you, the big work in our government is not done by the ribbon-cutting senators, but by men like Lincoln Oliphant who care more about issues than the glory (not that the others don't care, too).

Barry got up at the beginning of the Gospel Doctrine class and with characteristic humility introduced your Grandpa Hall as, in his opinion, "the greatest Mormon scientist ever-- notwithstanding that the statue of Philo Farnsworth stands here for all to see--and here he is for you to meet under this roof, this day." Embarrassed Grandpa, but the rest of us, also with characteristic humility, beamed our agreement and approval.

I do not know how a man could bear sitting in the audience to watch his own child get blessed by another man because he had made himself unworthy. If Satan ever tempts you--I should say, when he tempts you--I hope you will remember how joyful you will feel when you with worthiness bless your baby boy and confirm your beautiful daughter, all dressed in white. A scene from heaven! Oh, the inspiration in the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Only He would think to help every father become a worthy priest to his own family. 'Sure beats the audacious suggestion of other forces to call its priests "Father."

When we got home, the porch was covered with helium-filled balloons the neighbors had filled for an Open House and had given the Wood children when they were finished. You can bet Rose Ellen, Christian, and the rest made short work of those! We had a great chow-mein dinner

and about burned the house down lighting the candles on Virginia's divine carrot-cake to celebrate Dad Hall's 71st birthday. He didn't look 71 (actually, he wasn't yet--we were celebrating early because he will be in Canada next Saturday). I think he looks wonderfully healthy--such a tribute to a good and honest life! Mom looks great, too! I kept looking at her in Church and at the table because I thought she had such a sweet, happy look. New grandchildren are pretty special!

She and Dad have been on a vegetarian diet--she lost 8 lbs. already. Wednesday Dad is flying to Toronto to service their press which is no-doubt long out of warranty--but you know your Grandfather--if one of his presses doesn't last until the Millennium, he feels responsible for it! He came to visit us in Winfield (IL) in our first home when he and a friend were hauling that press to Canada and when you were still a toddler--after all these years, he still takes care of that machine for them! Maybe he will get to visit the Toronto temple while he is there. Mom is going to stay with Virginia that week or as long as it takes Dad to get that press serviced. Then Dad will fly back and he and Mom will travel to Richmond to visit with Delbert and his family. Then, if I have my way, they will come here and spend some time with us.

Sunday night we sat in on a half hour of a concert at their Stake Center (Welch brother and sister at organ and soprano vocal--just lovely at least the six numbers we heard), and then Dan and I sneaked out and made the drive home, arriving here at 1 a.m.

Dan was up and at work early, and I barely came alive around noon. I am thinking of going and getting a job to help us through the coming hard times. It is going to be a shock to have to get into a regular routine. I am still recovering from those years of early-morning seminary and enjoy recovering!

Well, so long for now. Don't worry about us. We have received Priesthood blessings, and we can call on tithing blessings, too. Of course I don't see that we deserve any better than the Abashamaas got--it took him 9 months to find a new job and they had to move, too. But as with all of life's adventures, the important thing is that we have faith, look forward, do our best, and trust that the Lord shall provide--and he shall. Compared to what the Woods are going through and to some things we have suffered in the past, this should be an easy one. I feel immeasurably happy and grateful and very much at peace. Does that make sense under the circumstances? We'll see how peaceful I am six months and no job from now. Oh, ye of little faith!

Love,

Mom