

Mom - take it easy!

NOT Hallmanack ☺

August 20, 1990, 180 N. Maple Avenue, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Dear Daniel,

It was wonderful to get two letters in two days from you last week. Your letters are a highlight of our week. I love watching your father's face when he reads your letters. Talk about one big beam, with lots of chuckling (between snorts)!

Dad likes to read the Conference talks in the Ensign while he is doing his bicycling. Last week he brought me one talk to read which I will try to get to the library to copy for you and Laura. 'Such a great talk: "Preparing the Heart," by Elder H. Burke Peterson. He emphasizes that we cannot influence people's lives until we love them in a way which touches their hearts and feelings. Dad told me reading this made him feel bad about sending you his last letter which had so much advice. I was glad I never try to give you kids too much advice (!).

I hope you and Laura can forgive us where we failed by example to teach some of these principles and that you will know how much we do love you, in spite of all our mistakes. We are counting on you to overcome these "traditions of your fathers (only-heh)" and give your children a better example in terms of love and praise and patience. We wish we had given you children a bigger dose of joy and trust while you were growing up, but are counting on your ability to remember mostly the good. We remember so much good from our parents, which gives us hope you will do the same.

I almost always send Laura a copy of our letters to you (we only write her occasionally because we have been talking to her on the phone almost every day)! Huge phone bill, but since she does not have a roommate, we like to be there when she comes home. I'm sure as she gets more involved and accustomed to being away from home, our phone bill will go down. I type up your letters and send them to Laura and sometimes to your grandparents, too. Last month, I misunderstood Mom Hall's request and quit sending her the weekly, typed copy of your letters (which I still typed and added to our family records) and just waited and sent an edited copy on very small print for the Hallmanack. Well, I guess Mom got addicted to your letters because she let me know I should feel very free to send her a copy every week. She still wanted the edited version for the monthly Hallmanack, but I could take more than two pages for that so it doesn't have to be such small print. Mom and Dad B. love your letters, too, and sure let us know they missed them when I stopped sending. So I am back to the old routine.

Your patient father showed me how to use that switch mechanism with Word Perfect to make editing your letters less difficult; when I was running off the edited version, I decided to send a copy to some of our friends in Westchester, too, since they love you and helped raise you, too. Don't worry, I edited it in a way which would not embarrass you. I sent copies to the Watkins, Freedmans, Garffs, Petersens, Dinny Lewis, Inouyes, Hedbergs, Stones, and

even some of our old neighbors (Mohrs, Schumachers, Higgins). I did tell the story about your native companion offering you the jade necklace from a skeleton, and how you said "No," without saying what a conflict it was for you. 'Hope you don't mind, but I think that's one of your most interesting stories, and I don't see anything wrong with it, as long as you said "No." I took out anything I thought might offend Catholic neighbors (not that there was much)--but, anyway--just want to assure you I was careful. I'm sure they just think I'm this pain-in-the-neck Mom who is bragging about her son. But they'll just have to put up with it--I only have one, you know. I'm sure they will find your experiences fun and interesting to read.

Garffs shot back an immediate response--great to hear from them! I'll quote it here for you, in full:

"Dear B's, It was so fun to get your 'Notes from the field of Elder B.' He sounds a great deal like our Elder G. (he eats lots of beans, eggs, and tortillas, too). We love getting Brian's letters. They are so funny, sometimes. He has his ups and downs, but is trying to do his best. From the readings of Daniel's letters, he must be a great missionary. It was fun that our Elders were able to see each other. 'Hope it will happen again. We sent a back pack to Bri with some members. He got the back-pack OK, but a few of his "goodies" didn't quite make it. By the time it gets where it's going, little missionary hands begin helping themselves. That's OK. Some of these Elders must be starving. Brian's down to about 170--at 6'4"--not much meat on the bones.

He was a Branch Pres. in a small farm town on the coast (not many BMWs or Mercedes there). He's now closer to the Capitol and being a regular "mish." 'Sorry about the stationery. We are enroute to a wedding reception in Fresno, CA (about 200 No. of LA) of a sister missionary who was in N.Y., Sister Silva (she was a companion of Sister Brick for a long time). I don't know if you know them or not; anyway, it's about a 6-hr. round trip.

It will be a while before we have an empty nest. Adam's a Jr.; Cris, Soph.; Elizabeth, 7th Grade; & Trace, 5th. We are learning to like California--the weather is great, but smog and traffic is the PITS! Blair is a Stake missionary, and I've just been called to teach one of three seminary classes (two wards--3 classes)--can't wait. I'm scared, but I'm looking forward to the challenge. 'Glad things are going so well. Love to all, Sue, Blair & All."

Hearing about your 8 members who showed up a half hour late really brought back some memories of Schenectady. We had a few more than that, but not much more. When I was a young girl, we used to go early to the YMCA where we held Church, so we could clear out the ash trays and beer cans, air out the place, and set up chairs.

Our branch was so small that if we children did not bear our

testimonies, the meeting didn't last very long. I got used to bearing my testimony quite often, and I felt the Spirit burning inside me in ways I do not always feel now. Mom and Dad were real pioneers in building up that small branch and in, finally, building a chapel there (which is now owned by another Church, as we have since built much larger buildings). Now there are stakes of the Church and many wards where those first, struggling Saints began to build.

I have been in a lot of fancy buildings and highly-educated congregations since then; but I have to say I have never felt the Spirit more strongly than we did in those early Schenectady meetings. Our mission president used to come and speak to us. I think his name was George Q. Morris. I used to hang on the words of visiting leaders--they were the big heroes in my life.

It was a common practice when I was a child to open up the meeting for impromptu talks called forth from members by the branch presidency "as moved by the Spirit." We used to sit there on pins and needles, wondering if we would be the next to speak. I still think those were some of the most inspiring meetings I have ever attended.

So, don't be discouraged by your small numbers. That just means the Spirit will be with you more than ever--because you obviously need it. Our prayers are with you. My feeling is that the Lord especially loves those starting out with few numbers. We feel the Lord has as carefully chosen you to be president there in Esquipulas as He chooses a bishop in Scarsdale. Consider your job just that important--because it is! Maybe more so, in the eyes of the Lord. I look back on the preparation and experiences you have had and feel certain the Lord has been preparing you for this for a long time. It's a good thing He knew what He was doing, because we surely did not!

Well, I have been trying to do my little bit here in Basking Ridge. Gil Moen came home from his mission and spoke in Church yesterday. He has got to be one of the most handsome young men I've ever seen. I thought he was before he left, but you ought to see him now. You should have seen the gaggle of girls from Ridge High who attended his homecoming. Good speaker, too, and a humble, mature, intelligent young man. It was an excellent service.

Back when the Millington Baptist Church was doing their Mormon bashing, I went in to the Bernardsville News and suggested they give us equal time and do an article on the Church. They suggested I wait until one of our missionaries came back and then do a feature. So I called their editor today, reviewed that history, told him a little about the missionary work and the distant places you young men and women from Basking Ridge are serving, and suggested they call Gill. He said he would send over a reporter to interview Gil today! I'll send you a copy, if they print something!

I love getting even one positive line about the Church into the media. It's a way to get in the door, and you know people are reading about you when they are feeling relaxed. You can reach more people with one day's work with the media than you can knocking on doors all year. I don't know if they have much media there, but consider that realm and try to multiply your influence, if you can. I have often felt the first calling in a ward after the Priesthood quorums are organized should be "Public Communications Director." Then get her to bring in your next Relief Society President, etc., by promoting a local radio program or whatever it is the people like to read or see.

My other latest media success was with a magazine. As you know, we like to read National Review. Lately they have changed management and they have started stinking up their front covers and insides with lots of tobacco ads. A recent issue was especially smokey, so I wrote them a complaint in their own style. In one editorial they had pointed out a hypocrisy in a certain local Cardinal's approach on abortion. I wrote NR that I was not Catholic and abhorred abortion in most instances; but that I found it hypocritical for them to criticize the Cardinal when their magazine had succumbed to the tobacco interests. I asked if a slow death of lung cancer was supposed to be more moral than a "quickie" abortion. I said their covers advertising tobacco were vulgar and made me want to hide the magazine from children and other persons of sensitive nature. I said much more of this and I would start looking for another news magazine, but indicated I would rather "fight than switch." I closed with a plea for a breath of fresh air in the future to equal that in their commentary.

Well, as I expected, they sent back a card saying they could not publish my comments because of "lack of space." However, I must not have been the only one to protest because two months later, an issue comes that has been de-smoked. The back cover ad is a dacron fabric advertisement. The only tobacco ad was a Philip Morris two-page spread depicting art in the Soviet Union and a thinly-disguised bid to associate themselves with Glasnost and the freedom of peoples from subjection, whether in art or politics. At the end of the ad was a list of divergent enterprises Philip Morris has entered, suggesting that the public is freeing itself from the tyranny of nicotine, also. There was also a photo of an NR senior editor smoking a cigar in an advertisement for tape cassettes of his scintillating commentary. Other than that, the magazine was smoke free. 'Must write them a note that the air is getting clearer and express appreciation. Actually what made my letter important was not my prose, but the fact that I wrote it by hand on pink stationery. They always open those--especially if they're perfumed (I didn't quite stoop to that)!

We have a second renter here now, who is staying in Laura's room. I read one of the Conference talks about finding positive things to say to your children. He spoke of the daughter who went into her brother's messy room, looked at the ceiling, and said, "My you have such a clean ceiling." Apparently he appreciated her

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humorous attempt to be positive and cleaned up his mess. Well, with this second one coming (actually, this one is only staying a week--but a permanent one is supposed to come in September), I was not exactly in good humor as I cleaned out the MESS in Laura's room. I did not have much time because I had spent the rest of the week doing research to protest our taxes, so all I had time to do was empty all the drawers and closets and stacks everywhere and put them temporarily in our master bedroom. Then I had to get all the gunk off the walls, floors, etc. and all the black marks everywhere, wash windows, etc., plus repair several of the oak antiques because Laura had overloaded or over-shoved them. I was not exactly thinking positive thoughts through all this, so I'm sure the Lord guided my reading of that particular article in a moment of collapse.

I felt inspired and repentant, so marched into Laura's room, looked at the ceiling, imagined Laura was here and said, "My, Laura, your ceiling is so-o-o-o-o.....you guessed it! There were also blotches of blue goop all over her ceiling where she had had posters even on her ceiling! It's enough to make a Mom sit down and bawl. No one can say I didn't try! (Laura, you are TOOOO much!)

Anyway, this Richard Rosier offered us \$150 to stay here a week (no food, just lodging). Laura's room looks beautiful. I rearranged all the furniture with Eric's help, put up that painting of the old barn, and put a bright bouquet of zinnias on one of the bureaus. I wanted to just stand there and gaze at this miracle--but he arrived before I had time to put my cleaning supplies away. Now if someone will just pay me to sort out all of this stuff of Laura's which is hanging around my bedroom. Every now and then I read my Patriarchal Blessing which talked about this great and glorious mission for which I came to earth. 'Provides a little comic relief, because I just did not know the Lord considered my children's messes to be that great and glorious!

Your father also has marvelous missions for me to fulfill. Last week, as he got ready to make a fast escape to work, he stuck one head inside the house and said, "Oh, by the way, forgot to tell you I sent in a form protesting our taxes and tomorrow is the last day to go through all the home-sale records at the Somerset tax office and find five comparables to make our case. 'So sorry I'm too busy to work up our case and so glad you're going to do it today." I told him he had his nerve and I had plans and projects of my own for the next few days, and just who did he think his secretary was, anyway, and if he started the project he could just finish it himself, especially, since he gave me so much notice, etc., etc., and etc. It's really very interesting to talk like that to a closed door.

I fumed and fretted for while. I was really in a stew. But one of the secrets it has taken me forever to learn is that anger at a person who seems to be imposing on us is a failure in faith. What you do is kneel down, tell the Lord how imposing and

inconsiderate the BIG JERK is, but ask forgiveness for getting angry and for calling the BIG JERK a BIG JERK and for being a ^{SORT OF} A BIG JERK, myself, so much of the time--and then leave the problem in the Lord's hands.

Part of my frustration that I could not see how I could do it when I was already on assignment at the library until 2 p.m. and the Somerset tax offices (a 30 min. drive) closed at 4:30.

I got to the Family History Center in Morristown and found that another librarian unexpectedly showed up, who on hearing my plight, let me off work at noon. When I got to the courthouse, another angry taxpayer was there who had just finished her work and was more than delighted to tell me how to read the records, the rules of the game, and what was important to note. With her help, I turned a four-hr. job into half that.

Then I called up my neighbor, Carolyn Koch, who likes me because I have given her two good realty referrals recently. I told her my plight, and she told me about two homes like ours (also situated in older neighborhoods with smaller homes on main thoroughfares) which had taken a beating in the market. I went down to the Weichert Office and the other realtors knocked themselves out finding comparables for me, because they had heard I was a good source of referrals. One of them even called another agency and ordered a fax of information on a home which had sold for far less than the asking price.

While down at Somerset, they offered to let me hand in the form (with my \$25 fee) and send in my case later--which gave me a couple of days. I tell you, I got together such a good case, I scared my own boots off. Do you know, a fabulous home in Basking Ridge which is located as we are, started with a selling price of \$629,000 and finally sold for \$380,000! That really nice gray Colonial on Madisonville Road which was for sale all last year was custom built by the builder for himself. It was reasonably priced at \$419,000 and finally sold for only \$352,000! We may lose our shirts if we have to sell our home in this market. You had better pray your father does not get a transfer out-of-area!

Anyway, I got my case together and got a recent photo of our home (one of the requirements). Eric Adams, who is renting from us, sells this great Mitsubishi equipment. He went across the street and took a digital-computer-image-photo of our home on a little disk which he then put in his computer which then printed out a color photo--simply amazing!)

I typed up a two-page argument, copied off the marketing ads with all the specs on five area homes which sold at big losses, and hand-delivered copies to the Bernards Township tax assessor and the local clerk. Then I mailed the other copy to the Somerset Board of Taxation and, of course, saved a copy for ourselves. The whole thing probably took me 12 hours. Before that prayer, I thought it would probably take an entire week, if I could do it at all.

So, faith is the tool the Lord has given us to lift fear, cool anger, and inspire creative activity. That's on our part, which is never good enough--so faith is also the link which, when we have done our part, provides access for the Lord's hand which moves, as necessary, to solve the problem--if we do our best in the meantime. I am learning the Lord is interested in our development--not in making us welfare cases.

Then, when the "crisis" is over, we need to remember that it was not our faith, but, rather, the Lord's mercy in providing faith and providing miracles, which made the solution possible. Unfortunately, it is human nature to pray very hard when one needs help and to thank very little when the crisis passes and the help has been received. It is also our (my) nature to brag more about our use of great faith than to praise the Lord for His power and mercy. I am so grateful to our Father in Heaven for the miracles, great and small, which He has blessed me with in this life.

Interestingly, our Father in Heaven carefully disguises His miracles in such a way that we could shrug and just call it "fortunate circumstance." He loves to keep faith on the "faith" level. But when you've lived as long as I have, you know pretty well exactly what's going on and exactly what would have happened without the faith and miracle.

I know this is very elementary and something we are told all the time and that everybody knows. But somehow, this is a principle I have been very slow in learning in my life. Anger is an exercise in wasted motion. It accomplishes nothing. It is evidence, as I said before, of lack of faith that our Father is more powerful than any potential aggressor.

Remember the above the next time you find yourself getting angry at your companion or frustrated by any circumstance. If you can stay calm, vent your frustration to the Lord (he understands well that you will hardly sound rational at that point--but He is very gracious, anyway). Ask His help until you feel at peace. Then you can go about your work, leave the burden upon the Lord, and save some energy for creativity in problem-solving. 'Sounds to me like this is exactly what you did with that landlord problem and your need to get some decent food.

Well, your father can be impossible at times, but I can't tell you how my heart swells with affection and warmth when I think of him. We are grateful for so much! We truly have learned much about love and acceptance through all our struggles. Heaven knows your father has much which is difficult to accept about me--but I truly think he loves me not only in spite, but often because of my idiosyncrasies. Don't worry about us. We're doing great!

Well, I got together your care package. But no call from your friends, and it's already the 20th. 'Hope they made it. No messages on our recorder, so I don't think they called while I was out. They had a sale at Pathmark on candy bars and I got you three

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packages of Snickers and most of the other stuff you ordered. I put all the chocolate stuff in the freezer so if we carry it on a hot day, it won't get melted.

I am also sending some black felt-tip pens and some bond, thin stationery and a lined sheet to put beneath it so you can write straight. Also some first-aid supplies in case bombs start dropping over this Middle East crisis. And today (Tuesday), after I did my shift at the Family History Center, I went up to the Mall to the LDS bookstore and got the last two Tabernacle Choir tapes they have of spiritual music. Dad found your Messiah tapes, so they are in there, too. I hope your friends do call and you get your treasures.

What's going on in the world? Ezra Taft Benson was on the front cover of this week's Church News, celebrating his 91st birthday. Looked perfectly healthy to me. He was in the hospital a couple of months ago--that's probably what you heard about.

I'm sure news reports in Guatemala are covering the Middle East buildup. We feel very supportive of what President Bush is doing to try and stop Hussein from taking more than he already has over there. Hussein sounds to me like a madman. I don't think we are going to intimidate him. I don't think he's going to back out of Kuwait. I think he is the type who would blow up the whole world before admitting he was wrong and retreating from his position. I hope I'm wrong--but that's my assessment of the man.

Jim DiSanza, as you know, is in the National Guard, and his wife is quite upset because he has been alerted that he may be called upon any day to join the troops. I have prayed often in gratitude to the Lord that you are on a mission with scriptures instead of guns. But maybe I have breathed easy on that count a little early. We got some papers recently from Uncle Sam wanting to know your current address and activity. This was delivered as a standard form the government uses to keep track of all draft-age persons, but it still made me nervous. So enjoy every day that you can teach a gospel of peace. And don't be nervous. Leave that to me. I'm good at it. We love and miss you.

P.S. I know this is asking a lot, but do you suppose it might start to sort of become possible, maybe, sort of, TO PUT A DATE AT THE TOP OF YOUR LETTERS?

P.S.S. How is the quick-step coming? Be careful not to get too dehydrated. Do you have medicine? You can't let that go--have to get it cured and QUIT DRINKING THE WATER, if at all possible. Nag, nag, nag. As I said, I never give advice, thankfully. (Smile!)

P.S.S.S. Laura called last night. She has started Education Week and is doing it with Kara and Ilana, Bryce, and Matt Clayton, plus some New Jerseyites. Tonight she's going to Kara and Ilana's grandmother's home to stay overnight. Sounds fun! She says Zina's boyfriend's roommate is some guy you threw a Jesus the Christ at and scarred for life. WHAT????? #!#@ \$! Things you never told your mother! Of all the things to throw, too!!*#@!!!!!!!