

Envelope dated May 11, 1990 from Los Angeles (stop point of King Express from Guatemala). Another letter came today in the same envelope, but Laura grabbed it to read on her way to work--so I'll type this in the meantime--though I don't know which letter is first in sequence--she had her nerve!

Dear Mom, Dad, and Laura,

How are you? I got all five letters you sent me in one day, and I really enjoyed reading them. The work here is going absolutely great! [We actually spaced the letters, which were from all three of us separately, to go out one day at a time, so he would get them at intervals--but I think they just collect them at the central location for a week and then deliver them all at once.]

Last week my companion and I baptized and confirmed ten people! [When we talked with him on the phone on May 9--he called for my birthday and Mother's day, jointly--it was up to 14!] I baptized them and my companion confirmed 'em. The funny thing is that I really didn't do much. I accepted my call, I came here, met my companion, and taught a couple of platicas (discussions) in very broken Spanish.

Without the Spirit the plats would have fallen on their face. We try to teach, the Spirit converts, and the Lord blesses us with baptisms. My mission has been a very humbling experience. I've really learned that the Lord uses the weak things of the world (us) to bring about His great work. Between my broken Spanish and my lack of experience, we shouldn't have been able to do anything. Needless to say, I've been blessed from the start.

By the way, things actually are almost civilized here. on P-days my companion and I eat lunch at Burger King (we get on a bus and go to the center) and there's a fairly decent grocery store quite nearby there in the center where we buy our food for the week.

Oh, Mom, here's something you're going to find quite exciting! We've got cockroaches here! Great big ones! And they're fast, too! Everyone has 'em here! Just the other day I was teaching a plat, and I saw one on the wall in the far corner of the room that was at least this [he drew a smiley face larger than a quarter] big! I'll be sure to bring home at least two when I get back, seeing as how you love them [he draws a big heart--how lucky can I get!] so much!

Oh yeah....I've taken part in two blessings now. The first one was bestowed on a man with AIDS. He was told that his health would improve according to his faith (he was not told that he was healed, though). I talked to him afterwards and, yes, Mom, we shook hands--isn't it exciting! Anyway, he was very skinny and obviously the disease was draining him. He told me that he'd had a "bad life," but that he'd left it behind (he had been at BYU of all places) about a month ago or something like that and then he said something quite scary about it being too late. I really felt bad for him but there isn't much one can do for them besides a priesthood blessing.

The second blessing we gave was yesterday on an extremely poor man

who had an operation on his cheek and he was sick in bed. They said he needed another operation for 250 quetzals which for him may as well have been 5 billion quetzals for the family. My comp. gave the blessing and told him that if he had faith, he'd be healed 100%. We gave this blessing by candlelight at his bedside because he had no electricity in his home.

By the way, Mom, I figured out how you can give me birthday presents without any problems [you can't mail anything there because it is always stolen before it reaches them]. I have recently become quite fascinated with books written by and about the prophets and apostles. You can help me by starting a small library for me at home. Here's a list of some books I've recently become extremely interested in. Some of them I've gotten in Spanish, but the books you pick up for me I'd like in English. All I really want you to do is keep an eye out for these books and if you see a reasonable deal, pick 'em up for me:

Mormon Doctrine - Bruce R. McConkie
Doctrines of Salvation - Volumes 1-3 - Joseph Fielding Smith
The Miracle of Forgiveness - Spencer W. Kimball
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith

The main thing I'm interested in is Church doctrine commentaries written by the prophets and apostles, people who are entitled to revelation from the Lord which gives them insight into things difficult to understand. That's right....deep doctrine.

Soon a book is going to come out called "Complexities of the Book of Mormon" that I've heard is going to be excellent.

I have two books about Isaiah that are excellent, and I'd suggest that if you can get your hands on them, do so They are: The Book of Isaiah - by Avraham Gileadi and Great are the Words of Isaiah, by Monte S. Nyman. The first is better; the second, very good. Both help us understand Isaiah better. I think the second one is out of print.

Anyway, don't spend all your money or nothin' but pick me up some really thick books by prophets for me to gnaw on when I get home.

We're working hard here in Boca del Monte and things are great! I love you and miss you, and I'm grateful that I still have another 21 months before I have to mow the lawn again!

Love, Elder Daniel H. Bartholomew

P.S. Tell Laura to send me a letter, and I think it's cool that she's doing so darn good! Send me a picture of you guys. I'll try to send you one, but developing pictures here costs a lot of money (about 50 quetzals). Let's see....how many more selfish demands I can make?!

I love you guys and I miss you and I hope you're all happy. Is Don Pepper getting baptized or what? Say "Hi" to him for me. Keep writing. LOVE YOU GUYS! P.S. 'Sorry about letters not coming for a while, but last week was a big holiday here and the mail basically shut down!

No date again (This is letter Laura took), but arrived in Basking Ridge NJ on May 15, 1990):

Dear Mom, Dad and Laura, Hello from Guatemala! Things here are just great! I just finished my first month aqui en Boca del Monte and it has been awesome. Elder Larson (my comp.) and I finished with 14 baptisms which is very good! (Crazy art all over page.)

I'm being changed to another place and another companero, but I don't know where or who. I'm having a great time, and I've hardly started. If the rest of my 21 months are anything like this it's going to be absolutely incredible! I got your letter, Dad. Careful with your back, big guy! I'm going to play at least a couple more games of basketball before you get old!

Happy Birthday Mom! Happy Mother's Day! I've got your presents all ready, but I'm sending them home with a bunch of stuff for birthdays and Christmas, etc., as well. I didn't forget ya!

Hey, Laura! I hear you're becoming little miss missionary over there! Buzo! (That's how they say "cool!" in Guatemala). Anyway, don't get too popular when you get to college. If you're married before I get home, you're dead!

President Romney is really a wonderful leader. Don't you worry about a thing Mom! If something were to go wrong, I'm in capable hands. [I suspect he is not telling me here what I learned when he called May 9 for my birthday and Mother's day (had permission): he had just spent three days in the hospital because he got an amoeba from drinking some lemonade a family gave them when he and his companion took a birthday cake over to their daughter. The mission president noticed he was looking "green" at a missionary conference and got him right in the hospital. Daniel said he felt he had excellent care and the doctor was well known by Pres. Romney. He said it was hard to sleep with the IVs in his arm, but when he called me he was out of the hospital, the mission president had put him in a more developed city and with two companions so he could conserve his energy and live in a more healthy area for a while. Daniel seemed in excellent spirits--we had a great chat!]

We're as busy as always. Right now we're just looking for some big families to baptize. We have finally found some men who are home nights and willing to listen and they're about to make a ward here. Now that we've got possible priesthood leadership, all we need to do is find a place to rent where we can hold meetings. The activity rate of the members here in Boca del Monte would rise tremendously if they had their own ward. Sometimes the bus fare to the church is enough to keep people from getting to Church. Pretty soon the Church is going to be a major competitor for all these Evangelicals and Catholics here en Monte. Oh well, gotta run! (He enclosed 3 woven bracelets--Laura's had her name woven!) (On a separate page in the previous letter was this note: "Dear Mom, I remembered your birthday, and I've gotten some stuff for you. When we send things that are larger than letters, we send them in baskets, so what I'm going to do is find presents for everybody for birthdays and Christmas, etc., and send them all home in a large basket. I'm sorry it's going to come late, but know that I'm thinking of you and I love you. Love, Daniel H. Bartholomew