

The Never-Ending News

There's always something! Things keep happening!

Less is more. If my cardiologist didn't prescribe it, butcher shops and my queasy stomach would proscribe it: No red meat. Neatly processed and wrapped, meat is just one more food package in the States. Here, eye to eyes (and to brains, tongues, feet, stomachs, intestines, and etc.), you know you're seeing slaughtered animals. Ugh, I find myself liking dead animals less and less. (Yet how I do love gravy.) In Argentina, my missionary companions called me "Cast Iron"--for my stomach. Rather than offend, I would eat anything, including all of the above plus chicken feet and sheep eyes, and never got sick. Now just the thought and the sight make me sick and I have become a born-again Word of Wisdom-ite. "Yea, the flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly; And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine." (D&C 89:12-13) Recently I read that only 10% to 15% of world grain production is consumed directly in the form of bread, breakfast cereals, noodles, etc. The remainder is used as feed for cattle and poultry. Add fodder to this plus the manufacture and use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers and the concentrated filth and waste of large-scale, criminal, disgusting, "efficient" feedlots and coops, and the result is a totally over-planted, over-grazed earth, the erosion and destruction of top-soil and desertification, the deadly pollution of water and air, and the annihilation of endangered plant and animal species, just so we can have our meat and eggs and obesity and heart attacks and cancer and self-degradation.

Through the auspices of one of my oldest friends, an Argentine of German descent whom I met in 1946, I had one of my finest experiences ever, in 1984, speaking to a Rotary Club first and then at a non-LDS youth convention while president of the Buenos Aires South Mission. The following day he almost ruined our relationship by proudly showing Merrill and me his egg factory. I still feel physically and emotionally ill from what we saw: Chickens imprisoned in tightly confining cages on top of their own dung, never able to move about their whole life long. How can anyone be so unfeelingly and unthinkingly cruel? This degrades us to a state far lower than that of any "brutish" suffering animal. I've hardly been able to look an egg in the face ever since, abstaining for months from eating "tortillas" (Spanish-type omelettes) and even rancho-eggos, a mixed-up chow mein omelette of my own invention and the tastiest concoction not on the market. How different the life of "factory" chickens from those of my fond remembrances on the farm. What a happy experience seeing a hen with her chicks, teaching them to scratch for their food, clucking to keep them close, warming and protecting them under her wings. What fun to hunt for eggs and find them almost anywhere--in the barn, etc., if not in the chicken coop. Producing one pound of meat takes about 10 pounds of grain. If people would eat the grain instead of the meat, with beans, etc. supplying proteins, there would be much more food available for the hungry, much less of a drain on earth's limited resources, better health for all, and a better world in which to co-live with all of God's creatures, great and small, surrounded by things bright and beautiful, wise and wonderful. There seems to be no end to evidences of the divinely inspired nature of the Word of Wisdom and its as yet only partially appreciated value and importance.

Impressive packaging. Chile is far ahead of the so-called advanced nations when it comes to packaging. Since they can't afford to use so much metal, plastic, and glass, cheaper containers made of biodegradable cellulose are commonly employed. Everything from milk to mayonnaise, flour, pickles, pepper, you name it, is so packaged. Disposal problems still exist of course, but

this is a trend that we should follow. Chile has an important timber industry as a source of cellulose and a fairly good reforestation policy, but it's scary to see how rapidly forests are disappearing everywhere. Conservation, frugality, and recycling are an absolute necessity to prevent pollution, destruction of the environment, and escape from burying ourselves in garbage. Santiago has severe problems of air pollution, noise, and congestion, but at least the type of packaging in use saves resources and reduces wastes.

Líquidas perlas de amor (liquid pearls of love). Group No. 200 (our 17th)... Hna. Orquídeas Paredes hadn't been set apart for her mission to Chile-Osorno so the blessing fell to me. So many relatives and friends were present for the occasion that there was scarcely room for them in "el living" (the living room) of our apartment. When "amén" was said, all eyes were wet as all hugged each other in typical Chilean fashion. Her father, a silver-haired convert of two months, couldn't stop crying, for joy and for love of his daughter. The next day, Hna. María Arcos arrived, one day late because of her mother's opposition. More tears were shed, in sadness for the mother's rejection and lack of understanding and in happiness--at the CEM at last, having overcome so many obstacles for love of the Lord and his work. Up till now I'd held this name in reserve, but after witnessing these and other expressions of love and joy, I nick-named this group "Los amorosos" (the loving ones).

Músculo minúsculo (miniscule muscle). One of the most important concepts we impart at the CEM is that investigators must participate as much as possible from the very beginning, an aid to their conversion and perseverance to the end. Among other things we teach them how to search the scriptures, think, study, pray, and resolve their own concerns [translated "dudas" (doubts) in Spanish] instead of dishing out answers for them with a silver spoon or, in Spanish, serving them up on a golden tray (en una bandeja de oro). We can give a man a fish and allay his hunger for a day. Far better to teach him to fish and have food for the rest of his life (if he can find a spot where the ecosphere hasn't collapsed). With the last group, to illustrate the need to make use of our diverse faculties in order to develop and maintain them, I lightly flexed my bicep and inquired what would happen if I stopped using it. Their reflex reactions quickly froze their facial contractions: "Would happen...?" But they politely replied: "It would atrophy." I much prefer overt laughter to the covert kind, so this time I got a laugh from a little ironic rhyming playfulness with respect to my "minúsculo músculo." Now I think about it, I should have flexed all out. It's springtime in Santiago and short-sleeve weather at last. No danger of bursting the seams of a long-sleeved shirt or suit sleeve.

¿.....? Some of you think my letters are part of an epistolary mystery novel. Suspenseful but not event full. Two months have passed since I wrote Elder Oaks. In that time I've had one interview and an indirect inquiry has been made. With each letter I thought I'd have something of substance to tell, but nothing has happened. Now, along with the six mission presidents in Chile and their wives, we have just received tickets for a flight to Buenos Aires, reservations at a hotel to stay there overnight, and a continuing flight to Iguazú Falls (Argentine side) where a mission presidents seminar will be held under the direction of Elder L. Tom Perry. It has been rumored that a member of the first presidency, either Pres. Hinckley or Pres. Monson, will be there. We intend to leave two days early so we can spend a little time in B. A. Vernón Bingham, president of the Buenos Aires MTC, and his wife Bernice, old friends of ours, have invited us to stay at their CEM until we go to the hotel, so it won't cost us much. Among other things, we intend to eat at La Estancia and Negro el Once. Try not to be too envious, Anna and Carolyn. We're hoping to have time to visit at least a few of our old friends, especially Pablo Lucena. Of course, Pres. Guillermo Pitarch (Argentina Rosario Mission), my former first counselor, and Pres. Tomás Lindheimer (Argentina Córdoba Mission), our former stake president in Buenos Aires, and their wives will also be at the seminar. Perhaps I'll be able to write something specific from there. The last time we were at Iguazú (July, 1981), my description of those incredible falls was rather vague and uninformative. I'll try to do better this time.