

*Dad, would you pass this on? I can't find my address list
(how about a copy?)*

80 Greenridge Avenue, White Plains, NY 10605
August 3, 1987 (914) 949-0606

Dear Family,

We are thrilled about the new "little" (9 lb.) Wood addition. The last we heard his name might be Christian Fletcher. If I am correct, Mom and Dad now have 33 grandchildren, with one extra male! Our prayers are certainly with all of you and you know I am "on call" after Mom leaves if you need me.

I haven't written much, but hope to turn over a new leaf. I first want to thank each of you for your love and prayers through these past few years and for the caring you showed while I was in Utah recently. We have been very blessed in our family, and I think it is easy to take that for granted-- particularly until we experience some other extremes. I came back from Provo with renewed appreciation and gratitude for the wonderful home Mom and Dad provided. Of course we all have our faults and problems. But we had a home with love, security, example, a sense of family pride, and the example of competent, independent, and faithful parents who above all respected and loved each other. These gifts are immeasurable and I thank the Lord every day for this upbringing.

I also feel especially grateful for you brothers and sisters. On the plane coming home, I thought about each one of you and your mates and the gifts you have and share. It was almost overwhelming to me to think all these positive qualities are available in the context of one family. And all your children are so beautiful and are such individuals! I gain so much inspiration and comfort from the lives you lead and the support you extend me. We must communicate more often and allow ourselves to unburden old stereotypes and get reacquainted and acknowledge changes which have come through growth. I felt really stupid in Utah when I saw these gorgeous nephews and nieces and had to admit I was still thinking of them mentally as they were when I last saw them. Spiritually, we as brothers and sisters have made similar changes, though less visible. I support Aspen Camp momentum for next year.

I want to share a blessing that came by surprise last week. I took Daniel and Laura by train and cab to Madison Square Garden to hear Paul Dunne and the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus (splendid evening)! We were there an hour early and suddenly this adorable nine-year-old came running with outstretched arms to greet us. Remember "Andy," the foster child we thought was a permanent placement, but lost? He came at age 3½ and was with us about six months. It was one of the most wrenching experiences of my life to give him up. We risked not only losing him, but losing him to the gospel because Church Social Services refused to place him again because his Jewish aunt gave them and me such a bad time and had misrepresented his adoptability (it turned out he had a father with rights--we had thought him illegitimate--his drug-addict mother still had hopes of rehabilitation and wouldn't sign--and this aunt, who had custody rights, made our life miserable and made it very difficult to help Andy.

When it became clear we could not keep him, I remember fasting over several days to get an assurance that Andy would get a gospel home. This assurance finally came with absolute surety which gave me the courage to go ahead with the procedure. I remember when the time came to tell Andy Church Social Services was coming to get him and would return him to his aunt. He knew as well as we that she did not want to keep him, but was envious of any home he entered. "But, Mom," he cried, "Who will take care of me this time?" While I struggled for words, he smiled through his tears to answer his own question: "Jesus will take care of me, won't he?" It was one of those moments word cannot describe. We felt the Savior put his arms around us and we knew He would.

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Family letter
August 3, 1987

Still, in the grief that followed over the next year and more, there were many times when I could not feel that feeling any longer. And I questioned and berated myself and mourned Andy's loss, especially when so many miracles had happened in terms of his progress and the love we all felt for each other.

I had seen Andy a couple of times over the years at regional conferences. The aunt demanded him back, in lieu of signing papers,--but she did not really want him. In spite of all her complaints, we must have done something right because she was determined to find another Mormon family for him. She finally got the Miller family to agree. He was a stake president at the time and they had a Downs syndrome child and had raised several foster children (a couple of years back, she was named New York Mother of the Year!). As an attorney, he could keep this aunt in line (she threatened to sue me every time I disagreed with her). It took five years, but he was finally able to secure Andy's adoption.

When we met those few times, it was strained. Andy seemed confused when he saw us. And I was hesitant to impose on his bonding with the Millers. But I used to go away and cry at the changed relationship.

Well, things were different Thursday. I guess he's been with them long enough to feel totally secure, so he could open up to us. And Millers were delighted to share him. What a thrill to see him! He was so excited to see us and just couldn't get enough hugs and kisses! Chased around with D & L before and after the concert--he was so thrilled to see them and vice-versa. You should see him now. Settled, mature, confident--with such a terrific vocabulary! He was so anxious to tell us all about his adoption and school and his mission plans (he's saved \$70 toward his mission by finding aluminum cans and returning them at 5 cents each)!

He couldn't wait to tell us he got to choose a new name when he was adopted and let us know in no uncertain terms why he chose "Daniel." He's very tall and great at sports and watch out BYU for Daniel Andrew Miller (goes by "Danny."). I thought for sure he would totally forget us. But not so. The Spirit reaffirmed a joy and returned love I thought we gave up forever. Danny will always be a part of our family. I cried through the entire concert for the joy of it. Afterwards Danny invited himself to visit us and demanded our addresses and phone number and got so carried away I worried a little about how the Millers felt--but they were just glad he could feel that way. They are such marvelous people!

Of course we've been enduring a much more traumatic separation in our family. But I hang on to the promise of George Watkins, our stake patriarch who gave me a special blessing at a time of despair. He said the Lord was closer than I knew and that the day would come when each member of our family would look back on what had happened and see it as a positive step. He also said it would not be many years before the clouds would clear and the sun shine through in full radiance. I hold on to that when it gets tough. What happened last week with Andy reassured me that when we have done all we can, we can trust the Lord to keep his promise to us. We will see the great law of compensation take effect. We can act when the Spirit whispers--even when our head can't understand.

I love each of you. Dan flew with Daniel and Laura to Provo yesterday. Dan wants to see you. He thinks you must all hate him. I know you don't and told him so. He is getting active counseling from 3 sources and I join him each Friday in New Jersey for the marriage counseling. We are both trying to understand what has happened and make necessary changes. In the meantime, I am pursuing the legal settlement--but once secure in my home, I intend to still work toward an ultimate reunion with Dan and am willing to wait years, if necessary. Love, Sherlene *Sherlene*

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