

Dear Family,

Well, I've had the round robin a couple of days--better get this off before Barry and Ginger have my head! We did enjoy getting all your letters. I read them through twice--just didn't want to give it up. I had expected the round robin the day before because Barry called ahead to say it was coming, and when it didn't come--did I ever get homesick! I am getting very addicted to all the news and cheer--let's keep the tradition going!

Spring seems to be finally here. All the snow in our yard isn't melted, but tulips and other bulbs are actually peeking through the leaf mulch and it's warm out there! We had a few warm days about 10 days ago and then it snowed again that weekend, making it look like November again. What a let-down! We've had a ten-year supply of snow this year. Talk about opposition in all things, spring never looked so good!

Three men are pounding shingles on the roof up above me right now. We're getting a new "white" roof, and it will look so much nicer. Actually, the shingles aren't as white as the sample looked--they're more light gray, or light green--but whatever it is, it's an improvement. They finally came and finished blowing foam into our walls. This time I stood over them like Simon Ligree (how did he spell his name, anyway?) and watched every step. They didn't like it, but at least I was satisfied that they were really pumping that stuff in there. We've noticed the difference, since they did it right, too. Dan took a week-by-week record of our fuel usage these last couple of years, and he's had fun making comparisons since we got the insulation--it does make a big difference. The storm windows and storm door all are on now, except they brought acrylic for the storm door, rather than tempered glass and I'm making them change it since that's not what we ordered. I don't like that acrylic. It fogs over so you can't see out of it and it scratches the first time you try to wash it. It is a little safer than the tempered glass, but our children are old enough now to handle it all right.

We have been sanding and caulking and sanding, and Dan finished re-doing the whole livingroom ceiling and is almost through painting the whole room. We painted over all the wood (which could not be refinished to look good) and painted it Winter white, along with all the book shelves. We're taking down those hanging lights and putting in a ceiling spot-light which will shine on whatever painting we get for that paneled wall--which we have painted gold. We're about ready to paper the stairway (a gold, grass-cloth effect) and yesterday I found the most gorgeous drape material on sale for \$1.00 a yard (seconds, but I can't see one thing wrong with it--they fed it through the screening machine and I looked it over completely). It's a white polyester sheer (not too sheer, though) with a nubbed effect throughout and then it has white-on-white geometric shapes (small) throughout it which picks up the geometric wallpaper in the dining room. I got enough material to make drapes for all the windows in the livingroom and hall for \$40. It's costing me more for the traverse rods to hang them on. I'm making them triple-thick with very close pinch pleats so they'll be extra full, and they will give us privacy but still let the light through and be light and cheerful. Eventually, I will get extenders for the traverse rods and put another rod on and put a heavier over-drape on top of them and make them sheers (for winter when we want to feel more cozy). I can't tell you what it has done for our emotional psychology to be making some progress on this house.

All our Burpee seeds came and I am getting itchy to get the garden planted. We ordered a pint of lady-bugs and three praying mantis egg cases, too. It will be interesting to watch them go over the fence into the neighbors' yards.

Just wait until you all see Laura at Aspen Family Camp. She has grown by leaps and bounds (through three sizes) and is almost as tall as Daniel. She is thin and willowy and I just can't believe how she is growing up. She is still a sweet, generous, giving-type. I am continually amazed at how quickly she will give up something she wants terribly to make someone else happy. A real little peace-maker--but she can be a fighter, too, when she wants. She is still a doll-lover and gives her doll a bath faithfully--every single day.

Daniel still loves school and still acts as though everything in the world was made to become a great adventure. He has been designing kites which invariably get ripped, but he never seems to get discouraged. He came in the other day with a new design. It was three huge fish-shaped flaps, joined together at the nose with the kite-string. "This one will fly highest of all," he announced. "That's the funniest-looking kite I've ever seen," sez I. "Daniel," that kite will never fly because the wind doesn't have anything to catch in. The wind will go through between the three noses of those fish and it will just stay on the ground." He gave me a look that said mothers are really kind of dumb and I went out to say "I told you so." I'd tell you the rest of this story, but you'd never believe it. I didn't. I guess I forgot there are such things as flying fish. I think they got up there around the roof on Daniel's faith.

He sang "Shout for Joy" on our ward talent night and sang it with lots of "oomph" and looked like he thought it was all great fun. Afterwards, all my friends said "Doesn't that son of yours ever get scared?" I managed to bite my tongue and not tell them all the anguish I went through getting him to practice all week long. Then our whole family sang on the "Family" part of the Primary program. We were supposed to sing "We are a Happy Family," with Daniel and Laura each singing a line as a solo and getting the family to practice (that and a little "spontaneous" family discussion for after the song) just about ruined our happy family. Now I know what mother went through all those years. I can remember her drilling us and drilling us and..... tears, frustration----ah! the price of success. You never know until you're up there if the kids have really learned their lines. But they came through beautifully, and some of our friends had investigator families in the audience and they told us these people were very touched. We were "touched" all right! I guess they decided Daniel's solos were all right because they last-minute asked me to teach Daniel two verses of "Christ Is Risen" for a solo on the Easter program. So we have been drilling that all week. These people just don't know what mothers go through for each of those easy little solos. But I'm glad to see Daniel getting the opportunities--and I believe my Muzzer went through a lot of that on my behalf, so I guess I can pass it on.

Daniel has developed quite a reputation for knowing the gospel, too. We have been attending early Sunday morning Relief Society, with Daniel going to Priesthood meeting with Dan and Laura to R.S. with me. Not quite kosher, but it gives me an extra day in the week without having to get all dressed up for Relief Society. Daniel really feels like the big cheese going into the meetings with all those grown men. Last week in the Seventies' meeting, the teacher was telling the story of Ammon and he lost his train of thought and couldn't remember who it was Ammon was teaching, and Daniel piped up: "The Lamanites." Those tapes and Book of Mormon Illustrated sets really have been worth the price. They (D and L) just love that "My Turn on Earth" record album and tape, too, and the book--we highly recommend that to all of you.

I think I told you in our last letter about Daniel's strange case of chicken-pox-on-the-knee. It was quite strange, because two weeks later, he broke out all over. I think I kept him home from school a whole week with impetigo. The doctor couldn't say for sure, but it did leave the skin under the scabs a purple color after it healed (didn't spread anywhere, thankfully). The kids missed a lot of school between pox, impetigo, and the snow-ins.

We have had some fun adventures lately. Monday, March 13, I went to Albany to join the Right-to-Lifers in an anti-abortion rally on the Capitol steps. It was a beautiful, warm, sunny day and I prayed before I got on the bus that if there was one person on that bus who would be receptive to the gospel that I would sit by that person. Well, all the way up and back I sat by Marie DeLardi, who lives with her husband and three children right down the street from us and who told me how disgruntled she was becoming with a number of things in the Catholic Church. Then I would say, "Yes, that's how we do it in the Mormon Church." She's good as gold, and I have since met her husband and he is, too.

Dan and I have been called to be "ward missionaries," along with eight other families in our ward, and we have felt the blessings in accepting this responsibility. It's a very frustrating program because we are requested to use the S L O O W approach (there are 13 fellowshipping steps when you select a certain family--after prayer--and you don't even tell them you're a Mormon until step #5). This is a pilot-test program which, if a success here, you will all be hearing about. I must confess I have been cheating a little bit. I can't help it if I want to tell them Adam is Michael and John never died and we have a Heavenly Mother after they first learn my name!

But the specific praying has made such a difference. I can list ten families right now who we have been fellowshipping and all of whom I consider to be absolutely golden. Many other families in the ward are having the same experience. We baptized a whole family last week (the Varley's--not our family, but we helped fellowship)--and they are now bringing in two additional families. The whole ward seems to be on fire with the missionary spirit. I feel it all came with our new bishopric. A bishop with a missionary spirit can surely make a difference. Actually, I think he realized that with all the young couples moving away because they can't pay the taxes any more, and all the couples retiring away to the West, that they had better drum up some new converts to fill their positions in the Church organization. People aren't moving to Westchester anymore. Housing is simply out of sight!

At Albany, I wasn't exactly thrilled with everything I saw. Some of those people go overboard and use methods that embarrass others from wanting to join them. But it was interesting to hear the talks at the rally. One, by a woman black surgeon from Boston, M. Jefferson, was especially interesting. She's a real charger. She is president of the National Right-to-Life Committee, and afterwards I went up and told her I appreciated her comments and wondered how she would feel about talking at B.Y.U., if I could arrange it. She said she would enjoy that very much--that as far as she was concerned, there were only two churches that stand for anything anymore--the Mormons and the Catholics! (She's the daughter of a Presbyterian minister). She's thin and has a charming smile and engaging manner and is quite a campaigner. I think she would make an interesting addition to the B.Y.U. forum program. I also saw Audrey Kelly up there, who was the only pro-life delegate-at-large Bella appointed to Houston's IWY from this area and who I got to know at the Conservative Caucus meetings (that's a whole 'nother story). She asked me if we could get a Mormon representative for their "education" committee on abortion. I met several other priests and leaders in the Right to Life movement and let them all know I was a Mormon and then arrived up at Senator Pisani's office. A group of Right-to-Lifer's was on their way out and told me it was impossible--Sen. Pisani was in a meeting and just wanted visitors to sign their names to a roll.

Well, I waited until they left and then I cajoled his secretary into letting me meet him. He was actually giving dictation to his secretary and I thanked him for sponsoring the parental consent bill and supporting the pro-life measures. He asked where I lived, and I told him, and he said he drove by our home several times a week--we had a very nice little meeting. Anyway, I was glad to meet him after all the letters we've written back and forth with him.

After that I went to Governor Carey's office and when I got there there was already a confrontation between two of his aides and about 35 Right-to-Lifers. One RTL was really making a pain of himself, accusing Gov. Carey of being a murderer and hypocrit and demanding that the Governor come out and face them instead of hiding behind his doors. Gov. Carey is a Catholic with 11 children of his own, but he has vetoed parental consent bills which give parents the right to know in advance if they are getting a grandchild aborted (in New York the parents have to give permission if their daughter's ears are going to be pierced--but HEW "Health" offices will arrange an abortion for a girl through school authorities and take care of it during the day without the parents ever even hearing about it!). Gov. Carey did say about amonth ago that he favored supporting alternatives to abortion and Dan seized on that to write a letter-to-the-editor saying he also favored the alternative of adoption and was willing to pay the higher taxes to allow for that.

Well, things got hot and emotional with that one tall, swarthy man quoting the Bible and really making a pain of himself, and finally I went up behind him, touched him on the elbow and very quietly said: "There are some of the rest of us who would like to speak, please." He looked at me in shocked disbelief and sat down with his mouth still open. After about twenty more minutes, during which time I said nothing, the two aides said that if the group wanted to nominate five persons who were willing to come back the next week, Gov. Carey would speak with them personally--if they would come with specific proposals for alternatives to abortion. Would you believe, I only knew one other person in that room--that group had not been on my bus--and a bunch of them gathered around me and asked if I would be among that group. I said I was not an official Right-to-Life member, so they put me as an alternate. But afterwards I talked with one of the aides and I told him I appreciated Governor Carey's search for abortion alternatives and said that, as a Mormon, I hoped I could come up with some constructive suggestions. I could tell she liked me and she put a check by my name and wrote "Mormon" by it. So I have spent the time since rummaging around for alternatives to abortion. I did get a copy of Mary Ann Quinn Wood's talk at the BYU forum assembly (which was very interesting) and sent a copy to Senator Pisani and asked him if he would represent it to Governor Carey for me.

I also, at the request of Lucille Bachman, Pres. of Operation Wake-up, rounded up some Mormons for the audience at a Jean Parr show on which she featured four panelists--three militant feminists and one "Total Womaner." I couldn't identify with any of the four. Why can't they get a real woman up there! Anyway, it took me a long time on short notice to round them up, and the Bachmans came to our Relief Society Musicales that Friday and seemed to enjoy it very much. They will make the nicest Jewish Mormons. Dan and I can talk politics with them more comfortably than we can with most members of the Church. He was the Conservative candidate for the Common Council in White Plains this election--but lost. They're such nice people and we consider them to be very close friends. By the way, a "Mary Tracy" was one opposing speaker in the audience at that Parr show, a non-Mormon who has been very active in opposing the ERA and abortion and she said some very forceful things. I have read a lot of her editorials and reports about her experiences with Bella and a few others, and I've got to get in touch with her and see if she's a relative.

Well, I've gone on too long. There is so much more to say--but, lucky you, I won't. We've been very happy lately--sometimes too busy and often very tired--but I'm rolling better with the knocks and not getting as up-tight as in the past. Maybe middle-age is softening me a little. I'll let Dan tell you about his "new" raise and his new project. He has his chance to shine, now!

We love each of you--Sherleney and clan.