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Dear Family,

We hope each of you enjoyed the holidays. Laura thought Mom and Dad's Christmas party was terrific. I have not yet been there to see Dad pull that sleigh through the snow with his tractor equipment. 'Must be great fun for all the grandkids. Laura was impressed that Grandma chose such individualized gifts for each grandchild--she was really pleased to get her own set of those LDS classics.

We were excited to have Laura coming home, after having been gone since last June. I bargained with the tree-lot man and got a huge tree for her room for only \$10. By the time she came home, the whole house was alight with electric candles in every window and little, white twinkling lights on the trees. It was great to have our home abuzz again with all her friends visiting and calling. We did have some adjustments to make after all this time apart. She wanted to treat home like a college dorm; and I'm sure she thought I was still much-too-much-the-parent, saying more than she cared to hear about 'most everything. I guess this is the Lord's natural way of paving the way for both children and parents to cut the apron strings.

One thing she did enjoy doing with her mother was shopping! We found some incredible values at the after-Christmas sales and were able to buy her a fantastic wardrobe for next year. We are still buying her clothing because she had to go right into summer school. But we have served notice that this summer she has to earn half her school expenses and her own clothes from now on--around here, students can earn \$3,000 easily in a summer, and we are prepared to match what she is able to earn and save with her Smith money (which we calculate will cover about half her education).

Daniel called Christmas Day, and we talked at least an hour. It was terrific to hear his voice and catch up on his news (his letters enclosed). He hasn't forgotten how to speak English, a mile a minute. What amazed me, was how fast he rolled out Spanish when telling his companion what I told him about Rev. Pepper's baptismal plans. He sounded happy, enthusiastic, and as fun to be around as ever. We miss him, especially at holidays--but then I ask myself if there is any place else I would rather have him be than on a mission, and that cures me for a while.

An old friend, Susan Buckles, was visiting relatives in New Jersey (she works for the Church in Salt Lake). It was a real shot-in-the-arm to have her and her friend to dinner, along with the local Elders. She is one of the few we helped fellowship into baptism, who has not just "remained," but has brought forth bounteous fruit.

We also had a fireside here for Dan's Elder's Quorum past and current presidency, secretary, committee leaders, etc. and their wives. Don Pepper gave a beautiful presentation on the Savior, showing slides of some of his experiences in the Holy Land. It was lovely, but a disappointment in that I prepared refreshments for 26 persons and only 4 of Dan's people showed up. I had put R.S.V.P. "Regrets Only" on the invitations, which I sent out two weeks early, and only one person called in "regrets." We even arranged with Laura to tend the children of a mother with four children, and this mother had a sick child, but did not even bother to tell us she would not need the babysitting! That would never have happened in Westchester Ward. Sometimes I get a little impatient with the hillbilly mentality of many in this area. But those of us who were here had a marvelous time, and next time we will know to follow-up by phone and see for sure who is not coming, so we can invite the others we know would have supported Rev. Pepper, and whom I would have rather invited, anyway.

Christmas Eve, we went to the 11:00 candlelight service at Don's Presbyterian church, which was truly beautiful. We provided a little unanticipated excitement when Laura tipped her candle, catching the paper wax-catcher on fire. It fell onto her coat, and when her blowing and fanning did not put it out, I came on with my big-wind and we managed to avert disaster. Nothing like a little extra excitement!

Afterwards we went with the missionaries to Don's home for hot-chocolate and snacks. Don's retirement is soon, and he is already planning his "goodbye" service in which he plans to ask the mission home for 100 elders and sisters to stand around the Church. He is going to invite some of them to bear their testimonies, bear his own testimony to his congregation of 36 years, and then ask them to give their names to the Elders on their way out. He is going to Utah at the first of February, looking for work--hopefully in the Church institute system. Since Pres. Workman, our former mission president, heads up that system, I think he has a fighting chance. We sang in our two-ward contata Christmas Day, and it was not bad, considering the talent in this area.

We received a retirement package from AT&T last week, congratulating us on our decision to retire. It's always nice to be told it was our decision to be severed. At any rate, as of Dec. 14, we are no longer with AT&T. Dan worked the inside network and had several AT&T divisions interested in him, but they could not hire him until the new budget year, and then when the new budget year arrived, the Company President made a policy that there could be no hiring from "without"--and by then, we were "without." So, he was frozen out on both sides by two weeks. At any rate, it will probably prove to be a blessing in disguise.

Dan has had a ball since then, installing a fancy new computer with all kinds of novel gadgets (including a scanner) and has been connecting the computers in our home, practicing to perhaps go into his own consulting business, helping

companies install similar systems. I think he would work himself to death in his own business and am encouraging him to start looking outside AT&T and to get a typical 9-5 job.

At any rate, it has been good to see him finally taking a vacation and having some fun. My friends seem more concerned by what has happened than I am. I feel amazingly at peace. I think something much better is around the corner--Dan truly deserves it!

I am just now getting my strength back after two weeks with a NASTY virus. I don't think I have ever felt so ill. One big advantage, though, was catching up on a lot of reading I've wanted to do. I also watched almost the entire congressional debate over going to war in the Persian Gulf. Very interesting. Yesterday, just as news came that Israel had been attacked by Iraq, we were suddenly hit by a very dramatic thunder and lightning storm. The whole house shook! Karen, who is renting a room from us until her house closes, is from California and not used to such scenes. She was terrified! It did seem like the end of the world for a while there. Blair Jensen is also back, renting our other spare bedroom. We had decided not to rent both rooms, but the rental he found was so terrible, he begged to come back. He was pleasant to have around, so we now have two renters, again.

I was just called to be the teacher of the Gospel Essentials (investigator) class in Sunday School and will be set apart as a Stake Missionary at the same time. I am still helping patrons at the Stake Family History Center two days a month and will also teach the Teacher Development Course. I'm excited about this Gospel Essentials call, because Bro. Pepper thinks he'll bring 200 members of his congregation with him. We may set up a second class in our home to help teach them. I know, it sounds like a pipe-dream.

I haven't done any genealogy to speak of in a month. David sent us a disk for Christmas on which he merged the disks I brought him this fall (of my genealogy input, plus the 4 Family Search disks I had downloaded from Salt Lake), plus Mom's and his disks). Great stuff--this ought to keep me busy for awhile, sorting, verifying, and merging. Dan is setting up a tape system, so I won't have to copy my disks after each day's typing--it will automatically back up everything! 'Love it! We've both really appreciated the much telephone help David has given Dan about installing this system and also connecting our in-house computers. Also, it will be easy for us to exchange tapes, and when we get the modems in, we can just send genealogy and such things as Hallmanacks over the telephone wires. Isn't technology marvelous?

Nancy and Doug, Mom tells us good things about DJ's progress--he's constantly in our prayers; Brian, we hope your knee surgery is still healing well--sounds like Charlotte's still hangin' in there as Primary Pres; Virginia, hope all of you are over the flu--glad your home wedding reception turned out so well--oh, Barry, I found a reference to a Kyme genealogy while I was ill--will send along; Betsy and Tracy, we've been very worried about Hunt Tracy and have been praying hard for his safety--we hear the political danger is pretty much blown over; Marty and Liz, Laura said she and Greg had fun in an activity the other night, and they've decided to spend more time together--she thinks Greg is one terrific cousin!--Let's all of us be sure we set aside enough from the March Smith payment to foot the bills for Mom and Dad's 50th wedding anniversary (and make sure we all have funds to get there). I vote for Charlotte's idea that we don't have a separate family reunion, but take the kids out of school those few days and opt for a three-day reunion, staying at the local hotel for the weekend which would include Dad's dance and celebration as close to their actual anniversary, Sept. 24, as we can get it. However, since we don't have children at home, I am willing to adapt to whatever those of you who do, decide. We had better set a date pretty soon, because Dad has to reserve the dance hall (the chapel won't work because they've carpeted the floors).

My big dream for the reunion is to discover these lost links I have been chasing so hard on the family pedigree and have them ready for temple work and sent to the Provo Temple by Sept. Then we can all go and do the sealings as a family. I think that would be so marvelous. Please pray for my success in this. I've worked so hard on these lines and I feel like I am just batting my head against the wall most of the time.

Love, Sherlene

P.S. from Dan: I'm doing some networking outside AT&T now [attended an ORACLE (database software company) seminar on CASE (Computer Aided Software Engineering) yesterday in NYC; talked with a fellow in the Arthur Anderson consulting group who said there's plenty of work in this area with the fortune 1000 companies. LANs and DataBase also seem interesting. I did get a 486 machine that will accommodate both UNIX and DOS and am still working on setting it up. I am thinking abt. a scanner but haven't got one yet. Don't think I mentioned working with Marty Zobel (in the Elder's Quorum) who Marty & Liz may remember from Eatontown. He remembers L&M fondly. I guess we can be happy when elections are over in both Haiti & Guatemala. Love to all, Dan

HAPPY VALENTINE'S, EVERY ONE