

Tracy Jr, etc.
Hallmanack
19 January, 1991

Dear Family,

Well, here comes a semiannual installment of our edition of the Hallmanack. Don't pass out. Also, don't get any ideas!

We had a truly wonderful visit with Barry and Virginia in September. We enjoyed getting to know their children a little, and B. and V. did too much for us, really, what with a new baby. With our usual extraordinary sense of timing we arrived on the evening of their annual ward lobster dinner. Mmm...mmm! It was heavenly.

A couple of weeks after coming home I contracted pneumonia and was out for the count. Almost two weeks in bed. I hated it. My laryngitis is finally nearly gone now, but I still have a residual cough that hits me occasionally. None of the children got it. I think that's because they had that HIV shot on account of their allergies. I think I better have one. Tracy, too. He had the same bug in a milder version.

That put me somewhat behind for Christmas, but Mary and Lili and Anthony and Spencer did the trees (after Tracy set them up), and Mary and Zina put up a few strings of lights on the outside porch. In fact the children did all the decorating, and I could concentrate on the shopping. And wonder of wonders, I didn't have to do a single "return" this year. We did have a joyful Christmas. Mom's Christmas party was really nice. It was good to see Greg and Laura. I need to figure out a way to see them more often. I was so happy that Tracy volunteered to play his violin.

Mary moved into an apartment with friends (and Zina) over New Year's and has started at B.Y.U. I still see her and Zina nearly as often as I did when they lived at home (they were busy then, too), but Mary's moving out had some symbolic effect on me. It's a turning point in our family. Those first three have been sort of a unit, and a constant joy to us. I was really blue for a couple of days. I told them I just wanted the 3 of them to be 13 again for a few weeks.

Well, I started this because Mom asked us to synopsise the news from Haiti for the Hallmanack. There is a good article in the 21 January issue of Newsweek (p. 41) about the situation. It's grim. Just when I think I won't be surprised by anything down there again, along comes a horrible picture like that one at the bottom of the page.

We learned about the coup at about 7:30 a.m. our time, and spent several extremely anxious hours until we heard the coup had been contained. H. T. has been out in St. Marc since the end of December, and St. Marc has always been a bastion of the Tontons Macoutes (the Duvalier strong-arm). I called the mission office and the elder who answered the phone assured me that they'd gotten the word out to every missionary. He also said that the missionary houses are all in comparatively safe areas. I didn't argue with him because I knew he was trying to make me feel better, but it's utter nonsense. Some of those houses are in known dangerous areas. The branch in Carrefour Feuilles is a

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particularly strong one, and that whole neighborhood is rough, even for Haiti. A shopkeeper was shot just a few doors down from the apartment where Tracy lived when he was in Carrefour Feuilles -- that was a few days before he had moved in. The man was probably shot by a Tonton Macoute. You understand that a few doors down in Haiti usually means closer than your next-door neighbor here.

I've just been reading a book about Haiti's recent history, (It's called the Rainy Season, by Amy Wilentz -- excellent), and several times in the course of the narrative she would talk about a street or neighborhood that was especially prone to "political" violence that I knew was near a missionary apartment.

The Haitian family who are our dear friends in Provo were very anxious and depressed by the news. He told me "I said to my wife, 'if this is true, Haiti is dead.'" Their families are still in Haiti. She's the one whose conversion story I told in my last letter. He is the Elder Dort whom H.T. mentioned in his letter and "genealogy."

I do believe that the coup containment was miraculous. I know of many people who prayed for Haiti in those hours. And while I grieve for the violent reprisals the population has enacted, I think we must understand that they have been subjected to terrible and arbitrary violence for centuries, with no tradition of justice. The only justice the Tontons Macoutes have ever experienced has been mob justice. And ever since Duvalier took over, the people have not dared rise up, until the last five years. We can't judge them or feel superior -- our ancestors did the same things in medieval Europe. We have the advantage of 500 years of the Bible to temper us, and even then, we are seeing here what the French taught the Haitians 300 years ago. The army and the Tontons Macoutes have guns. The people have had machetes. A gun makes such a much cleaner looking death, and the machetes make the "peasants" appear much bloodier, but it isn't so.

Oh well, I've taken too long with this and have still just scratched the surface. The inauguration of Haiti's new president is scheduled for February 7th. Your prayers are welcome and needed. The Tontons Macoutes have vowed to prevent its taking place, and there is bound to be more violence. Aristide (the newly elected president) has been in hiding for two years, with dozens of assassination attempts over the last several years. I keep wondering how he's going to be inaugurated.

I know the missionaries will be safe as a group, but, as we've learned from Columbia and other parts of South America lately, there's no assurance for any particular missionary except that God will receive him into his bosom. I guess that has been the greatest lesson for me in contemplating all of this.

I've been wondering how the election in Guatemala has turned out. That's been ~~the~~ a frustrating aspect of the Persian Gulf war, which has certainly riveted our attention this week. There hasn't been current news of other countries available to us. The Gulf news has driven it out. I won't even get into that now. Many reasons to pray for the world right now.

We love you --- Betsy (for all).