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January 3, 1991

*Just for you, since
I fessipped a little
about Mom in this.*

Our Dear Son Daniel,

It was so wonderful to get a letter from you today, on your birthday! I can't help but wonder what you were doing twenty years ago, getting ready to come to earth--what was it like there, and who came to your "send off?" Come on, 'fess up!

I can tell you what I was doing. Eighteen hours straight of Dad rubbing my back at Delnor Hospital in St. Charles, Kane, Illinois. He was coaching me through some hard contractions: "Now breathe deeply, relax, exhale, etc." coach, coach, coach--contractions coming every two minutes for that long. You were VERY stubborn. 'Did not want to be born. Very secure in that warm environment. And so BIG headed, it was next to useless for teeny, petite me to try to deliver you.

All right. I'll admit I was not quite so petite as now--I gained 40 pounds during my pregnancy with you, while weighing out all that protein, etc. Adelle Davis said I had to eat to have a healthy baby. It was all your fault.

Back to this birth drama: finally, I couldn't stand it any more. I threw out all that Lamaze natural-childbirth lecturing, chucked all pretense at courage, and proceeded to scream at the nurses: "You either get that doctor in here and deliver that baby one way or the other or I'm going to up and die. I can't take this one more minute!!!"

I must admit that for 18 hours I had been so nobly concentrating, they thought I was asleep (Dad did, too--I reached a point of irritability where I wouldn't let him touch me, either, and told him to shut up and let me concentrate without interruption. I'm sure this is not exactly what we both envisioned while learning about all this wonderful Lamaze husband-wife teamwork! Actually, I'm sure I did not tell him to "shut up." My mother taught me not to use such crude language. She used to charge her seven children \$.25 any time we said such gross words as "shut up" or "brat." I did not start using such language until I had teen agers and wanted to be particularly vehement.

Asides aside, I assure you I was concentrating. On keeping my cool. I was determined to have this baby without any medication. One nurse was furious when I admitted how long this had been going on. "Well, you know, there's such a thing as concentrating too hard--sometimes you should just do what comes naturally! We thought you were asleep!" Well, if I had quit concentrating, I would have missed a breath to talk with them and then I would have lost rhythm, as well as my cool. Anyway, one value in being very quiet and strong is when you do start yelling, they notice. Did they ever jump!

Dr. J. M. Miner, a marvelous, quiet, white-haired minister (who left the next year for Africa--must have been a great shock to him to have delivered you), had given up on your coming any time soon, advised against rushing things, told the nurses to let nature take its course--he was hoping you would turn by yourself from that breech position, so he wouldn't have to turn you--and had gone to sleep in the next room. He came in, decided I had indeed lost my nerve (if not my mind), and he'd better act.

He gave me what they called a "paracervical"--natural child-birthers call it "chicken-feed." He tried to turn you inside me, so you

could be delivered, but the act twisted the cord around your neck and I had studied enough about delivery to know what they were saying when they monitored your heartbeat and tried very calmly to tell the Dr. the news. I knew it meant your beat was half what it was supposed to be.

Then Dad, who was monitoring my pulse, advised them that my pulse was also at half pace. They called over several other nurses and all held me upside down and shook me, the plan being to shake the cord up and over your head and off that side of your neck. This, while they put my head in a tent to breathe oxygen--and none of this yet in the delivery room where they finally got me just at the transition stage.

It was time to push, and I was too worn out to do it myself, in spite of your father's enthusiastic coaching. He acted like it was a football game or something: "You can do it, Sherlene. Push harder. Come on now, one more push!" I pushed about three times with all the strength I thought I had--no results. Then I heard the nurses talk about actually climbing up on top of me to apply pressure to push you out themselves. That was all I needed to get my strength back. The next push worked! At 3:03 p.m., Sunday, 3 Jan. 1971, I heard your father cheer, "It's a boy, it's a boy, it's a boy!" He had said all along you would be a boy. At that point I didn't care what "it" was, just so it was alive and had ten toes and ten fingers and was properly repentant about having made me labor so hard on the Sabbath.

'Sorry to say, but you were not exactly beautiful at first. You were slimy and bluish and looked like you had been through quite an ordeal. You did not cry right away, and that upset me. I kept asking, "Is he breathing?" and they did not answer me while they worked over you, suctioning out some mucous and monitoring all your signs.

Finally, you started this little, at-first apologetic cry (you should have been!), and I was so relieved that you were alive, I started to cry, too. I guess you didn't like the way I sounded, because then you started sounding off more loudly (which might have been augmented by your reaction to the circumcision --which the Drs. told me does not hurt babies--but I have read more since, and I am starting to think it is an awfully inhumane way to bring babies into the world). Dad and I felt so bad that you were so unhappy, and the doctor commented: "Look at this, these parents are already so wrapped up in this child."

Then they wrapped you all up in sheets before I could even see you and only let me hold you a few seconds, and then they rolled us both away to separate parts of the hospital, and I did not get to see you again until the next day. A terribly barbarian practice. Make sure you get a hospital where they let the mother keep her baby beside her and where they can be together a while and comfort each other. I felt robbed! I was so put out at those nurses for taking my baby!

You had better believe that when they brought you back the next day, I unwrapped all those wrappings and counted your toes and fingers myself to make sure you passed my inspection! You were so fat, your eyes looked like little squinting Chinese eyes hiding behind huge cheeks. You looked at me with these bright, intelligent little all-wise eyes, and you looked deep as all eternity and scared me a lot. I thought, "He knows so much more than I do about Heavenly Father--how come I'm supposed to teach him?" But I could tell right then that you liked me a lot. We accepted each other right then and there, and it's been that way ever since (even during those terrible twos and teens).

I just knew you chose me for your mother--you lucky dog!

Later, Dr. Miner admitted that shaking me upside down during delivery was a somewhat unorthodox procedure which he had never tried before and did not hope to try again--but it worked. Soon both our pulses were back to normal. Dad was traveling a bit in my late pregnancy, so I had asked him for a blessing early in case he was out of town when you were born. In that blessing, he received impressions that there would be problems because he said the doctor would be very skilled in handling complications of the delivery. That's just what happened. Plus, Dr. Miner was part of a clinic, and if you had not come when you did, another Dr. would have been on duty and you might not be on a mission right now.

Anyway, Dr. Miner said you responded just like Chicago's Mayor Daley, when born. You know, you both acted very passive and uncomplaining when the cold stethoscope was pressed to your bosom! As a conservative Republican, I was highly offended at the analogy and told him so. He said he had examined hundreds of babies in his life, and he could predict a lot by how a kid acted during that first exam. He said to take a deep breath and watch my health because there was nothing wrong with your health and you for sure were going to give me a run for my money!

Dr. Miner also asked me what procedures I had followed during pregnancy because you were such an alert, healthy little baby--so I bragged about my Adelle Davis and all that (these doctors know just how to butter up a new mother). P.S. I'm not sure I want you to be a politician. How 'bout garbage collecting? Now they make money--and it's a much cleaner profession. (Actually, we need good LDS people to get into politics. We're very proud of Stan Layton for winning his election in Somerset, though he's already disgusted with all the people who all of a sudden are fawning all over him trying to win points for their own elections.)

Dr. Miner also indicated that he felt some very strong spiritual impressions during your birth which confirmed to him that we were a very special family and that something very important was happening with this birth. I rather relished that part. Still do. Later in the week a nurse told me that Dr. Miner was the best in the area and that the angels much have been watching, because it was an extremely difficult delivery and we were both lucky to be alive.

You were nine pounds, six ounces, and 21 inches long, and you had lots of black hair, which fell out after a while, leaving you quite bald until chicken fuzz began to appear (that's what comes from eating chicken-feed). Most of that was HEAD (muscle between the ears). It snowed that day for the first time I remembered that winter, and all was fresh, white, and beautiful. I thought the entire world looked reborn that day. Your father was so proud. Went home and wrote a poem about the experience inside the cover of a book of poems by Carol Lynn Pearson--which he lovingly presented the next day--talk about a proud papa.

My mother arrived the next day, and I hugged her from my hospital bed and cried, saying I had never understood 'til you were born how much she loved me. It was the ultimate creative experience to give birth to you. I do not feel I have ever felt so close to God as I have during the births of our two children. I can remember also feeling some

sympathy for your father, wishing he could have felt this--that he could only be a coach and support. At the moment of your birth, I quit envying the position of man in the world. I have been happy since that men hold the power of the Priesthood. The Lord had to give them some compensating factors. Let the poor men be head of the households. They don't know how marvelous it is to be a mother and give birth!

The minute you were born I would have fought lions for you. Of course, I also took a little chicken-feed before you arrived. So much for Lamaze. With Laura I was only dumb half as long. Half the fun is giving up and screaming at the nurses!

My mother thought you were absolutely beautiful, which was a relief because I thought you were beautiful, but I tried to be realistic and was prepared for the probability that nobody else would think so.

See, the generations get better. I was a forceps baby and was born with a squashed nose and a bruised head. The first thing Grandma Langford said to my mother was, "Just so nobody says she looks like me!" So, when things get bad and you think you are a horrible branch pres. and nobody is responding to your calls and all your baptisms go out and get drunk, you can take cheer and remember that your Grandmother Hall thought you were a beautiful baby. I still think you're a beautiful baby. (Mother's get to gush on birthdays--don't you just love it!)

Now I know you could have cared less about all that baby stuff, but if I could handle it 18 hours, you'll just have to read about it that long. I know. *Call the nurses or you'll just up and die!*

Well, I want you to know I feel kind of bad that I can't bake you a birthday cake today. But I lit up the whole house in celebration of your birthday, in remembrance that you are letting your light shine and are not hiding your candle under a bushel. The whole house is ablaze with the celebration of your worthy mission. Candles in every window! Both Christmas trees twinkling six strands of tiny white lights (I talked the tree lot folks into giving me a fabulous live tree for only \$10--so I put it in your room and we put all the handmade ornaments all over it to make it festive for Laura when she came home.) Also, that tree made out of green glass and little jewels is alight with white lights above the piano in the family room.

We also have regular candles in every room of the house, which we light from time to time. So we lighted all the candles for your birthday, even if we didn't have a cake. Tomorrow they will all come down, but we know your light will keep shining there in Guatemala.

Don't ever let Satan suggest that you are not a very good branch president. Don't ever let him insist you are wasting your time. Don't ever let him whisper that you have failed in any way. I think the Lord does use "tough love" once in a while to teach us what won't come any other way. But most of the time, He specializes in noticing the good, encouraging our efforts, and applauding our tries. I know He is very proud of you, and we certainly are. Just a tip: He won't call you out of Esquipulas until you are begging Him for more time there. 'Took me a while to learn that on my mission. You're not ready to go until you're determined to stay. So decide you're going to be there forever and look for things to love about every aspect of being branch president (I know you already do).

If you do nothing more on your mission than learn to love one unpleasant companion or help comfort one unhappy person, then your mission is a wonderful success. Actually, you comfort your family all

the time with your wonderfully appreciative letters. They give me such a boost when I am down. I am lucky to have two such wonderful children.

We love you. We miss you. We pray for you all day long and, yes, have occasionally been caught bragging about our incredibly wonderful son--you know, the one who is on a mission in Guatemala? All our love,

Oh, I forgot to tell you, Dan Teck called the other day while Laura was here (Dad took her to the airport this morning--I am home with a decidedly nasty bug), and he was excited that you had called and said he had a letter and photo ready to mail you. He and a friend are coming to visit Pam some time over the holidays and said they would call ahead and probably stay overnight with us when they come. It will be good to see him. He was very solicitous with Laura, asking her all kinds of questions, much to her delight--he is definitely one of her heroes. He asked all about you, and I bragged up quite a storm, and he seemed very impressed with what you are doing and experiencing. I asked him for gossip about the old gang which I could pass on to you--any loves, marriages, new schools, etc?--he said, "No." There was nothing worth telling. His comment: "When Dan comes home, he'll be the only one who has done anything exciting worth telling about. The rest of us will just be plugging along in school."

He wants to go into philosophy and--get this--religion--now. You ought to brag up B.Y.U.'s department--they are terrific in those areas. He doesn't seem that thrilled with the dept. where he is now.

Well, Happy New Year. 'Hope your Christmas was beautiful and your birthday, as well. We got notes from the Freedmans and the Hedbergs saying how much they enjoyed the exerpts I sent them from your letters. Dad saw Doug Jackson at a trade show, and he said the same thing. I sent Freedman's a copy of your sentiments about being branch pres. in the letter received today--he'll empathize with that! I think I'll also send a copy to Bishop Smith to make sure you get a chance when you get back to say, "Yes, Bishop. What else would you like me to do?"

Next day: Laura got safely to her dorm--Mom and Dad Hall picked her and Tyra and all their luggage up at the airport, but they were delayed in Denver for two hours with all the fog. We had one beautiful snowstorm a few days ago, but now it is all melted, and it looks like Spring again. Kathy also arrived last night from CA. Her home there is sold, and we're just waiting for news of her mortgage here.

'Still no news on the job front, but Dad keeps plugging along. I have the personal philosophy that the Lord is going to give him a fat plum, but wait a little while to give Dad an enforced vacation. We took Laura into the City her last day here to look for a book-bag-pack and see the Big Apple at Christmas.

Well, they had pulled down most of the store windows by then, and the place was so dirty, all I could think was "Wormy, Dirty Apple." I'm sure that's why I'm sick today. Too many people coughed on me while I was crammed in with them on PATH. According to the news, one in six persons walking around New York has T.B.--which we used to think was an eradicated disease.

With AIDS and all, T.B., an accompanying disease, is alive and well, and joy of all joys, all it takes to transmit T.B. is a cough. So doctors are being trained to test for T.B. all over again. So watch who coughs on you, and if you get a cough, get to a doctor, and have yourself tested for T.B. It's becoming a world epidemic, again. It can be terminal if not caught early.

As for me, I get T.B. (totally blithered) just thinking about New York City. Laura acted like she was in Seventh Heaven. She really does love the place! She had better know I love her to even consider taking her there.

Your envelope was a hoot. What do you mean you are only willing

to come home to the tri-cosmopolitan area and just maybe D.C.? After going into that filthy City, I am sure it is going to sink into the ocean any minute just so the Lord can wash off all the filth. I am going to start encouraging your father to look for jobs in places like Kansas and Iowa.

Your Ever-lovin' Mom

Daniel from Dad: Enjoyed your letter yesterday. I have great joy in the spiritual insights you share. I feel you are putting forth great effort and work to do both the missionary and the branch work. I am humbled and impressed by your gratitude and humility and recognition of how great the room for growth that the Lord and life offer us.

Your mention of not being trained as a Branch President reminded me of our current Book of Mormon chapter-a-day reading about Alma in Mosiah 26. Apparently Alma had the same problem, having just established 7 churches among the Nephites and not knowing what to do with the blatant unrepentant sinners. Mosiah, as King would not touch it, but dumped the whole thing back on Alma. Mosiah 26:13 "And now the spirit of Alma was again troubled; and he went and inquired of the Lord what he should do concerning this matter, for he feared that he should do wrong in the sight of God."

The rest is worth reading (v.14-39). He went to some trouble to get an answer and indeed received a real answer. I believe that I don't seek or receive answers often enough because I view matters as being more complicated than they really are. Or I like my own ways and answers better than relying on the Lord. But when I do pay the price--humble myself and labor in prayer, get my own spirit right, study things out in my mind, then go over it with the Lord and listen and wait some--thoughts come, the way becomes clear, and good things happen.

It's simple but not easy or instant. This simple process worked for me recently when I was preparing for a home teaching visit and overheard myself saying to myself that I didn't want to just do the usual routine mechanically (read the Ensign article and talk about it), but rather obtain the errand from the Lord and do it in His way. It probably took a half hour of spiritual preparation, but I felt a lot better about the visit.

Of course Alma didn't have handbooks and instructions, which the Lord probably expects us to read as well as to pray and think about things. The dangers seem to be (1) of going by the book without inspiration, or (2) winging it and calling it inspiration. I do too much of both of these. My mission president, Valdo Benson, underscoring the simplicity and consistency aspects of following the spirit, said that we can enjoy the companionship and gifts of the spirit even when shining our shoes. Which reminds me. It's been a while--I need to shine my shoes.

President Monson is one of my models in these things--with his "can do in the Lord" and "will do" attitude and corresponding actions. I believe that he realizes literally the fulfillment of the promise in the Book of Mormon that you have mentioned before (Alma 26:22)--satisfying the conditions (repent, exercise faith, bring forth good works, pray continually without ceasing) and thereby blessing the lives of thousands and bringing many unto God.

May we also, with God's help, make this our lot.

MUCHO AMOR, DAD

Thanks again for the C'mas & for taking Laura and her friends (2X) to the airport!