

December 19, 1990

*'Just for you. Maybe I'll get around to a  
shorter "Hallmark" version soon. :)*

Dear Elder Bartholomew,

Maybe this letter will arrive in Guatemala by Christmas--I hope so. I hope you know that your stocking is hanging by the fireplace waiting to be filled by a fat, jolly old elf ("elf is a male designation, in case you were wondering!). We are missing you, but enjoying more Christmas Spirit than ever because of where you are and what you are doing.

This morning I did my personal reading in 3 Nephi, which I skipped over to a few days ago, in honor of the season. I tried your idea to put my own name within the verses. It was almost more than I could bear at times while reading Chapter 17. There I found Jesus praying to the Father for me by name and weeping for you and for me as he pled with our Father in Heaven in words unspeakable. The Spirit took me back in time (or perhaps forward), as I felt lifted into that atmosphere of whitest light and inexpressable joy. Tears bathed my face, too, as my heart overflowed with the love my Saviour has for me and my love for Him (and for all the world at that moment).

If only each person on this earth could read that chapter and put his own name within its message. We would have total peace and love on earth and the most joyful Christmas ever! This year we can't give you the fancy gadgets which excited you so much in the past. But you still have the Book of Mormon, and because you have an even bigger heart, the Lord will fill it with His richest treasures, which you are now more prepared to receive. We are so grateful for you and your beautiful life of service! This is the best gift you could ever give us and we cherish it as the richest of treasures.

We have had the warmest winter ever. (Insert: today, Dec. 27, we are finally getting our first snow--and we just learned BYU lost by a few points in the Madison Sq. Garden game. Channel 5 made a big point that Bradley is going on a two year mission for the "Mormon Church" soon.) But the last few days were gray, cold, and drizzly--which seemed to match how we were feeling. Dad got officially terminated from AT&T on Dec 14. I suppose some of the emotions are similar to those some friends had when they got their divorce papers. They said they knew it was coming and were resigned to it--even had themselves convinced it would be for the best--but getting the final papers was still a severe jolt. When Dad's boss called and asked Dan to cut up his AT&T I.D. and mail it in and to come in to "sign off," I was not quite prepared for my own feelings. Dad took it all very cheerfully, but that night he moaned and gnashed his teeth in his sleep all night. It's a hard thing after 21 years of service and dedication to find yourself dumped without even a thank you.

However, Dad's patience in hanging in there this long pays off in some early retirement benefits. We will receive \$1100 a month until he dies in retirement pension and retain full medical benefits. He also gets a lump sum payment which will be released to us in a \$6,000 payment, with the rest divided out as though Dad were getting full pay for six months--so if it takes that long to find a job, we will not feel the effects until after that time. If he finds a job earlier, he can just keep the remaining sum.

Dad has been working day and night at finding a new job and finds the market very bad. Jobs within AT&T are frozen until the New Year, and yesterday a big news article quoted AT&T's president as saying that after Jan. 1, AT&T will only hire from within. That leaves Dad frozen out by two weeks on both sides. Several divisions have told Dad they want to interview him after Jan. 1, and several have already interviewed him and then told him their budget or hiring was frozen, but they had interviewed, hoping to get the final authorization. Only one interview

found Dad unqualified for that job (a division with new products --they were looking for someone already familiar with that line). The newspaper said AT&T has laid off over 100,000 persons in the last few years. Several division heads have apologized to Dad for their delay in calling back, saying that with all the layoffs, they are so inundated with resumes, it's hard to respond to each.

At any rate, I decided the atmosphere in this home was not going to be as gloomy as the situation and weather. I have decorated the house like never before. There is holly and ivy and pine boughs everywhere, new wreaths and surprises in each room, and I took some money Mom and Dad Hall sent us for Christmas and splurged and bought those little brass electric window candles and put them in every window of the house, tying them to the sills inside with pine garlands and ribbons. On gloomy days, I leave them on all day, light the tree with its three strands of tiny white stars, turn up the Tabernacle Choir Christmas CDs, and this place looks and sounds like heaven. Of course, I have to turn off the sound every time the phone rings (which is about every fifteen minutes), so I can be Dad's executive secretary in this job hunt and answer line 2 with a very official: "Dan Bartholomew's office, May I help you?" He had better give me a good raise soon. I've earned it!

However, I cannot shake the feeling that this is only a necessary step to something better. Maybe I am not realistic enough, but I do know Dad has never been so spiritually in tune, so effective at planning and accomplishing, so positive in his interactions with others. I also know he has never been so devoted in service to the Lord and in his living of the Gospel. The Lord will bless him with something wonderful. The important thing now is not to get discouraged. So I keep the house lighted and the music going, and the neighborhood thinks we're having a continual party over here. We are.

The usual festivities are taking place. This is probably my most organized Christmas. I sent 350 Christmas cards (letters) on time for a change, each with a short personal note inside. I wish Dad would participate more in the sending of cards. It is a wonderful exercise to take that pause to remember old friends and beautiful memories. It's like counting blessings all day long. Of course your hands get a little cramped. There were times I wished we had not lived in so many wards and learned to love and appreciate so many people.

We are singing in the Christmas cantata. We are having a joint service at 10 a.m. this December 23 (with Clinton ward), so get the benefit of having their choir join with ours. We have had many and long practices--it is going to be marvelous! After the service, Susan Buckles is bringing a friend to join us for dinner here, and we have also invited the Basking Ridge missionaries. We'll pick up Laura at the Newark airport at about 5:35 Saturday night, so she will be with us, too. I can hardly wait until she gets here. I am decorating her room all up, just like we did for you with sugarplums and such stuff as dreams are made of. (I talked a tree-lot guy into selling me a really great tree for just \$10 the day before Laura arrived--and I strung it with lights I got just as they put them on half price and then Laura helped me put all the hand-made tree decorations on it--lots of fun.) (Daniel, you should see Susan now. She has been in the Church 15 years now [seems like just yesterday we were attending her baptism], and she is more beautiful than you ever could imagine--just amazing. She was so radiant, filled with testimony and light, and so much fun to talk with! She brought us the book, In His Service, by Carlos Asay, which I have very much enjoyed reading. Susan told us the Church has closed the BYU Center in Jerusalem because of Saddam's threats. Makes me

sick.)

Speaking of sugar, Dad just came down and caught me eating cherry chocolates. So, I forgot to tell him that when I got boxes for the stockings, I had to get an extra one to fatten up the elfin around here. He can be heartless. Stood there with this smirk from ear to ear and counted all the empty cherry-chocolate holders. Then he makes this sarcastic comment about getting to the "bottom line." He thought he got off with the last two chocolates, but what he doesn't know about a second layer won't hurt his bottom line!

He came down to tell me Suki Crandall just called. They are the ones who invited us to Thanksgiving Dinner. I invited them to Christmas Eve here, after I thought she hinted for such, but she quickly backed off when I told her it would be a traditional evening with prayer, reading the Christmas story from the scriptures, and singing of carols. (She did not even want to say a prayer at the Thanksgiving meal, so we just bowed our head silently). Anyway, she needed a good cry because her husband expects announcement tomorrow of loss of funding for his AT&T job and, therefore, his layoff. Also, she expects serious surgery in February, so this is a rough time for them. I felt good that she felt she could call her home teacher about it, though I don't think she guesses what gives him that power to comfort. I think I'll invite them to our Christmas concert and to dinner, too, afterwards. (We did, again declined, but they delivered a Christmas cookie/candy plate here and Steve wrote Dan a three page summary of feedback from AT&T retirees who went into consulting. Turns out Steve did get his funding and now wants Dan to consult for their group.)

Dad also got an invitation to bid for consulting with the company our next door neighbor, John Koch, works for. John took the AT&T retirement package last year (like we wish we had) and has been working for these folks. They have a contract to consult for AT&T on a military contract. They invited Dad to bid his hourly request, but told him the total should not go over \$60-65 per hour, and that would have to include their \$15 per hour "overhead." Well, Dad wants to charge at least \$50 an hour, but may start at \$40 to get the job and to get himself into the business. It is a job which would give either side the option to back off after six months. Dad also has an interview for another consulting possibility in the City next week--he's not very excited about a City job--but thought he would check it out, anyway.)

Christmas Eve we are also having the Elders over, and then at 11:00 p.m. we are going to hear Don Pepper's candlelight sermon and service at the Bernardsville Presbyterian Church. The Woods and Youngs will probably join us. Also, December 30th, we have invited 24 people over here for a fireside. Bro. Pepper is going to give an hour-long slide presentation on the Holy Land. We have invited the past and current Elder's quorum presidencies, the class instructor, secretaries, committee chairmen, and Stake advisor and their better halves. Also a new family in the ward which needs some fellowshipping and whom Dan hopes to call as temple-trip coordinator. We'll have refreshments (fig pudding with caramel sauce and mulled cider) first, and then the program. 'Should be warm and wonderful, if we can fit them all into our living room. (In reviewing this on Dec. 27, I'll add that at the Candle-light service, Rev. Pepper was giving a particularly moving prayer in which he asked that "we have the courage to take those steps which are right, regardless of concern for our own self-sufficiency," and I guess Laura got involved in the prayer and forgot to watch her candle. The paper drip-catcher around her candle caught on fire, she couldn't blow it out, it fell on her (my borrowed) coat, and I blew it out in what was hardly a reverent flurry of excitement. Never a dull

moment around here!) Don had us over to his home with the missionaries afterwards, and again he repeated his desire to invite 100 missionaries to his last service in the Bernardsville Presbyterian Church (hopefully in February) when he plans to teach the gospel, tell his people of his baptism, and ask them to give their names to the Elders before they leave the Church! He left Christmas day to go visit his family in Vermont, most of whom have now finished the discussions and are very ready also to join the Church!)

I enlarged our Christmas Family Tree this year and with usual humility called the Bernardsville News and told them they ought to take a picture of my incredible tree. They came out and took photos, which you saw in lousy copied version on the Christmas letter I sent. They also gave me copies to send the idea into the Ensign for next year. I gave them some information about our Family History Center when they came, and they sent out a reporter Monday to interview me again for an extended article telling local residents how they can search their family trees. Unfortunately, this reporter seemed more interested in talking about polygamy than anything else (after reading some histories on the backs of the photos of our polygamist ancestors). It's supposed to be published today, and I am afraid to go to the stand to see what it says. Probably another Mormon smear. Well, we shall see. (All the effort and time was worth it in just one of the positive calls I received about the article: a couple from Armenia, who now live in Basking Ridge, called the next morning and said they just had to call and say how wonderful the article was and how anxious they now are to do their own genealogy. So, we are getting together after the holidays. Mom, could you send me the address and phone number of Dr. Kezerian? I know he does a lot with Armenian genealogy--perhaps he can help these people.)

Do you remember Elder Earl Tingey from New York? He was our Regional Rep. for a number of years when you were little and worked with us closely during those years Dad and I were in public communications and also the years we were involved in the E.R.A. fight and those women-issue conferences and interfaith activities. We always thought he and Joanne were great examples and leaders. Well, we opened up the Church News yesterday to see he was called to the First Council of Seventy. It feels good to have some of our great leaders in the East called to be general authorities of the Church. As you know, Elder Hales of the presiding bishopric was from Westchester Ward, though you were probably too young to remember him, Daniel.

I have finished all my Christmas shopping, except for Laura's--which for some reason she wants to do with me at the after-Christmas sales. I asked Dad Hall to choose their own gift at the BYU bookstore 20%-off sale, and he chose the McIntosch version of the program which has all the LDS scriptures on it, which your father got for us some time ago and which is such a marvel. You can look up any term and it will call up all the scriptures on that subject and print them off for you, if you desire. The only problem is, it takes up a lot of memory. (Laura and I went to the after-Christmas sales and got her wardrobe for all next year at half-price after markings-down. We were so blessed to get some marvelous combinations in her colors and styles which worked together on several levels--at fabulous discounts.)

Your father has ordered a brand new computer with incredible new memory and some fabulous features and options for Christmas. He got a special deal on it, getting essentially the package David got two years ago for about \$2,000 less than David had to pay then. I am quickly using up all my storage with my genealogy, and Dad is buying this with the excuse that he needs this additional capacity in order to store and

study two new languages which will make him more qualified for jobs out there. It scares me to spend that kind of money when you just lost your job, but as you know, Dad can always justify new computer equipment, and I am usually the one who ends up enjoying it most. If we're going to starve, at least we shall do it in style.

In this true spirit of spending, I also went out on the one-day Macy's sale and bought a set of Lenox China at almost 40% off. I have never had more than five place settings of the china I chose at my wedding, so I bought a set of 12 five-piece settings, with completer set and flatware to go with it. Gorgeous. Actually, I am still trying to buy more of my original pattern (Olympia Gold) which I still think is the most beautiful in the world, but which was discontinued, so I have to find used sets. I found a list of persons who collect and sell these old sets and hope to fill out my original set and then give this new china to Laura as her wedding gift (for yours, we'll give you a two-year supply of paper plates)! This new set, called "Eternal," complements the Olympia Gold, except it has two gold lines, instead of the one and is a slightly different shape; so, when we gather for Thanksgiving with my dozens of grandchildren, the sets will be interchangeable and Laura can also use my complementing large pitchers, bowls, platters, etc. Laura says she loves my taste (she MUST be homesick) and she would be happy to keep the "Eternal" I bought as her own, if I am able to fill out my original pattern. Otherwise, she won't get it until I die. (She came home, saw it, and wants to keep it.)

Speaking of weddings, Lori Wood was married in the temple this weekend, and I helped with the reception. I worked two evenings on her quilt (tied), and Saturday helped at the Church with the decorating. I brought a centerpiece of holly (which I gathered from table decorations they were going to throw out after the Relief Society Christmas dinner and program--I helped with the food, and the program was very touching--a reader's theater about two old women in a rest home taking bets over whether their children would take in an older stranger for the holidays). I arranged the holly in my punch bowl--it was gorgeous tied with a red ribbon around the base and with the red berries and tiny bulbs of gold, silver, and red. They put it by the guest book, and now it cheers our dinette table. We put tiny white lights all over trees and wreaths, also decorating with hundreds of gold-sprayed pinecones. In the darkened room, with all those sparkling lights, and our CD player and glorious Christmas music, it was an impressive wedding. Of course, you know how Onalee gets when she's under pressure. At times it was enough to make me want to move out of the neighborhood. But your mother is getting smarter in her old age. I just took it and kept my mouth shut. There are times, though, when I think I know why James has been striking out.

It has been a rough time for Onalee, I'm sure, with Michelle's farewell service the next day--losing two daughters at once. Michelle practically ran that whole reception--then still had to come home that night and prepare her talk. Michelle looked absolutely radiant. I was happy for Lori, but happier for Michelle that she gets to go on a mission before getting married. The service was lovely. I offered to hold an open house here for Michelle, but Onalee about bit my head off for even suggesting it. That was one more thing they had decided to do without. Michelle was a real trooper and did not seem to care, though it did not seem fair that the wedding got all the attention. Lori was a beautiful bride. Got her braces off just in time and seems to have married a fine young man. I was so exhausted after the small part I did on the reception, I decided to pay both of you to elope. I can't pay you enough--but do elope--TO THE TEMPLE. Don't you dare.

Did I tell you about our accident? Kathy, who is renting Laura's room, came home at noon to make some phone calls about the home she is buying (they will probably close in January) and, having her arms full of packages, lost her balance in the doorway to her room and fell. Since her arms were full, she did not break her fall with her hands, but fell flat onto her nose which split on top, needing three stitches, and broke inside. She also had a big, blood-blister of a lip. It was scary. Fortunately, I had that first aid course last year, so I knew not to move her. We stopped the bleeding (blood all over the rug), and the first aid squad got here and put her on a stretcher in case of neck injury and took her in an ambulance to the hospital.

Dad had been out in the back yard putting little fences around his trees to keep them from the deer and came around front just as they were carrying Kathy out on the stretcher. He thought it was I! He looked right at me and with the most horrified look on his face said, "What happened to Sherlene?" I guess he loves me a lot. It was worth waiting 21 years to see that look on his face. I went to the hospital with her and stayed until they released her four hours later. As I said, never a dull moment around here! Kathy is now home in California for the holidays.

Kathy had planned to be in her new home by now, so Laura could have her own room back by Christmas. But Laura seems satisfied that I am giving her the two-weeks' rent from her room to sleep in yours while she is here. (Actually, that rent got included in the after-Christmas spree.) Now you're going to want rent for Laura's sleeping in your room. This could get pretty complicated!

The Stobaeuses had us over for supper the other night. She just got a bread machine and she is having so much fun making different kinds of bread and taking it over to people. She took a loaf over to Rev. Pepper the same night I took him a stew (he has been ill), and when she called and offered us a loaf, I said Dan and I would come over and get it, thinking we would save their coming out in the wet and cold. Well, that was a mistake. The next thing she says is, "Well, if you're coming over here, you have to have some soup with us." Well, soup turned into a gourmet feast! Those people are so sweet. John is the high Priest's leader now, and he and your Dad get together trying to solve all the ward's home teaching problems. They keep asking me how they can send you Books of Mormon and how they can help you, and you never answer my letters about it, and they are feeling ignored and they are very sincere and WILL YOU PLEASE TELL US HOW THEY CAN PROVIDE YOU WITH BOOKS OF MORMON? Mom says you never said anything about getting the ones they sent. Did you get them? (Mom, Daniel called on Christmas Day, and we talked an hour and fifteen minutes! He DID get them. Thanks.)

Dan got one of those new bread-maker machines. He decided since his wife doesn't bake bread any more, he'd make it himself. But he took it back when he tried the whole-wheat recipe and it turned out like lead. I suppose I ought to make the poor guy some bread.

Fran and Dave Price called yesterday, inviting us to their home for dinner on the 28th and also inviting us to come over again and get pine boughs from their five acres of trees. They are such good people--about my favorite in the ward. I know, you're not supposed to have favorites.

I think the most fun I had shopping this year was for my Wood nieces and nephews. I can't possibly buy for all my nieces and nephews, but I decided since they are nearby, I can have the fun of doing some Christmas shopping for children. I bought them games and the most wonderful books with tapes they can read-along with, like you kids had when you were little. I got tapes telling the story of the nutcracker

ballet for the girls (Rose Ellen and Sarah love to don ballet dress and dance for me) and other Christmas delights and tales, with music. We sent them to the temple with friends, and some temple workers who live near Virginia dropped them by, since we're not going to make it there for Christmas. We also took treats over to our visit teaching families, and Dad has worked up a little Christmas message to put in Books of Mormon, and we are wrapping them for the local Elders to distribute as gifts in our neighborhood.

The last time we went to the temple, Bro. Gordon Bartholomew, a temple worker, invited us to come to his home and meet his wife after a session. We had a great visit and looked at some of his genealogy. He is a convert Bartholomew and does not connect with Dan directly, as far as we know. However, the next day was Dan's birthday and we spent the day at the Library of Congress. Dan found genealogy on Gordon's line and was able to drop off three additional generations of information for him (at the temple on our way home). I was trying to find the missing link on the Simmons and Richardson lines--this was going to be my big gift to the family for Christmas. Dan was in D.C. for a self-employment seminar sponsored by AT&T, so I got to spend a day in Frederick MD and a day at the Lib. of Cong., and found some interesting information, but not my big break-through.

This Bro. Bartholomew was the inspired man who invited Dan and me to be the altar couple at the first session Dan and I attended after two years of separation. We had just started getting counseling together and this was really our first date in all that time. Things were still very rocky, and I had not even been certain I wanted to accept Dan's invitation to go to the temple. When Bro. Bartholomew asked us to be the couple at the altar, I told him I was not sure we were worthy to represent Adam and Eve. I told him what had happened and told him it was still a time of decision for us, and I was not even sure we would get back together. Well, he paused for a while and said, "I still feel very strongly impressed that you two should be the altar couple. Please do it for me." Well, kneeling there at the altar, a feeling came over me which can only be comprehended by people who have felt the Spirit that strongly. I wept through the entire ceremony. I felt the Spirit was telling me not to be afraid that this was right and good and everything would be blessed by the Lord. Everything in my head said it was impossible for us to live happily together, but the Spirit and my heart were saying something different. What a mess I would be in today if I had not felt and acted on that Spirit.

Of course Bro. Bartholomew got me in all kinds of trouble. Look what just happened. Dad comes down in his stocking feet and says, "Wow! Look at the exciting mail we got!" I race to the table to see it empty and realize he thinks I'm going to go all the way out in the dreary cold to get it! Well, I get it (only because I think there might be a letter from you) and leave him the junk to read while I lock myself in the bathroom to open the Christmas cards; so he stands outside the door, threatening to use the emergency bathroom key and makes all these droll, threatening noises. Ah, the joys of married life! Christmas cards are wonderful. Our bulletin board is already covered with cards, photos, and letters from friends and loved ones.

Dan just came down with news about a job inquiry from Bell Labs at Holmdel. They have a job for next year which will involve temporary assignments for up to a year in Columbus Ohio and in Massachusetts. The ghosts are working. Nice places for genealogy research. Dan is not so thrilled about all the travel which would be involved. At any rate, don't worry about us. Something good has to happen with all this phone ringing constantly. I just don't want to move. I would have to clean

To Daniel, December 19, 1990

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the basement.

'Guess I'll go see what is in the newspaper this week. I also have to make a long drive to pick up some ink for our printer or you'll never get this letter. Love, MOM (That's why this is so delayed--finally got some ink.)

Well, here it is! A big, feature article. I thought the photographer was just going to take the tree, so I didn't get my hair done or anything--I think I look just awful! He said it was the policy of their newspaper not to use photos unless they featured local people. As usual, I look just sick in the photo--I wish one of you children had been home to be in it, instead. Oh, well.

I think she wrote it well, in an attention-getting manner. She took a few liberties with some of the quotes and histories, but I learned long ago, that is to be expected in dealing with reporters. And then, I was so tired when she came over, who knows if I was talking sense. At any rate, I hope it doesn't make it look like all Mormons are alcoholics and polygamists. My goal was to get people interested in doing genealogy and to get them out to our Family History Center. I guess if just one person gets involved for the first time, it will be worth it. Actually, Sandy Stewart, who wrote the article, says she is going to call me after the holidays to help her do some of her research.

I am thinking of going over to the newspaper and seeing if they need a reporter. I think it would be interesting to meet different people, and I think I could write an article like this. Of course there are always those deadlines to meet. It would be as bad as those years in Church public relations.

'Bye for now. Have a very merry Christmas, Daniel. Take a surprise to someone who doesn't expect it. That always brings some extra cheer. We love you with all our hearts and pray for you constantly.

Love, Mom. P.S. The phone call was wonderful. You sound terrific. 'Hope the amoeba is gone when you get this. P.S.S. It has been great having Laura home. Her church friends wanted to hold a surprise party for her here (the younger ones), but we talked them out of it, since their parents would have to drive up from Hillsboro and Somerville, and many of them had to be at the Church with us at 8 a.m. the next morning for choir practice. So we thought we'd get some sleep. Well, who shows up but all her Basking Ridge friends for a party. When they told me they were coming that afternoon, I quickly made a pistachio-pudding-Bundt cake (colored Christmas green), sprinkled it with confectioner's sugar, and decorated it with real holly leaves and marachino cherries (for berries). It was so pretty, and did not taste bad topped with vanilla ice-cream and hot-fudge topping. Quite a hit with the group (I know you are always very anxious to hear all these details about good food! Smile). About 11 p.m. they left to go visit another friend, and Laura came in about 2 a.m. That is about the schedule she has kept all week. Maybe we can bribe her to stay in summer school, so we can catch up on our sleep by next Christmas!

Tracy Allen flew in tonight (said the weather and flight were scary), and so all the gang came over for another gab-fest. Laura was at the game watching James play, so while we waited, I showed them your photos from Guatemala. They were very impressed by your roaches and haircut, Daniel. Anyway, the photos brought forth a lot of questions about missions and missionaries, and I tried not to over-answer. It's always hard around Laura's friends--they are such a great group. Tracy said she met a guy at college who was working two jobs to get ready for a mission. You Elders are WONDERFUL! We love your letters. And YOU!

*Love,  
Sherene  
P.S. Laura loved your Christmas party (hayride, too!)*



Separate letter in same envelope as above:

Dear Mom and Dad. MERRY CHRISTMAS! HAPPY NEW YEAR! I will call you guys Christmas Day to say "hello" and everything personally. The only thing I can honestly say that I'll regret about that call is that AT&T will make money! (Smiley Face) (AT&T just forced every man in Dan's division over age 45 into early retirement--Dan just barely "qualified," and is not too happy about this response to 21 years of service.)

(By the way, Daniel did call on Christmas day, and we talked about an hour and fifteen minutes. It was terrific. He sounded wonderful. He also talked twice as fast as he ever talked before, which is phenomenally FAST! What really astonished us was hearing him make side comments in Spanish to his companion. Unbelievable! His Spanish sounded plenty fluent to me [not that I would know, really]. He said he had been suffering from the amoeba again for a couple of weeks, but he was taking medicine and thought it was getting better and that he was generally in good health--still sleeping at the Church. Sounded extremely happy in the work, though a bit frustrated at trying to be a missionary and branch president at the same time and a little disappointed that more of the Saints did not keep their covenants and promises. He expressed love and appreciation to all the family. We were especially touched by the genuine interest he showed in Laura's life and in asking her questions and responding with real caring. It was such a shot in the arm to hear from him--what a GREAT Christmas gift!)

On with his letter: Speaking of money--thank you for the extra \$100. I'm not quite sure what to do with it. It's a moral problem because I can't change it myself legally. In the future, if you want to send extra, please send it through the bank.

The last time I received a check, I cashed it on the street, but I felt quite badly and promised myself not to do it again. I am not low on funds, and I'm going to make myself a monthly budget and live by it. If I lack money or I'm low on funds, I'll warn you guys, but I do feel that it's important here to learn to spend wisely and less than I earn (or receive). (Here I must say that he has done very well. He has not once asked us for additional funds!)

I really appreciate it. I'm going to give it to the office elders to put in my account. It will be put to good use and all. Right now I'm more worried about how I will survive after my mission. (Actually, we sent him the check because we thought he might need money to put up a Christmas tree and hold a branch Christmas party and give little gifts to the member children and whatever for the holiday--but he did not want to set that precedent, which makes sense. We found a Guatemalan family which delivered some packages to him before Christmas--which got through.)

I can hardly wait to talk to you guys. I love you very much. The mission is the best thing I can be involved in. Thanks for the pictures. I really enjoy them. I love you guys!

Elder Bartholomew