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Dear Family,

This will be a short letter because this has been a lousy month. Why dwell on all the lousiness! (Insert: I said that?)

First, we had to put Teddy to sleep. He had a form of dog-lupus. He was so sweet and patient through it all, but we knew he was suffering. We had him on steroids and antibiotics, but it never did go into remission. When the sores on his nose and around his eyes started bleeding, we knew it was just a matter of time until we would have to ease his suffering. We just waited until the holidays were over.

He had been ill enough that even Laura suggested it was time--much to my relief--I feared being the "Mean Wicked Witch of the East." So, I arranged to pay the road construction crew \$20 more to dig an even deeper hole (they had already graciously dug a hole for our live Christmas Tree), made the appointment with the vet, arranged for Daniel, Steve Allen, and Brian and James Wood to be our burial crew, and determined that it was against the code to bury dogs on your own property (but that most dog owners did it, anyway, and it had never been challenged). I had carried this process to each member of the family to make sure there were no last minute astonishments and thought I had myself quite well fortified, emotionally, for this ordeal.

The day before, the construction crew (bless their hearts) came and with those incredible huge steel maws, carved out a grave to match one ever dug for any human. Teddy is a pretty big dog and with great solemnity and dignity, these dear Italian workers dug a perfect rectangle through almost solid shale-- as neat and precise an operation as you could ever hope to see. Then, refusing compensation (which I finally got them to take, assuring them this was just a "tip," knowing the job was worth much more), they expressed their sorrow about our dog. Such good people.

I might have anticipated what happened next. Laura, though having mourned the inevitable for an entire week, announced to me she was sure his nose looked better. Dan concurred that Teddy had seemed more perky than he would have expected on the walk around the block. Daniel had his typhoid shot that morning and just did not feel up to doing a burial. In spite of all my precautions, I was being nominated "the WMW of the E" if I went ahead with this!

I am getting smarter in my old age, though. I did not argue. I simply stated a few facts. I told Dan I was perfectly willing to call it off, but he should know the road construction crew had offered to come back and put the dirt back if it was too heavy for us; if we delayed, they would move on down the road and would no longer be available. It seemed fair, therefore, since he wanted to put it off now, that he should be in charge of the next burial arrangements.

I told Laura I had determined that the vet would handle burial arrangements for \$60 (and she could well imagine what those arrangements might be). However, since I had already paid a crew

for the same job and it was time to plant the Christmas tree, I trusted she would be willing to handle this out of her own earnings. (This approach I learned from the Church which does not tell members they have to simplify their programs--just tells them they'll have no money for it).

Daniel was charged to call his friends and tell them they were no longer hired. Then I went in my room and cried (I'm not sure from frustration or relief that I did not have to go through with this, yet).

The next morning Laura told me she had taken a good look at Teddy, and he was actually worse and we probably shouldn't let him suffer more, after all. By then Dan had gone to work, so I called him up to make sure he was not going to come home and think me a murderer.

We gave Teddy two knockout pills two hours before the appointment, but later I read the label and realized it was supposed to be three hours, so we had to wait an extra hour for it to take hold. It was just as good. Our burial crew all showed up an hour late--they were all attached to Teddy, too--not exactly the kind of thing you want to be on time to. During all this time, Teddy got so many hugs and treats, he must have known something weird was going on.

He is so big, we put him in the car when he could still jump into the back and took him a little early while he could still walk. He did not get sleepy enough for some time (he is terrified of vets and even tries to bite them when he's "out.") So he got another pill and another wait.

I think the hardest part for me was signing the "euthanasia" statement--which I should have anticipated, but did not. With all my right-to-life background, that "euthanasia" word carries a lot of negative connotations for me. After, all, "Teddy-Bear" was more human than anybody else in our family. Was it possible, that I was doing something eternally evil in not letting nature take its course?

I decided the God I worship would not want Teddy to suffer. I suppose I would still be afraid to pass laws legalizing euthanasia in humans for fear excesses initiated by sick minds would lead to killing off political undesirables or whatever. But I am becoming a little bit more liberal in my old age. If somebody wants to slip me an injection against the law when I am suffering from cancer, please do it in a way where you don't get caught. That's all. I suppose I'll just refuse to stay in the hospital and spare you the decision like Grandpa Langford did when he had stomach cancer at about age 95. But why should anyone have to suffer like that when we wouldn't do it to our dog!

We talked while waiting at the vet's about our LDS belief that all things were first created spiritually and that dogs, too, have spirit bodies and a spirit world and will be resurrected. Dr. Levy, a beautiful, blond, sensitive woman, got tears in her eyes and left the room when she heard that, saying she wished she could

believe it.

At first Laura did not want to be there, but when it came right down to it, she did not want to desert her dog in death. She held him in her arms while the fatal injection was made. Tears were streaming down her face, and Teddy looked at her, realized, I'm sure, what she was feeling, and started to cry, too. I had never, ever seen him cry. I didn't even know he could. He just looked at Laura with all this love and tears rolling over his sore nose. I think he knew he was going to die--but I had the distinct impression he was crying for Laura, not himself. It all took about 30 seconds and was so simple. One second he breathed, and the next, did not. He just made a little rumbling sound in his throat after his last breath. Not even a twitch before he was gone as if to peaceful sleep. I would like to go that easily. But it is also a little frightening to realize how fragile the line between life and death can be.

Afterwards, I just couldn't believe he was dead. I had myself braced for a struggle of some sort. "Are you sure he's gone?" we said. "Absolutely." They wrapped him in the old blanket we had him on, put him in a large black garbage bag and loaded him in the back of the car.

When we got home, Daniel was waiting. He eased Teddy's body out of the bag, letting it down into the deep grave, and then jumped down to stroke him, gently tuck the blanket around him, and come to grips with reality. Laura said she had all she could take and she really couldn't handle burying him, too, so she went into the house. Daniel and I had him just about buried before the rest of the crew showed up. Dan was still at work. I did not want him to ruin his back again trying to help.

We put about a foot of dirt down and then, with the help of the others, dragged the Blue Spruce from the deck around to the hole and put a living memorial on top of Teddy. Laura kind of liked the idea that with a beautiful tree growing there, his grave was not likely to be disturbed. Also nearby is the rose garden Dan planted for me as a Mother's Day, birthday, and anniversary present. A lovely setting for a dog who taught us all a lot about love and devotion and who filled a huge emotional gap for each of us when needed.

We will miss him and have each mourned him more than we might have anticipated. For someone who never wanted to have a dog and expressed quite unpleasant attitudes about them before finally succumbing to Laura's pleas, I owe Teddy a bit of an obituary.

He was certainly the most civilized member of our family. Certainly more able to express unconditional love and enduring loyalty than any person I have known. He was willing to risk life and soul to protect our family. He barked every time a stranger approached our house, even when it became apparent every little sound sent excruciating pain down his throat. He was never demanding. Never begged for food--much too dignified for that. Just knocked himself out expressing appreciation when it did come. He took such delight in the smallest attentions and accepted life's

hardships without complaint. I am thinking of when he was assigned to the garage when before he had enjoyed full range of the house. I became concerned about the Lyme disease scare and all the ticks we found on Teddy after each walk. When I found one in Laura's bedroom, I decided he had to stay outside. He was bewildered and unhappy, but still loving and trusting. Oh, that I could always be that way with God!

He had an inborn courtesy born of love and respect. No matter how hungry he was, He would thank me with grateful eyes and watch until I left the room before he would begin eating. He was only about 9 years old-- a beautiful, golden, long-haired Chinese Chow, with a black tongue and purple pedigree. We got him to ease Laura's sadness that we could not have a younger brother or sister and bought him when he was 3 yrs. old from a family that was moving. I hope we are good enough to go where he is.

While the boys finished planting the tree (we had put it in too soon and the construction crew had to lift it up and replant it), I dashed over to Marolyn Moen's to visit teach. The women here like group visit-teaching. I prefer the one-on-one approach because we chit-chat a lot as a group, but don't get very nitty-gritty. But I've been outvoted, at least in Basking Ridge, and there was a good group there: my companion, Laura Lee Edwards (a professional counsellor), Nancy Ferderber, Marolyn, and Onalee Wood. Laura Lee and I also v.t. Cindy Young separately and Winnie Stobaeus, which is a laugh, as she has been taking care of me ever since we moved here (she's now in Florida). Also, Dan home teaches a single sister whose parents don't allow Church visits, so she comes here and I am his "home teach" companion for her.

At this group session, I was supposed to be giving the lesson, but they all knew what was scheduled that day, and I found they got quite personalizing, after all. They were very sensitive and supportive and able to weep with me. Made me feel ashamed for how inept I was when we lived in New York and our neighbor's dog died. I couldn't understand why they were so upset. I mused to Dan, "You'd think their dog was part of the family!" So much for ignorance.

It was good that I could take Laura the next day (Jan. 19) to Scarsdale to meet her friends and ride to the "Frost Valley" regional youth festival. James Wood joined them later (Laura introduced him to Roslyn Lehnardt and now I sometimes get to car pool on all this New York transitting). Roslyn stays at our home when she comes here. While there, Seila Lehnardt and Richard Hedberg took me on a tour of the new Scarsdale chapel. Wow! Really amazing what is going on.

I was pleased to be consulted about some of their interior decorating decisions. They were considering painting the chapel walls a light shade of mauve to go with the deep wine seats. I told them it might save on heating bills, but to stick with the desert-sand shades and keep everything very neutral. Somebody painted the hall walls a bright turquoise--like an elementary school in the '60s. Seila, still Relief Society president, commented that the men did not bother to ask the Relief Society on

that one. But, in general, they have done amazing things with the space available and in spite of much community opposition.

We contributed 2% of our income to the building fund for that chapel for years and then our Westchester Ward savings were sent to Salt Lake when things got centralized. So, we still feel that's our building and want to attend the dedication.

Laura had a great time at "Frost Valley" and said James was very solicitous about her feelings about Teddy, since he fears losing his cat. James is a year younger than she, but this has made little difference in their friendship. Daniel drove up Sunday to attend Church in Yorktown and give them a ride back, and we found out just after he left that due to an ice storm, church there had been cancelled and parents were quite concerned about the youth returning from "Frost Valley." I know I got a few more gray hairs thinking of Daniel on those winding roads covered with black ice. He said it was pretty hairy driving all the way to Yorktown for no meeting, but traced his way back to Scarsdale and waited it out at Inouyes until Laura and James came back. It was good to see them home safe!

Then, I had to take down the Christmas decorations. I had intended to leave them up a while, but the pine needles were starting to drop (and drop, and drop, and drop), and besides the floor people were coming, so I had to get it away. But you know how that is, after the colorful holidays. Everything looks so EMPTY. And BORING.

Before Daniel's leaving, our builder finally decided to comply with the arbitration (by the way, she did come down in our favor on fixing the floors). Harvco had some new homes and this floor company wanted the jobs. Harvco told them they could not have the contract 'til they made us happy. They not only fixed the sloping floor and sanded smooth the gouges, but sanded all the downstairs floors, including the laundry room, and coated them twice.

It was a blessing that Daniel and Brian were still around to help move the furniture and rugs and clear out the floor level of all the closets and cupboards. Daniel was a great help, hauling my rug to the cleaners and moving all that stuff. He ran a lot of errands that week; with his shots, dental work (2 visits), and everything else, it was the kind of last week it's easy to leave!

It was pretty crazy, living on fast food and climbing into our bedrooms by ladder, nights, but the floor situation helped get the shopping done. Every time Daniel said, "I can't stand this shopping, let's go home," I just reminded him that the floors weren't dry yet and how the fumes gave us headaches.

Dan lucked out on the second floor-coating by getting sent to Wash. D.C. by AT&T for a two-day computer conference. He took Virginia and Barry to dinner (or I should say, they took him in their new van) and stayed at the hotel, for a change, hoping to give them a rest from hosting relatives. I noticed, though, that he called me from their home, anyway--who can resist stopping by to see those kids!

While he was gone, we had some heavy fog and Laura tried taking a shortcut, back road, couldn't see where she was going, and rammed into a stone curb, totalling my Nissan's new tire and sending the hubcap where we never found it. So, we called the Woods and Brian came on the last evening before leaving for his mission to help Laura change the tire. Daniel walked over there and helped. I hope all problems like that are over for two years.

So far, Laura's driving has cost over \$500, not counting raised insurance. I got news last week that Allstate had decided to drop us because "the claim record for operators in your household represents unfavorable driving experience."

I can handle sending off a missionary, putting a dog to sleep, and having my home turned upside down all in one week, but getting that letter from the insurance company sent me into a royal funk. That--and finally getting around to looking at all the bills that piled up recently. \$650 just for Daniel's wisdom teeth!

I finally quit stewing and called my agent and learned that for some reason the accident with Mom and Dad last year when someone threw a big rock at our windshield (coming back from the genealogy trip) got counted as two accidents. Also, they did not realize that when I took the car in (when someone smashed our car in the parking lot while we were taking Andy on rides at Great Adventures), the adjuster chalked up the repairs as 3 separate accidents (just because I got them to include shopping cart dents on the other side and scrapes to the glass and the side of the car when our windshield wiper broke).

The only accident which was our fault (which we claimed) was one where I hit the car ahead of me while dozing in stop-go-traffic. They are at least "reconsidering" keeping us on at our paltry \$1,000 a year fee (that's with a previous 10-yr. no-accident record, Daniel gone, and Laura's "good student" rating)!

Friday, January 26, we went to a fireside at Morrystown Stake House on "Israel's Destiny" by Daniel Rona. He is the Jewish convert who lives near Jerusalem and who conducted the tour Dan and I took with Morrystown Ward to Egypt and the Holy Land. It was very engrossing (for everyone but Laura), and afterwards Pres. Wood, with the aid of Dan and Bro. Almon Clegg, gave Daniel a beautiful setting apart for his mission, promising him the "gift of tongues," among other blessings.

The next morning Dan also gave Daniel the blessing of a tender father--I wish I had a photo of the look on Dan's face and the tears in his eyes at the conclusion of that blessing. I hope, Daniel, you will never forget how much your father loves you.

For family home evening, Dan, Laura and I put our heads together to reconstruct those two blessings as much as possible, and I typed them up and mailed them to Daniel at the Mission Training Center in Provo and kept a copy for our "Sacred Documents" file.

Saturday, Jan. 27, we put Daniel on the plane, grateful that

his blessings had proffered both good health and safety while on his mission. Laura thought I waded too long after the plane--but then she's never been a mother.

Getting Daniel to shop for the last minute details and organize his affairs, seeing his last semester's grades (rhymes with tirades), paying Bishop (Dr.) Frazee \$425 to fill the cavities he developed last year and \$300 in extra phone bills Daniel chalked up after we told him to stop making those calls, and putting up with his "cutting of the strings" bad temper that last week, also made parting a bit easier for us both, I guess.

I was not in the best mood that week, either. I'm sure we both felt like schizos--glad and not glad to say "goodbye." I felt a little guilty and called Daniel in Provo (he "stayed" at Mom and Dad Hall's the few days before going into the MTC--but they said he spent most of his time with friends at the dorms) to apologize that his last week was not more positive, and we agreed that we were both pretty stressed out. It was good to have the chance again to tell him how much I loved him and what a joy it is to us that he made this decision to serve the Lord.

I saw Onalee Wood at a going-away party for a single sister who is moving and asked her if she had recovered from Brian's leaving. "Are you kidding?" she said. "I'm enjoying the peace!" That's what I love about Onalalee. No pretenses. Brian was so sweet helping me that last week (we did pay him \$10 an hr.), I guess he had to vent his frustrations somewhere.

The Lord knows what He's doing to give sons and mothers a break at age 19--especially this mother--I know I get much too involved in my son's life. Daniel, I do miss you. Almost as much as Teddy--and that's a lot! (Smile!)

We hear from both sets of grandparents that all four and also Tracy, Betsy, Robert, Mary, and Zina came to say "Goodbye" to Daniel at the MTC. Thanks, all of you, for your loving and caring and for filling in for us. Mom B. wrote a nice letter telling about the service which we will keep for Daniel's mission record here.

Our house came together, pretty much. The furniture is all back, and I've even cleaned out most of the drawers and cupboards (had to empty most of the cabinets before moving). Everything is just like I wanted it to be the whole time I was raising children. Very shiny, very clean, very organized, and very quiet. I hate it!

Just to make January truly complete, Dan came home last week with a new job. His boss called him in and said they were forced to cut the division from 43 to 28 employees because of recent budget changes. He is one of those to stay with the Company (sometimes it pays not to be too ambitious and command too high a salary--most of the higher levels are now OUT!)

Dan's new job is to continue to stay abreast of computer technology and innovation both at AT&T and with the competition. Instead of staff technical support, he will now do it in the field

(i.e., the entire metropolitan area). This will mean a lot of travel (which he does not enjoy) and which bugs me (I knew I thanked the Lord too often for a warm bed, again). This is all in connection with the new AT&T contract with the FAA (Dan helped put together that bid). So, next week he will spend another four days (Tues-Fri) in Washington, D.C., this time, Barry and Virginia, staying in the Embassy Suites Hotel (someplace near where he was last time). From what we've been reading about Gov. Barry, Washington hotels can be interesting places.

As for me, I signed up for the "Piglet" program at Weichert (appropriate, since I gained 5 pounds over the holidays), and came home all fired up about making big money and starting intensive work in real estate (as assigned in this course). If you are a good piglet, you might qualify to join their "Sweathog" program and get training for those who really know how to throw their weight around!

That night Dan came home with his job change, so I dropped out of the program. This little piggy cried, "whoa, whoa, whoa," all the way home. I think I shall wait to see what this is going to mean in terms of Dan's locating. He is going to try commuting a while to see if it is bearable. I knew, now that we are almost through calling our builder, something had to happen.

The one bright light on the scene was Laura's grades. Five A's and 2 B's this term--with an intensive load, too! The real benefit is seeing how this achievement has made her feel about herself. Dan and I went to the honors assembly at Ridge last week where she was honored as one of the school's top two Political Science students (her prize was a book by a liberal NY Times editor which left Dan gagging and us both wondering if this was her teacher's way of spooking parents).

In fairness to Daniel, I should say for the record, that two of his grades were super--he got B's from Maren Mouritsen's Honors Book of Mormon class and also from Grigg's New Testament. Too bad they were only 2 credit courses. But I would be proud to get those grades from those teachers--and I'm sure he learned a lot which will aid him on his mission. The other grades were not below C--so it is slightly possible things could have been worse!

By the way, Daniel, Dillon Inouye called the other day and said he does not think you will have a hard time getting back in. I told him what you thought about the Symposium course, and he said he and Terry Warner are in a position to restructure it and make it better--but also told me he kept in touch with the teachers and it was obvious to them you were not doing the reading. Dillon says he knows you will do terrific work when you get back. 'Said there is something very pure about you and you remind him of Tracy Jr. He thinks that when you decide you're ready, the sky is the limit scholastically. And of course you SHALL be ready when you come back, because if your grades don't go up, you SHALL also be paying your own way (called REAL incentive and TOUGH mother love).

Fri. night we took two pizzas over to Kamal and Linda Abashamas home and had a nice visit with them and their family.

He was a top exec. with a dairy firm and lost his job about six months ago when he refused to succumb to pressure to authorize some dubious programs which would cut costs on dairy products, but which he felt would jeopardize public health.

He is a Ph.D. from Egypt who joined the Church here and has never dared tell his Moslem parents what he did (they would consider him buried). They have an absolutely elegant home, but can't sell it and can't meet the payments. He has applied everywhere and cannot find someone willing to pay even near his past salary. The test of Job. These things are really hard, but his wife is a real trooper and has a wonderful attitude. She says when she prays, she knows the Lord is there, so why should she be concerned? She said she does get scared sometimes, but then she remembers that she is married to an honest man and knows how fortunate she truly is.

They have a home movie screen which is the largest I've seen with that clear a picture. It was like being at a theater. He showed a video about Egypt which brought back great memories and introduced us to a lot of sights we missed in the short time we were there.

Saturday morning we went to the bishop's storehouse and filled orders for the different wards. They have a number of impressive new products this year. It was exciting to me to fill orders with everything from roast beef to kitchen brooms. We got a real system going with the three of us and got a lot done. I think I'll go on Church welfare. They have Idaho red beans which I can't get here.

It made us feel wonderful to see what the Church does for its people. There was nothing extravagant, but I could live on that diet pleasantly, I think. I wish the whole world could see this inspired, effective program in action. For a Church which has taken a lot of heat for not giving women the Priesthood, more should acknowledge that it at least FEEDS them! And does so in a manner which helps them retain their dignity and respect, along with giving us each the security that when bad times come, our children will not go hungry nor cold. All without the bureaucracy and red tape people get with the federal government.

I tore up a letter I wrote last week to Connie Frazee, who left the Church last year over the women/Priesthood issue. I started arguing with her and decided to keep my mouth shut and just send her the article about Van Gogh's addiction to absinthe in which she had expressed an interest (she is a real "art" buff).

By now I wonder if she has discovered what an honor it is to clean wine from all the sacrament cups and do twice the menial work at her new protestant church where women have the "priesthood," but most of the men have dropped out because they feel displaced.

While at the storehouse, an old friend showed up from Morristown Ward. He has nine children, including a new baby, and we helped him fill his order, not letting on that we knew it was for him. We heard he, too, has been out of work for nearly a year--a highly educated finance entrepreneur who tried real estate

speculation and lost out when the stock and home market crashed. Makes you grateful to have a job and food on your table. Laura was wondering because she said his daughter told her that he refuses to take a job unless it's exactly what makes him happiest or gives him just the salary he requires.

'Made us grateful for Dan who has put up with a couple of assignments with AT&T he really did not enjoy. But he has never missed a pay check and has generally seemed to enjoy his work. Knock on wood. We had quite a talk on the way home about how we would react if we found ourselves taking welfare and the attitude we should have about judging others in this situation.

Well, goodbye for now. I am home with intestinal flu while Dan and Laura are at Church. I was not feeling well, anyway, and I think working in the chilled storehouse didn't help my recovery. It is good and rainy and dreary outside. Just like me!

We got a letter from the Ungers, beloved family Dan knew on his mission in Germany. She suffers much from bad health and is confined to bed. Sister Unger sent us a bookmark with the saying, "LEIDEN IS NIE SINNLOS - wenn du es mit einem "Ja-Vater" erleidest, wirkt Gott dadurch Wunderbares, eine Erneuerung deiner selbst und deiner Umgebung."

Roughly translated: "Suffering is never without meaning. When you endure it with a 'Thy Will be Done' attitude, God will thereby work a marvelous renewing of both your self and your environment." Makes me feel silly for moaning about my little trials.

The other golden side of trial is that we are then in a position to genuinely comfort and help others. Last week I took a sister in our ward to the branch library to help her get started on her genealogy. She told me of great sorrow in her marriage. As she described her frustrations, her feelings, what her husband says and does and his and her reactions, I thought I heard myself talking just four years ago.

When I told her Dan and I were separated two years before moving to North Branch Ward, she was really shocked! "Why you look so happy--you're one of the couples who makes me want to divorce my husband!" I did not try to tell her what to do, but I could tell her that she did not need to look to her husband for happiness, nor did she need to feel guilty doing things she enjoys (like genealogy and going soon the first time to the temple--he is not a member and is very bitter about the Church, but agreed to give his permission there--she has waited years, hoping he would come with her).

I could also assure her that miracles still happen, in less time than we might think--especially within ourselves, through the power of Christ. It felt great to see she was comforted. I know I could never have helped her if she had not known I have stood in her moccasins (she does have a real squaw in her ancestry!).

Goodbye for real!

Sherlene
(Remember how Dan & Laura, too.)

P.S. HAPPY VALENTINE!