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Dear Family,

Let's call this early for the month of September. It feels good to be writing you again. As you know, this has been some year for me, and I haven't written many letters. But I can see that things are coming together, and I'll be doing better in the future.

First, I just want each of you to know how much your love, prayers, and faith have meant to me over this past year and always. I have talked with some divorcees who said one of the most painful parts of the divorce was all the opposition from family members. I can't thank you enough for all the understanding and support you've given both Dan and me, as well as the children, through all of this. I could not have been more blessed in terms of the same kind of attitude from ward members, our bishopric, and even our neighbors, here. People in this world are truly wonderful. With only a couple of strange exceptions, the people in my life have been more sensitive, open, and accepting than I think I could have been. I feel truly blessed.

Secondly, I just want to give you a sort of status report. Since July 1, the terms of the divorce have taken effect, even though they are not legally written up yet. After Dan and I spent about \$8,000 on attorneys who did not accomplish very much, Dan finally asked Bishop Garff to arbitrate our case. He agreed to do so, only because he knew both attorneys in the situation and both of us so well (we've been in this ward 11 years now). Dan's attorney is LDS, and I think my attorney was a little concerned that it might turn into a kangaroo court-- but I think he feels the outcome was fair enough. It seemed like an endless process, but I guess it wasn't so bad as divorces go. Bishop Garff collected all the papers he could and after much consulting with our former marriage counsellors and both attorneys, held a court session right there in the Church. We had a court recorder there, and Dan and I both agreed under oath to abide with the bishop's decision, no matter what--with no further contention, arbitration, nor court action. Each of our attorneys presented our cases, we each got to speak, and then each attorney got to cross examine.

We agreed ahead of time that the issues brought forth would deal only with the economic settlement. We decided not to make the issues of our divorce a matter of court record. I think, in general, the whole session was quite pleasant, as divorces go. My attorney was amazed at how relatively loving and gracious we each were regarding the other and how everything opened with a prayer and closed with a prayer, and how wise and intelligent Bishop Garff was as arbitrator. It was quite traumatic, but I did leave the building with a burning feeling inside, which I found very comforting. The court recorder was so impressed with the entire proceeding, she started asking me all these questions afterwards about the Church, and I got so involved answering them, I forgot my attorney was standing there ticking off the minutes at \$125 an hour. Oh, well. I also gave him a tour of the Church and answered a few of his questions, and that also cost me a bundle.

All I asked for in terms of financial settlement, was the house. Period. I didn't want the tug of war over alimony the rest of my life, and I felt this was a way to avoid a lot of future tangle and provide a way for Dan, on his good salary, to get a home of his own soon enough. It had been difficult to get a true picture of our finances, and I did leave the door open for some child support, if finances warranted it, after the value of the house was taken into consideration.

The final decision came an agonizing some time later, after Bishop Garff took off a couple of days for analysis of the records and fasting and prayer. I wouldn't want to go through waiting outside the bishop's door for that verdict another time. That same week I had gone in for a physical exam and they found a breast lump and the tests taken did not look good. I had gone into surgery, not knowing what they would find (fortunately, it was a large cyst, which was drained, but they said I still have serious fibrous-cystic disease and will have to watch carefully). But having gone through that, it still was nothing like the terror

*Have we had this before?
Even Shirlene couldn't
remember.*