

May 22, 1977

Dear Dad, Mom, Sherlene, Dan, David, Karen, Liz, Marty, Virginia, Barry, Charlotte, _____, Nancy, and Doug, and assorted offspring. Now, by process of elimination, you know who this is from. Enjoyed all your letters--Sherlene, I even read all of yours. (Betsy refuses to abstract them for me any more).

Betsy and Buster are doing just fine, although I wish the little twirp would get night and day straightened out. Betsy's going to start the "cold turkey" treatment tonight--letting him cry if he wants to be fed sooner than four hours after the last feeding. She says he's the smartest one so far at learning how to get Mother to hold him. He really is cute, though. Looks more grownup at one week than any of our kids have--he never was a shrivelled up red prune. He's got long fingers and feet and prehensile toes, and a distinctive nose, which I can't quite describe, but which I hope doesn't grow in proportion with the rest of his face. For all his nocturnal activities, though, he sure is a calm baby. When he's asleep, nothing bothers him, and he seems to have come well equipped to weather the attentions of his siblings. We've put down "Richard Alexander Hall" on the birth certificate, so I guess the poor kid is stuck with it, unless I change my mind when I bless him and call him something else. Betsy's calling him "Alec" and "Alex", and I'm calling him Richard. (Both of us have pioneerera Alexanders, but we haven't tied them together). He arrived Saturday, May 14, at Redwood City, San Mateo Co., Ca. (Kaiser Foundation Hospital).

I'm enclosing a copy of our group sheet for anyone to copy who's interested. Would appreciate copies of yours someday--maybe you ought to wait until after you're dead, though, so there won't be any more changes to make?

Also, Mother, I like your suggestion of keeping a central repository and have the perfect solution--you just xerox them all! That way the letter doesn't get held up any longer at one of the six homes while it waits for hubby to remember to copy it, and we don't add to the weight of the mailing or get current letters mixed up with old letters, etc. Sure, it makes work and expense for you, but what are mothers for? (Heh, heh).

I think I'm actually getting less static from the ZPG doo-doo-gooders at work, etc., about number six than I did about number five. Number five was shocking, but number six is insane, and they know we're beyond hope. One of the grandmothers in my Hebrew class exclaimed "oh, the pollution", when she heard we were expecting our sixth, but after she saw the kids one day when we took them down the street to the Israel independence day at the Jewish Community Center, she could only exclaim "such beautiful children, you can have all you want" (smug, smug). I brought a big fruit bowl to class after Richard was born and got lots of mazetofs, etc., -- I did the same at work. Cheaper than cigars, and I like the symbolism.

o u h
That was Robert's contribution. Liz and Marty stopped by the evening before I took Betsy to the Hospital and we had a really good time with them. We played a word game, "probe" and yours truly here, put on a real good exhibition of mental telepathy. Liz's word was "ambidextrous", which I guessed when she had only four letters showing-- I think the a, i, e, and o. I also guessed Betsy's word almost out of the clear blue, but drew a clear blank on Marty's "asphyxia"--perhaps the word was a bit stifling. Anyway, the girls,

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at least Liz, got back when we played a game called "scan", which involves spotting arrays of colors, patterns, or shapes to match one which is uncovered. Liz really has a good eye. And it turned out, after she'd cleaned up, that she didn't even realize that there were four colors to match--she'd been going by the inner three.

Betsy had what the O.B. called a "desultory" labor, pushed along by pitocin, and a long, hard session on the delivery table resulting in a final, fairly rapid delivery, but when all the difficulty is past, it really seemed easier than any previous birth--her total labor was only 6 hours. She's recovering rapidly--having her mother (Grace Letitia Rondot Huntington, Tacoma, Wash) here was a big help. I sure wish there was an easier way to have babies--maybe the pain and sorrow of childbirth is somehow crucial to the awakening of a deep and enduring love between mother and child, the pain being swallowed up in the joy of a new life. Sure is a marvellous and thrilling experience, though, to hear that first cry. There were four babies born in the hospital that morning, ours being the last, and the labor rooms all opened onto a central passage leading to the delivery room, so we could hear each one being born. One mother was wheeled down the hallway screaming "I don't want to have a baby" over and over (as though she could do anything about it now!), and as I heard each newborn cry, I had a mental picture of these spirits waiting around for their arrival, maybe kidding each other a bit, wishing each other good luck, and maybe a promise, or a wish, from those entering the world under less favorable circumstances, that the one to be born in the Covenant would bring the gospel to them, . . . then "so long," "see you later", a deep breath, and whoosh! into that body each had been waiting so many thousand years for, to take a first breath, leave every memory behind, and take whatever chances await. Robert Frost, of all people, wrote a beautiful poem about his picture of the pre-existence, called "The Trial by Existence, in "A Boy's Will", from which a few lines follow:

. . . And from a cliff-top is proclaimed/ The gathering of the souls for birth,
The trial by existence named,/ the obscuration upon earth.
And the slant spirits trooping by/ In streams and cross- and counter-streams
Can but give ear to that sweet cry/ For its suggestion of what dreams!

And the more loitering are turned/ To view once more the sacrifice
Of those who for some good discerned/ Will gladly give up paradise.
And a white shimmering concourse rolls/ Toward the throne to witness there
The speeding of devoted souls/ Which God makes his especial care.

And none are taken but who will,/ Having first heard the life read out
That opens earthward, good and ill,/ Beyond the shadow of a doubt; . . .

The tale of earth's unhonored things / Sounds nobler there than 'neath the sun;
And the mind whirls and the heart sings, And a shout greets the daring one.

But always God speaks at the end:/ 'One thought in agony of strife
The bravest would have by for friend,/ The memory that he chose the life;
But the pure fate to which you go/ Admits no memory of choice,
Or the woe were not earthly woe/ To which you give assenting voice.'

And so the choice must be again,/ But the last choice is still the same;
And the awe passes wonder then,/ And a hush falls for all acclaim.
And God has taken a flower of gold/ And broken it, and used therefrom
The mystic link to bind and hold / Spirit to matter till death come.

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(Frost, cont'd)

'Tis of the essence of life here, / Though we choose greatly, still to lack
The lasting memory at all clear, / That life has for us on the wrack (sic)
Nothing but what we somehow chose; / Thus are we wholly stripped of pride
In the pain that has but one close, / Bearing it crushed and mystified.

It's really an incredible piece, no? If you will have it, I think he's come up with the solution to that age-old Mormon Sunday School class "paradox" concerning free agency and God's foreknowledge--the key being that no way can we know what He knows (even the Seers are only permitted to look in the Urim and Thummim where the Lord permits them to), and we aren't even permitted memory of our previous existence and choice in coming here. "Thus we are wholly stripped of pride" (I hope). Anyway, enough philosophy for today.

Sherlene, you mentioned that FHE lesson on forgiveness. We had it a few days ago, too, and since it was Mary's turn to help with the lesson, I told her the story of "Eagle Feather" who lost one of his braves during a buffalo hunt (the man was accidentally shot in the chest with an arrow) and who fell victim to his own ~~xxx~~ determination for revenge. Evidently Mary knew only one meaning of the word chest, for when she refitted it back to me in her own words, she told about the Indian who died of an arrow in his drawers. (Ouch!)

My garden is doing slightly better this year than last. I spread two yards of eau de corral on it and worked it in, and added some magnesium sulphate, and at last the larger seeds (beans, corn, squash, etc.) are able to jack-hammer their way through. Because of our water shortage, I thought I'd save water by planting all my seeds in close proximity in a painstakingly prepared seed bed, for later transplanting in rows, and I covered the seed bed with polyethylene film to hold in water. Unfortunately, it also held in heat, and I killed all but the hardiest seeds, losing about three weeks in the process. My second try is doing better, however, and I've got lots of cute little seedlings for the bugs to eat. (I have three 20 foot squares in the H.P. employee's garden which costs me \$5/ a year for water). Operating under a semi-voluntary conservation scheme, our community has reduced their water usage 50 to 60% from the same time last year -- quite a feat, I think, and a source of some community pride. The Lord has also blessed us with a rainy May (a month which is usually dry), giving us some hope that the drought might end. Still, all this May rain has contributed very little to run-off, being just sucked up by the dry ground like a sponge, and unless the rains return next fall, millions of people will just plain be out of water. Our own household, with eight people, used only 8 of our allotted 10 units last month, and provision is made for larger families with young children to request more, so I don't feel too bad about having a garden. (I'm also not completely disappointed in letting my lawn dry up--I don't have to mow it anymore). The trouble with my farming experience, I've decided, is that I'm too proud to think that there can't be a better way to do anything, and so rather than repeat the "tried and true" procedures, I'm always experimenting. It's a good thing I don't do this for a living.

Work has been mostly downs for the last couple of months;; I've lost my black thumb, and can't seem to grow decent layers any more. The bosses, who were skeptical of my ability to do it in the first thing, are breathing over my shoulder again, and life is pretty miserable. Maybe I should try some manure? On the boss's desk?

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Jerry, my immediate boss, is very understanding and patient, but he's really under a lot of pressure, too, especially because we just wrote a proposal for a government-supported project, emphasizing the excellent results that I had achieved just before the writing, and it looks like we're going to get it. I've come to believe that you should just keep your good results secret, let your bosses have their pleasure in canning your project, and then go off and develop them for yourself. If I'd never had a good growth run, I don't think anybody would have been dissatisfied, because they all have pet expansion-type capital expenditure schemes in mind that they'd rather have me working on. (Relatively speaking, this project has really been run on a shoestring-- I just don't like spending a lot of money, even H.P's.) Enough paranoia for today. If I can't love my boss, at least I should take the attitude suggested by Boyd K. Pakker, . . . "All right, I won't work one more day for the _ _ _ . . . I'll work for the Lord, and do my very best." (A crude paraphrase, but that's essentially what he suggests.) To the extent that I've tried it, it has helped, and magically, it has also helped me work off some of my hidden resentments and have a little more charity for the poor bounders. Obviously, I need a lot more.

x which is pretty damn big!

Despite what I consider to be temporary setbacks at work, however, I think I've been blessed with a pretty happy existence of late. My family is a real joy to me, and we seem to be doing things better, handling conflicts better, repenting faster, showing a little more humor and patience, and rejoicing in the kids' growth, learning, improvement. Tracy and Zina are both avid readers now, and can really read almost anything, being limited only by their speaking vocabulary. *H.T. still has struggles with wanting to boss the sisters around and taking minor setbacks too intensely, but he is so sweet and considerate and helpful with Robert, Susanna, and now Richard, that I know his heart is growing big enough to accept them all. He is so thrilled with a brother, after all his prayers, and I sincerely believe they were answered . . . more than just coincidence. That he wasn't born on his birthday? . . . well, he's philosophical about that-- I think he had such a good time on his birthday this year, and I think he actually has second thoughts about having to share it. "Anyway, he says, I still have the first birthday in the year."

Robert is finally beginning to talk a lot, though a lot of it is still unintelligible to untrained ears. He is really a beautiful boy--such a beautiful child, I hope it doesn't become a hindrance to him. He's coming out of the terrible two's into the thrilling threes, thank goodness. Now Susanna is coming into the two's . . . but girls are easier.

We're so grateful that Dad's health seems to have returned--may it remain, and may you have had all the flu bugs that exist, and become immunized against them all.

Well, I know we have more news, but I'm too tired. So much to do, and so little discipline to do it! I am getting myself a little better organized, doing more of the things I should be doing, but still not enough. I've worked hard with my first priority, my family, with much happiness, but I've got other responsibilities, and I must find a way to work them in. I'm so thankful for the gift of time, for the Lord's patience and goodness in granting me ease, security, luxury, time--but I sense an urgency to make better use of it, a need to prepare for a time when greater demands will be made on all of us, and a need to better organize my household. It's so good to hear what all of you are doing--it's a strength to me to know that my brothers and sisters are finding ways to do what I'm still trying to do.

Love,
Hang in there!
+H *Jan 24* *Paul*