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December 10, 1979

YOU ALL NOTICE THAT I'M ANSWERING IMMEDIATELY!!

Marty, I don't know what we'd do without you in the family. I could hardly get through your daily schedule. I laughed until it actually hurt--but it felt good. I haven't laughed that hard in years (probably since the last time you were around). Dan came home from work at 2 a.m. last night and I thought I was finally going to get some sleep and he started reading your letter and then he starts convulsing over your nonsense. Actually, we should have both been crying. Our charts are still posted, so I guess all faith is not completely lost, but a careful observor would note it hasn't been checked since the first three days it was up. It's really very discouraging. We are so good at setting up all these fantastic goals that on paper look like they'd work so beautifully. And the reality is so miserable. If we ever get anywhere as a family it will be because we started so many times that all those starts added up to something. We'll never make it for finishing well.

I'm with you, Betsy, on praying for the new meeting schedule. With me, it's sort of like contemplating pregnancy. Boyd K. Packer came to Illinois eight years ago and promised us there would be a great streamlining and asked us to not all lose faith if some old and trusted programs went out with it. I'm trying hard not to get my hopes up until it has been verified--and then I'll wait long to make sure it doesn't miscarry. Faith and hope and all that. I am having a hard time coping with my new job as Relief Society Stk. "Social Relations Leader and Public Affairs Specialist." Along with the streamlining, I hope they abolish all stake boards and middle-management-type church jobs--at least in the more settled parts of the world. I have been putting in a lot of time and effort (we travel all over the region--including Conn. just trying to visit each ward twice--once for each session), and I have reaped the usual rewards that come when you're working hard in a job, but underneath is lurking the sneaking suspicion that we're trying hard to justify our existence and that really the wards could get along just fine without us. The teachers are so fabulous--they don't need my two-bits. Believe me, giving up my community involvements and taking on this is a real test of my faith and a sure sign of my obedience and commitment (if not docility). I am "waiting on the Lord" on this one, and I trust I someday will see a reason for it all. For a while I thought the foster children was the reason, but when that fell through, I couldn't find one good excuse. I suppose it's all to teach me patience and obedience. Pooh, pooh.

I was asked to be vice-chairman of Westchester County's Right-to-Life Committee. They said they wanted to groom me a year to become the Chairman next year. It was a first-rate opportunity to mingle with great Catholics and also to alter the approaches they use, which I haven't always felt comfortable with. It was a very difficult decision. But I finally decided I had to follow through with my stake job now that I had committed myself and Dan has taken on such heavy responsibilities, there really is no way I could do it and still have any kind of family life. Oh, for the good old law of polygamy. Could I ever use some more women around here. But I finally declined, after getting no results after asking our bishopric and Stk. leadership to provide some alternative suggestions (and free them from church responsibilities to do it). I think we just missed a fantastic missionary opportunity. They were very gracious, though, and said they would ask me again next year.

We had planned a trip to D.C. to spend Thanksgiving with Uncle Delbert and Barry and Ginger, but Dan's deadline at work loomed through the holiday and now continues looming through Christmas. Computers are definitely a mess. You just think you have it cleaned up and another little bug peeps out to hold you up another

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Dan and Sherlene

two weeks. Oh well, with all the overtime, maybe we'll get a car. I am worried that Dan really has taken on too much. Besides his finance-clerk job (which consumes fantastic hours, just typing receipts and balancing books), he is organist for Spanish S.S. and Priesthood, has agreed to do a huge home-teaching program for the bishop and is computerizing all the ward records. Not to mention all the pressure at work right now. Fortunately, he has taken up Wednesday night basketball, and he goes with Daniel and coaches local boys in basketball Saturday mornings--so he gets some release. Now I know why the Lord made us to be hungry. If Dan didn't come home for meals, I wouldn't know he existed.

Our car has had it. We have been smelling fumes for two weeks. Last Tues. I drove it to Relief Society and on the way my tongue all swelled up, and I started feeling dizzy. After R.S. I took it right in to the car shop, and they said it was a wonder we weren't all dead. The whole bottom of the car is rusted out and all that exhaust has just been sucked up into the passenger chamber. Some people who used to live in our ward had a little baby die while they were on a car trip. The baby was sleeping on the back seat and fumes from the exhaust came up behind the seat and overcame him while they drove along, totally unaware that something was wrong. What a terrible shock when they got home. So now we don't dare go anywhere. We can't find a used car we feel is right, and it will take six to eight weeks to get a new car if we order one. What we really want is a Ford Fairmont wagon that is one year old, has about 15,000 miles and costs \$2500. I know,--dreamers. Oh, it also should be a light yellow color--to match our house, have good visibility on our shaded street and to be cool in summer, since we're not getting air conditioning.

I vote for Aspen camp. We can't afford it. If we come, then we'll have to go another two years without any furniture or carpeting. It's really rotten that Aspen Camp is in Utah and not in the East--it's really all of you guys' turn to spend a lot of money coming to see us. But I need that camp--I need a complete rest with no cooking, dishes or responsibilities, and lots of time for relaxing, talking, laughing, playing, and being with family--ESPECIALLY MY HUSBAND. Nothing short of Aspen camp will get him to go anywhere. I love him, but traveling is not one of his great loves.

Well, I'm sure you've all heard a lot about Sonia Johnson. I was awakened a few nights ago with a phone call from a late-working reporter of the Gannett chain, wanting to interview a local Mormon woman with her reactions to the whole thing. He wrote up a big commentary on our editorial page and quoted me only partially--leaving out any of my supporting comments and devoting most of the editorial to refuting my position on the E.R.A. Oh, well, gives me a great excuse to defend the cause. But I didn't have two days to write that up in the middle of my family preparations for the holidays. I wish all this persecution and controversy would blow up and dry away. No I didn't get that backwards. I wish the Lord would just come and end all this nonsense. I'm tired of being lured to fight defensively on the opposition's battle territory. It's time we were on the offensive, giving them something to come and fight about--on OUR territory. That's what we were trying to do with these organizations of United Families of America and the Utah group we were trying to nationalize. Pardon my saying I told you so, but if we had gotten that organization moving here in the East, and I had gone to Utah, we would be prepared with all the materials and the non-Church structure to distribute it, and I would have something concrete for all the people, members and non-members, who are ringing my phone off the wall wanting materials about the ERA. \*@\*!!@\*@@##!! It's so nice to have a family to spout off to.

Dan will have to send his comments ahead later. He doesn't have time to eat and sleep now, never mind write letters. Our children are reading freaks and are turning into wunnerful people, if I might give an unbiased opinion. We love you.

Dan, Sherlene, Daniel and Laura and  
Sonia (who has become part of the family)

P.S. Did I tell you Rabbi Wohl purchased 30 copies of the BOOK OF MORMON and distributed them to his temple members in their Sunday "Comparative Religion" class? He told them all we considered ourselves to be their relatives, so they might as well find out what we believe. Sort of exciting. He also has almost finished reading Leonard Arrington's THE MORMON EXPERIENCE and thought that was fascinating. I'm still taking Braille. It requires ten hours' homework a week and is really a challenge--but I'm getting it. I have a machine, and I am actually punching out the braille now--it's like learning a new language--really fascinating--and HARD.