

Jan 2, 1984

Dear Family,

So much has happened since I last wrote, but since I can't find the last Hallmanack, I stand in danger of repeating myself. Grandpa Langford's death, of course, is the most significant. I'm sure it was a joyful day for him and Grandma Langford, and many others on the other side, and a relief for Jim and Melba, who have attended him so faithfully since Mom & Dad left on their mission. It was good to see all the uncles & aunts except Iola, (Uncle Tom is too ill with emphysema to travel). Ginger & I took a number of group pictures at the banquet provided by the Relief Society, and when they're developed we'll try to send copies to all of them and also our brothers and sisters. Donald & Louise and Gene & Joyce were there, too. There had been a big snow storm the day prior to the funeral, and I decided not to take my family, driving Nancy's VW instead, but the roads were clear all the way. Ginger's and Charlotte's number was lovely, and I learned a few good things about Grandpa from his former bishops who spoke, but I regretted that none of the family spoke about family memories. I hope Mom will be able to get the things she has written and taped in a form for all to use.

For the record, if any of you survive my death, I would like plenty of joyful congregational singing at my funeral, and a rousing sermon on the plan of salvation and the restoration. I would like to have my unembalmed, grey, non-painted-up body put in a plain plywood coffin made by a carpenter friend. If anyone's afraid I'll start stinking before the funeral you can rent a refrigerated locker at the county morgue. And please put me in the grave. (You probably can't avoid the concrete vault, which helps keep the cemetery lawn smooth after the coffins rot). I want my wife and kids and every able-bodied friend to grab a shovel and fill in the grave before you go off to the feast. This business of walking away leaving the coffin above the grave really gripes me-- are the undertakers afraid dirt might soil their respectable image?

Mom's Christmas dinner and party was a delight. You should have seen those little kids light up when they got their teddy bears during Mom's little story/play-- that was just a really cute thing. Of course, Anthony thinks he got his teddy bear from Robert rather than from Grandma, but that's one of the risks you run in show biz. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for your generosity to us all.

Betsy's brother Geoff and his friend Spencer Lee made a big doll house and nifty four piece 4 x 8 foot road/river/city layout on Masonite which the kids have had a lot of fun with. The other big hits this Christmas were the "Chalkboard" touch pad for the Commodore 64 with software for sketching and composing music (who would ever have thought the TV screen could be such a nifty medium for artistic expression?), the Star Wars stuff, HT's unicycle, the stilts, the Barbies, Care Bears, (nope, we didn't try for any cabbage patch stuff), a block set-- the list goes on and on. Betsy

is definitely the Christmas person in our family, but I have learned to really enjoy her efforts. Someday I might even pitch in, but I'm just holding onto that little fault to avoid being translated. Anyway, I actually bought her a present this year, which she, naturally, managed to figure out before unwrapping it.

Not to mention the helium cylinder. The whole neighborhood has had fun with that. We've blown up dozens of balloons and made lots of Donald Duck voices. (Zina passed out doing it. Helium is completely inert and non-toxic --deep divers actually breath an Oxygen-Helium mix because Helium is much less soluble in the blood than Nitrogen and enables more rapid decompression with less danger from the bends-- but of course, if you take too many breaths without any oxygen, your going to be light-headed in more ways than one.) We're going to launch a bunch of Post Cards to see where the wind takes them. Keep your eyes out back east there. And here's an interesting thought experiment for you. You have a helium balloon inside your car (either held by someone on a string or rolling freely on the ceiling). What happens to the balloon when you accerate? brake? turn a corner left? right? Why? Answers in next month's exciting sequel.

Yesterday I was set apart as President of my Elders' Quorum (Drem 68th Ward, Drem East Stake). (Lee Clegg, the previous president is now in the bishopric. I chose his former counselors, Alan Manley and Chip Headman for my counselors, and Ted Prescott for my secretary. It's not a call I ever wanted, but I feel good about it and am already realizing the blessings that attend it, especially in the inspiration that I felt as I went about organizing the presidency and filling my first assignment-- seeing to it that all who needed help clearing their driveways after this last big storm got help. My high council advisor told me I could continue teaching the quorum, if I wanted to, and I probably will, at least 2-3 times a month.

I'll be baptizing Susanna this Saturday unless she comes down with the chicken pox (it being exactly fifteen days since her exposure at the family party.) She sure is a sweetheart. It seems each one I baptize is littler and littler.

Sherlene, I confess I haven't yet taken time to study the genealogy sheets you sent us, but thank you for doing so. I really think you are doing an important work, and ask the Lord's blessing for you therein.

A Happy New year to all.