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Nov. 17, 1979

Dear Family,

It's been so long since we've been in touch, I'll go way back and tell you all we've been doing since this summer.

We vacationed to Arkansas to see Marty's parents in Cove. Marty was so excited to get started and I wasn't looking forward to the trip at all. I have a better memory than he has! That is a long trip by car, and about one day into it when Greg and Emily were fighting over some toy and Erin had smelly diapers and I was insisting it was time for Marty to stop and find a motel, Marty turned to me and said, "I had forgotten how much fun this is!" Anyway, we made the best of it, but it will be a long time before we drive that way again. When we want to see the Neil's, we're going to send them airplane tickets to California! We did stop at the Grand Canyon one night and part of the next day and took some great moving pictures with Marty's new Minolta XL440 sound camera.

I gave Marty this camera for Father's Day, the day he came back from a 3½ week trip to Europe. I don't normally give such expensive gifts, but he had been thinking of buying this particular camera, before. He was so thrilled, and has had so much fun taking sound movies of the kids. Of course, what fun is having a sound movie camera without being able to see and hear the movies, so now we have a projector, and a movie editor, and a splicer, and a super deluxe boom microphone, all in a super duper deluxe carrying case! Movies anyone? Can't wait to bring it to camp!

You've probably all heard by now that I'm expecting a baby (what else!) on May 1. Marty is expecting a boy, although I'll take another baby like Erin any day. What a joy she is.

I enrolled Emily in PreSchool this fall, but two days after it began, the director called me and said that Emily was too advanced for Pre School and belonged in kindergarten. The public schools would not accept her in Kindergarten because her birthday is ten days after the official cut off date. They make no exceptions. So Emily is attending a private kindergarten at the same school she would have attended pre school. We had all kinds of advice from people who held their young children back a year telling us not to push her ahead, but obviously those children are not as bright as our Emily. She is doing just beautifully, and fits right into the class. This kindergarten is very structured and teaches reading and handwriting, so Emily will be at the top of her first grade class next year in public school.

Greg is now in the second grade and doing just great, although I'm not too thrilled about the teacher. At our parent teacher conference, I hinted that I thought the work was a bit too easy for Greg, that his skills were greater, and the next day he received a new math workbook. She has had him in the top reading group, but he has had to do math with the rest of the class and has been bored. Marty and I have decided that the schools just don't challenge children enough and we're going to have to do a lot of teaching at home, as we can't afford private schools. (We're stretching our budget to send Emily this year!)

*We want to go to camp! --- please?*

I give Marty all the credit for the teaching that goes on in our home. I do well to get the cleaning and cooking done (don't worry about the ironing still) and smile at the kids once in a while, but Marty is a fantastic father and spends hours playing with and teaching the kids. No wonder they're all such geniuses. (enough bragging)

We're hoping to go to Utah for Christmas this year for the first time since we've been married.

In July, Marty was released from his seminary job and asked to be a stake missionary. He hasn't been ordained a seventy, though. He goes out two nights a week with the regular elders. He would go out three nights, but stays home on Wednesday nights while I go to mutual. I teach the Mia Maids this year, about 15 girls.

Erin had a really bad case of croup and spent 24 hours in the hospital and gave us a scare. She was really sick for about two weeks after that. Then Marty caught the same virus, without the croup, and was home for a week from work with a terrible sore throat. He still won't shake hands with anyone at church. He's become paranoid about germs. I don't blame him, after that week!

Marty wants to say a few words about our daily schedule. We love all of you and hope you're all well!

Scherelene wanted to know about the daily schedule of some of the rest of us so I thought I'd give you ours:

- 04:30 Liz and I rise to the "Overture to Tannhauser!" Smiling sweetly, Liz makes the bed singing a medley of songs from Camelot. I waken the children with revelie.
- 04:45 Bed check. As I bounce pennies off the children's freshly made beds, they sing "Hail to the Chief".
- 04:55 We muster in the back yard for PT (physical training). Of course, we're all singing "Heads, shoulders, knees, and Toes".
- 05:30 The girls now head for the mess halle for KP. As Liz grinds wheat for fresh bread (to conserve energy, she uses two flat rocks), Erin and Emily sing "When We're Helping, We're Happy". As Greg practices the piano, I explore the inner self with TM, EST, and other self awareness techniques (very big stuff out here in Cal)
- 06:30 Breakfast. Freshly baked bread, yogurt (also spelled yogurt), sugar pops, and orange kool aide.
- 07:00 Family devotional and study. As the children discuss Milton's Paradise Lost, Liz and I study eighteenth century counterpoint. We close by singing various forms of 7th century vocal polyphony. Although Greg and Emily are partial to Gregorian chant, Erin specializes in Mozarabic chant.
- 08:00 Off to work and school.

I guess our day isn't really that much different than any of the rest of you so I won't go into any more detail.

*P.S. We've only been doing this for 20 minutes but I hope we can stick with it. Marty*