

Dearest Family,

It's Valentine's Day! A good time to write and tell my family I love them. I remember how Mom used to decorate chocolate-covered, marshmallow eggs with her pink frosting roses and our names and put them by our plates on Valentine's Day. When I was on my mission or away from home and single, Dad used to send me Valentines to let me know I had a boyfriend. On some of these holidays I wonder if I'm just wasting my breath because my family doesn't seem to be as sentimental as I am (I can never get anybody around here to help me decorate the tree!), but I want Mom and Dad to know I do remember these holiday traditions and each holiday is a little sweeter with some of the memories.

Of course the important traditions of lasting worth--family prayer and home evenings, that chapter a day of scripture--Dad's always being there with interesting conversations at breakfasts and dinners, family participation in all the gospel activities including Church meetings--these are the traditions I especially hope won't get lost. With all Dad's scientific involvements, I remember him as a very present father and thank both our parents for what they gave us and, especially, for loving each other through thick and thin. That example, in the end, is the best way to show love for your children.

I am in mourning right now because I was released Sunday from teaching my Beehive class and also as second counselor in the Young Women's presidency. It is a long story that I suppose doesn't need telling. But basically it boiled down to a confrontation between me and the YW President. She wanted me to remain as her counselor; and I wanted to keep my Beehive class and wanted her to call a new counselor (the bishopric had told me when I was called that my preference to be the Beehive advisor was logical, since I had already been teaching them, and that the divisions could be handled later once the organization had taken place--leading me to believe I would end up as the Advisor). I really loved that class and went many extra miles trying to reactivate half of the 11 girls who are inactive and come from non-member of part-member families. The Lord blessed me so much in this, and one of the families is now studying the gospel regularly after they had their first cottage meeting in our home after dinner (I also invited their Mormon neighbors, home-teachers, her new Mia Maid teacher, a fellowshipping friend, and unbelievably--the stake missionaries I invited to teach them turned out to be relatives!) I felt the Spirit so much in that calling and I still can't believe that the YW Pres., in her determination to keep me as Counselor, would throw away a good teacher in a ward that has very limited personnel. After being Party Chairman for the previous presidency and finally negotiating with the new presidency to get 49 lesson slots (they had been showing "Pollyanna" and eating popcorn even during the Sunday time, if you can believe!), I wanted to teach the gospel in those slots, not stay on as party chairman. She said she had a revelation that I was to be at her side. I told her after two days' fasting that I could still be at her side as Beehive advisor. She said she needed to develop good administrators for the Lord's Second Coming, and I told her when He came He would be looking for good teachers. Needless to say, my gamble that she would keep me as teacher if I refused to be counselor, failed. They got rid of me by telling me a stake job was waiting (actually I had invited my Stake Pres. neighbor in on this, hoping he would persuade the bishop to keep me as teacher--he just sent it back to the bishop). Now I am going to be called to extract German names for temple work--what with thousands of Hall family names in my file which already need comparing with the IGI for name submission.

I don't know why I have to be so bull-headed. I should have been more patient and submissive and willing to remain as 2nd counsellor. But with 15-20 hrs. of administration, plus all the basketball games, AND teaching a class of 11, it was too much. But at least I would not have lost my Beehive class. As Ken Kartchner said in our delightful talks while he visited with us this weekend: "IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO HELP THAN TO BE RIGHT."

*P.S. Everybody take note! We speak to have Mom and Dad here next Christmas for the holidays and Daniel's mission farewell! We'll be taking him out to BYU in August for one semester before his mission.*

Dan is in Denver for 3 days and spent a day last week in Chicago. I think he is enjoying the variety, but plane seats are hard on bad backs. We're hoping this isn't going to become a regular pattern. He has a new boss at work who is a woman, so there is hope she will know what she is doing more than others have (no prejudice here!).

Monday I got home from Visit Teaching (yesterday) to have Laura meet me in the garage with sad news. She warned me not to try to talk to Daniel for a while because he was very depressed after learning he had not been admitted to BYU. His grades, except in certain AP Humanities classes, were not that good and we were hoping his outstanding scores on the PSAT and ACT would pull him through. I got in the house and heard him bawling in the back room. Then I knew it was a joke! So, Laura's acting is getting convincing and Daniel is now going to BYU this fall semester. We were glad to get the news in time to express mail his slides of artwork in time for the art scholarship Feb. 15 deadline. If he gets an art scholarship, I will really have to shake my head. All those sacrifices going to work to pay tuition and transporting him to Hackley so we could get his study discipline and grades up and all the time what will help pay his way is the doodling he did during boring Sacrament meetings!

We were thrilled to see in the Church News that Uncle Wendell has been called again to serve at the new MTC in Chile. Daniel has had four years of Spanish (not that he learned much!) I have this daydream that he'll get called to a Spanish-speaking mission and get to go to Uncle Wendell's MTC! I would love to have him have that exposure to Uncle Wendell--he was such a loving example to me as a little girl.

Last week we learned a former friend of Daniel's tried to commit suicide. He took an overdose, but his parents found him in time. This boy had become addicted to drugs in Jr. High, but gave them up and reached a point where they actually had him giving seminars on drug-danger to other highschool students. He joined the Church after he gave up drugs, but since his parents weren't members, he had a hard time staying active. Daniel was a true friend, calling him almost every Sunday, arranging rides, inviting him to parties, etc.--but he must have gone back on drugs and went totally inactive. Daniel took a day off of school and got on a train and went to see him the next day, talking long hours with him in the hospital. I think Daniel will make a marvelous missionary. He really cares about his friends--and has a lot of them.

We had a wonderful visit a couple of weekends ago with Andy (now named Daniel Miller). The Millers called up and said Daniel wanted to visit us; so he came--and it was wonderful. It seemed he had never even left. It was crazy having three Daniel's in the house--all our systems of distinguishing fell apart--we finally went back to calling him "Andy." Even after being with the Millers seven years and being adopted and sealed to them, he still seems to be having some problems with bonding. It is a terrible thing when little children get bounced around to so many homes in early life. Anyway, we deliberately did not run a three-ring circus for him--just carried on as usual--but still, by the end of the weekend, he was making overtures to come and live with us. "The grass is always greener..." The Millers anticipated this response in him and told us what to expect. We want to be in league with them and help any way we can--but I sense the best way is to ignore his pleas to come at least monthly and see him maybe once a year, but not be another "Aunt Edie" to play his parents against through the teen years. Tough love can be tough. The Millers have suffered some serious financial reverses through a failed business venture and have cared for many foster children and have a mentally retarded son who lives at home. We could tell Andy is still a big challenge--the Millers are absolute Saints in my book.

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Still, we all cried a little when he left, too. He is such a spunky, fun, curious young man. He treated me with such love and respect--couldn't do enough to be sweet and helpful. He had a few spats with Daniel--but he sure did let me know I was special to him and kept calling me "Mom." When he left our home, I did not expect to ever see him again as long as I lived, but prayers are answered. When his family finally decided they were willing to sign papers and let him be adopted, they chose another Mormon family, even though they didn't like me. Brother Miller told me my bull-headedness (he didn't use the word) at insisting on certain rights for the parents paved the way for them to be able to better negotiate with the relatives and saved them a lot of grief--though they still have to let Andy go to his Aunt Edie once a month (better than the once a week I had to put up with). As Dan says, "Two Jewish mothers" wasn't the best combination. But Andy did get a gospel upbringing, after all, and we felt so good about being able to see him again and having such a good relationship with the Millers. Pres. Miller came up to meet us at the bishop's storehouse to bring Andy and we spent the morning there helping fill welfare orders. Very interesting activity--Rev. Pepper went there a couple of weeks ago and spent the entire day--just thrilled with what the Mormons do for their poor. Said it sure beat the food baskets the Presbyterians have such a hard time getting out only at Christmas!

(including Ken Kartchner)

Don (Pepper) dropped by and joined us last Sat. night for about a half hour after another engagement. We had invited some other friends over and were trying to enjoy a game of Trivial Pursuit. The brains there were having a ball competing, but I can't even remember my own name half the time, never mind connect dates and names and details of ANY kind! But we had fun and occasionally I would remember to roll the dice, thus contributing to the evening. Rev. Pepper is still planning to be baptized as soon as he gets his business in order (a new job, to be exact), and told us with great relish of the Book of Mormon scriptures he was using as text for his sermon the next day. He doesn't say it's from the Book of Mormon--just quotes the verse and gives a discourse on it--says everybody seems to love it! He has invited Dan and me to dinner next weekend--we're really looking forward to it.

Dan, Daniel and Laura have all been playing church basketball this season--I go to as many as I can, but am usually lucky to keep up with the Young Women's games. They are all getting very good and usually win their games, too! Dan is a case. He limps around all week, then gets suddenly better in time for a game and then hobbles around again. He should stick to Trivial Pursuit!

Daniel and Laura really enjoyed Frost Valley in January--thought it was a blast in terms of fun and also a real spiritual feast. I made Laura a dress for one of the regional dances they have up there. She looked so lovely and radiant when she modeled it for me, I got a little scared. She's going to grow up and leave me, too, one of these days. The dress was peach satin with matching lace bodice--she was gorgeous. Daniel is something else when it comes to dressing up for anything! I can't get him to go shopping with me, and he won't spend his own money on anything but musical instruments and tapes. I hope they call him on a mission to a nudist colony because they'll never get him to dress like a missionary--that's for sure! We live in a community where the kids all look like preps on their way to Harvard (which a lot of them are). Daniel goes out of his way NOT to look like any of them. When we got that little blue honor notice from BYU spelling out in great detail that the boys take off their earrings and the girls wear bras, I expected Daniel to throw up and apply to another school. But as he folded out of the car when I took him to work (bad weather), I actually heard these words: "Maybe you're going to have to take me shopping before I go to the 'Y'!" Fortunately, I recovered in time to say, "Yes, YOU are going to have to go shopping before you go to the 'Y'!"

HAPPY BIRTHDAY to David and Mom this month--Only 3 pages--there is hope! Love, Sherlene Family