

LA IGLESIA DE
JESUCRISTO
DE LOS SANTOS
DE LOS ULTIMOS
DIAS

CENTRO DE ENTRENAMIENTO MISIONAL

Pocuro 1980
Santiago, Chile

Este... LAS NOTICIAS... Este... QUE NUNCA ACABAN
¡Siempre... Este... hay algo! ¡Siguen... Este... sucediendo cosas

5 de febrero 1989

In a lesson the other day I reminded everyone to write home once a week. So, to set an example, here I go again. Take no more than 2 minutes of your valuable time to read this.

For my heart's sake I'm still supposed to walk 1/2 hour morning and evening. So far our record is 2 mornings and 1 evening. Just now we walked for almost an hour and did Zion ("hacer Si6n"). The idea is to cultivate "un 6rea" ("sector," in Chile) by being friendly, sociable and helpful--without any direct proselyting at first. Easy to do, yet hard. For example: Now I feel we should have been unhesitatingly direct with the future Relief Society president and her first counselor--two older ladies about our age with lovely, peaceful countenances and friendly smiles. Also, we need greater skill in entering people's personal space and crumbling the crust of their reserve. As we returned, a little 4-wheel vehicle like an enclosed motorcycle stalled at the intersection almost in front of the MTC. As the light changed and we started to cross, a husky man passed by, twisting his body away so as not to see a fellow citizen in distress. So I had the blessing of pushing the thing across the main avenue (Bilbao) in time to beat speeding traffic from the other way. I offered my services to help get it going but the driver declined with a smile. Believe me, I really wanted to, and bet I could have found the problem. But can you see Mom, in dispair, watching me get my best clothes all greasy?

Why did the fine-looking young man deny me the pleasure of service? I had the distinct impression that he didn't want to be beholden, feel obligated to do something in return. (On the other hand, maybe he didn't want me to wreck his machine, which had a beautiful BMW motor.) The idea, though, is not to return the favor to me but to pass ^{it on to} someone else, and so on and on until kindness and helpfulness reverberate around the world. With greater skill, as taught in our new MTC materials, I might have overcome his reticence and we could have become eternal friends. Anyway, I was wearing my placa (name tag) and I think he knew I was a missionary. In Argentina the "Zion" program was quite successful in some areas. Oh, I forgot the part about our missionaries. Without our knowing it, a group of them had been watching from a second-story window. When we came down the sidewalk they started cheering and applauding, happy to see their president set an example. (Or were they applauding Mom, because of their love for her?)

Every time we eat a nectarine we think of Anna, since she likes them so much. We think a lot of Anna! We think of Anna a lot! One day as we knelt to pray, I thought of Howard, my dad, and how he would pray for everyone by name. It's just not the same to generalize and say "our children," "our grandchildren." So I prayed, "Te damos gracias por John, Marjean, Wendy, Anna, Teresa, Carolyn y Alice" and we both had to wipe away our tears. As soon as we can get enough boxes of Kleenex, we'll name all of our grandchildren, brothers and sisters and in-laws et al. We're so thankful for all of you!

Yesterday we practiced making el primer contacto (first contact). In the Provo MTC the missionaries have to simulate it, switching the roles of contact and missionary. In Santiago, with its 4 million inhabitants, we do the real thing. Merrill had to wash our clothes. I was eager to make first contacts right along with the others (nobody mentioned the word "folletear"--tracting) and also had to take Elder Equino and his wheel chair in the van. I really drive scared. Buenos Aires was worse, but given my precious cargo (11 others jammed in with Elder Equino) and the fact that

I have no driver's license (had to send off our Utah licenses to get international ones), I drove far too slowly and cautiously--making me a very dangerous driver here. When we arrived at our "sector" I was assigned a young companion, just 15, from the Quinta Normal Ward, and off we went. David is amazing. What a knowledge of the scriptures for someone his age! Surprisingly, at every door, he was too timid to speak first, but once we got started you'd think he thought he was the senior companion. Before our first door, I felt a little timid too, but then I remembered what I'm always telling the missionaries: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). So if we're scared, it's because our love is far from perfect. I do love these people and, besides, tracting is challenging and fun, especially if you try to use a different approach at every door. There are so many possibilities! Wish there was time to describe a couple of novel techniques I employed this time. Anyway, not a door was slammed in our faces ("narices"--noses/nostrils, in Spanish), everyone listened for at least five minutes and we got invited in and invited back. One companionship got 12 referrals, beating us by far, but then they obviously couldn't have spent as much time with each contact as we did. Naturally, things don't always go that well out "golpeando puertas" (knocking doors), but Chile is special. Last month the missionaries in the Viña del Mar Mission baptized more than 1200 persons.

Feb. 7. Last night we had the farewell meeting for our very first, fabulous, group, No. 184. What an emotional drain, saying goodbye to the first of approx. 48 groups that we'll have! All of them wanted us to write something in their notebook and Merrill and I loved doing it but I was exhausted by the time we were through. Now we have about 60 missionaries to prepare for and our facilities are inadequate. We'll have to squeeze more double bunks into the elders' section and put some in the sisters' study area, moving the tables out. There's not enough hot water for 1/3 that number and not nearly enough toilets and showers. Our main classroom is much too small so we'll have to use the church employees' conference room.

I've had to spend hours--every free moment--updating and adjusting our schedule to conform to the new uniform program for MTCs everywhere (now 16 in number). Although there are only five new lessons, there is a much greater emphasis on practicing the discussions, increasing the time spent on this from 12 hours (here) to 23. Total study hours remain the same, with some topics receiving less time now. However, to be effective, discussion practice should take place in groups no larger than 12. We have three other small classrooms, unused by us thus far. The problem is that we don't have teachers to form separate groups. The two mission presidents, Santiago North, Santiago South, will lend us some experienced missionaries to help out.

For our first group we had the help of 10 volunteers, most teaching only one class and only two assisting with discussion practice. They receive no pay but are reimbursed for bus or subway fare. Most are superb teachers and we're overjoyed to have them. One just got married and is moving to San Diego CA. Merrill is particularly grateful to Hna. Acosta for her help with the Sunday sisters' meeting (same time as priesthood meeting for the elders) and with classes which are more or less her responsibility as "la presidenta." Hna. Acosta just finished her mission (Santiago North) and unfortunately will probably have a full-time job within a short time. Some of our teachers can come during the afternoon, when we need them most, but others are available only on Sunday or in the evening.

Our situation reminds me of a sign, in English, that we saw in a second-story window of a school one day: "HELP!" We'll make it this time, we have no doubt, but if our groups keep getting larger, some changes will have to be made. For one thing, we'll need bigger, stronger hearts. They've almost burst with joy already from being with a much smaller group of just 24.

Ever-loving Mom and Dad / Merrill & Wendell

M + D

M + W