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Letter from Mom, 3-21-11

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To: Phillip Larsen <phillip.larsen@myldsmail.net>

Cc: John Larsen <john@larsen-family.us>

Hello, Dear Phillip, Dear Elder Larsen!

Happy Spring! Or rather, since it's spring here for us, Happy Autumn! I found a website that gives the time and temperature in Teresina, and it looks like you have very hot and humid weather, all the time! But I guess that's what you can expect, that close to the equator. (The site says you are an hour ahead of us so when it's 9am there, it's 8am in NH, and you do not have daylight saving time, but Sao Paulo does.) I went to look at your missionary plaque in the hallway at church, and Bishop McFadden came down the hall, and commented that you are close by the Amazon River. I don't think your mission extends to the Amazon, but I'm sure you have some jungle in there. I will love to hear all about what you do in your mission. Lori has commented several times that she just loves your letters! I do, too. I love how descriptive you are, and how excited you are to be serving the Lord as a missionary, and now to be in Brazil. I love the testimony you share in your letters, and also the details of daily life that help us to enjoy your mission right along with you.

Ok, now for some questions:

How is the Portuguese going? I can imagine it gets better day by day. I first listened to the Pimsleur language program on the 9th of March, on my way down to my Presidency meeting. I have pretty much listened to some every day since then, and I have a better feel for how the language sounds. I'm almost ready to greet one of the sisters from the Lowell Ward, or from Nashua 2nd. At least I can say hello! I can't write or spell just yet, because what I'm learning is all verbal so far. Dad made Mp3's out of the tapes so it's on the iPod Touch. Sis. Ure said the people are so friendly in Brazil (she lived there with her husband, in Rio de Janeiro, for four months while he was on an internship) and the people are thrilled when you try their language, and are happy to help out and encourage you.

How about the food? What are you eating, and who is cooking? Sis. Ure said the food is great. "That's the best part!", she said. I think they eat the main meal in the middle of the day, then what do you eat for the evening meal? What about breakfast, when cereal is not commonly eaten?

Will we send snail mail to the mission home office, then you'll get it from there? That may be easier, because if it takes about three weeks, you could have moved on to a different area before any letter or package even gets there.

Have you seen any interesting animals? Monkey? Panthers?!

How are the missionaries in Brazil different from the missionaries in the TLM? You mentioned they are different, and I wondered in what ways.

Where are you doing your laundry? Where do you write your emails?

Have you done any of the actual baptizing? (Have you used your baptismal clothes yet? Just curious.)

You asked some questions a week or two ago, which Dad answered, but I did not, yet. You asked about the qualities of missionaries that came to our ward. I think Dad answered very well. I would agree, they are hard-working, and serious about serious things, but they definitely know how to have fun. Their testimonies are strong, and they rely on the Spirit. They follow the mission rules, so they are blessed in the things they do as missionaries, and they are focused on the work. Those are all qualities I see in you, Phillip. You are very strong in these things, and I've been thrilled to hear your testimony in your emails, and to see how much you love the people, and are enjoying your mission.

You asked about what other people remember from the experience with Stanford. I have thought about writing down things I remember. I have "written" them in my mind already. I have a journal that I began, intending it to be letters to Stanford, like missionary ones. I actually even thought of doing that before he died. I remember standing in the bathroom with him one day, looking at him, and thinking that I would write every week (and hoping at the time that it would not be necessary). But I have not written each week, the way I do with you. I never hear anything back :(. Actually, that isn't quite true. I have had a couple of very specific spiritual experiences, that let me know Stanford is still around, and he will get his body back someday. I would like to talk more to Shelli Scott, and to McKayla, too. She mentioned how the missionaries teach, and they teach with the help of those on the other side of the veil. So I don't know if she has felt that or not, if she knows from what she has felt, or just knows because of what other people have said. I have heard about how missionaries have felt close to deceased siblings while on their missions. You might feel Stanford. If so, be sure to write it down. The things I remember about Stanford's death are very sad, and bring tears often, but they are also sacred, I think. And things throughout my day remind me of times with Stanford, or times in the Hospice House, or feelings I have about him, and about death. I read a lot of D&C 45, and 78, and 138. Those are all

good ones. I would like to read what you wrote about the experience and how it strengthened your testimony, if you are willing to share it.

You asked what led us to move to NH, and Dad answered that, as well. A couple of things I remember about that are that Dad got two job offers from all of his interviewing, one to NH, and one to some place in Arizona. I remember feeling like it was important that we have an "adventure" and move away, rather than staying in SLC. And when Dad and I talked about it, we decided on NH, because the weather is not so hot as in Arizona. I remember it was hard for us for about a year, we felt quite homesick. And then we were glad we came, and have been glad ever since. I can see growth in myself I don't think I would have had if we had stayed in UT. I also think our immediate family is stronger than it might have been, and we are certainly closer to our ward family than we would have been in UT.

Sis. Scott said yesterday that Mike is planning to go back on his mission in the fall. She and I talked for a bit. I just love her, I love the whole Scott family!

I emailed Ian on Friday, through DearElder.com. He is in the MTC, and writes lovely long letters the way you do! Leslie puts them on a blog, the way Dad puts yours on a blog. Ian misses his cats, and he wants to do some baking. He wanted to bake banana bread. He is learning Dutch. Also, Leslie writes to Ian on Sundays, so she has set aside Sunday as her letter-writing day, and she writes to me as well. I am writing to her, too, though sometimes it is not on Sunday. I should write to the Wilsons as well, more often.

Dad mentioned that I am going to UT in April. I will leave on the 5th, and return on the 14th, in time to hear the Secret Agent band play at the dance! I'm looking forward to the visit, and working out details so Dad and Julia will eat more than cold cereal while I'm gone :).

Oh, Beverly was having a very hard time with healing, and it was getting worse and worse. Then last week she had more surgery, to clean up the surgical site, and clear away dead skin that was damaged from the radiation treatment she received. She will be coming home today. Things sound hopeful, so I do hope she is really on the mend this time. I know it has been frustrating for her and discouraging.

One more quick thing, then I had better send this so you get it today, and I'll get busy cleaning up the kitchen! Heather made a quick list the other day of birthplaces of our ancestors. We were mainly wondering if we are Irish only on St. Patrick's day, or the rest of the year, as well :). From Dad's side, you have relatives from: USA, Denmark, Norway, England, and maybe Scotland. Dad thinks Sweden as well. From my side, you have relatives from: USA, England, Sweden, Scotland, Isle of Mann (an island off of England), Switzerland, Denmark, Ireland, Canada, Germany, Wales, and the West

Indies (though I'm thinking the girl who was born there was born while her parents were traveling). Anyway, I thought it was interesting.

I love you, Phillip, and I'm so proud of you! I love reading your testimony, and I love hearing about your mission, every detail! Take good care of your feet, now that you are in tropical country where foot fungus is more common, and you are walking a bunch. Eat right, wear sunscreen, take the malaria pills if you need to, and continue to enjoy every moment of your mission!

Love,
Mom