



John Larsen <theclaw56@gmail.com>

Hello from UT!

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

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

Hello, my dear Elder Phillip Larsen, (my missionary!),

Wednesday, 6 April 2011 (Just as I wrote this date, I realized it is the day the Church was organized, and the day the Savior was born. Cool!)

I've thought about you a lot, and hope you're doing better each day, and feel the Lord's love for you, and feel guided by the Spirit. I hope the language gets easier each day, too. Learn a new word every day! I was reading a novel today (in English), and one of the characters said "How are you?", and the other one said, "Fine, thank you", and I thought of those words in Portuguese! So, it's coming, little by little (very little, in my case, but still . . .). I'm trying to learn along with you, and hope that my efforts to learn the language a bit will somehow help you. That maybe you can have extra blessings in that regard because I'm working on it, as well. (Like my donating blood can help another person, maybe my "donating" language learning time can somehow count towards your language skills? Something to ponder.)

I arrived late last night after a very long day of travel. The plane out of Detroit was delayed two hours, and they had us on the plane for an hour, just sitting there, while they were trying to fix some electrical switch. Then they had us get off the plane and go back to the terminal. Then back on, and we were finally on our way, two hours late. We walked in the door at Oma and Papa's house around 11:00pm. I was supposed to arrive in SLC at 7:13pm! But it was a good day. I ate my lunch/dinner at the same table as a lady who was traveling from visiting and babysitting her grandchildren in Wisconsin back to her home in Albany, NY. I think airports are quite exciting, looking around at all of those people, and realizing that for a brief moment in time we all come together in the same place, but will soon be scattered across the world, never to meet again. I sat next to a man who is a mechanic for airplanes, who was coming into SLC to help fix a plane. I thought that was interesting, to have to bring someone in for that. There was a lady and her seeing-eye dog on the plane. The dog looked to me like a golden retriever, and sat at her feet. Another lady had her little dog in a carrier that fit under her seat. I don't know if she was there the second time we boarded the plane. Lots of people made other arrangements, if they missed connecting flights, so the plane was less crowded the second time.

Today Oma and Papa and I had a relaxing day, driving around, having a good lunch

from a delicious bakery, and going to a yarn shop (of course!). I've been making calls to plan times with family to visit with different people. It's good to be here. And I miss home. But I'm working on enjoying the moment, being here with whatever I'm doing just now. I thought of that, and my feelings that I mentioned last email about missing out on being at the Noels for General Conference, but then realizing I would rather be doing what we were doing, even though going to the Noels is a fun thing. But so many times, we choose between two (or more) good things, and then we have to miss out on something. But I'm working on feeling less like I'm missing out and more like appreciating the moment I am having. I don't know if that will help you at all with homesick feelings. And I'm sure as things settle down (your companion gets better from his medical problem, you are more comfortable with the language, and you get to teach more often) you'll love your mission even more than you long for home. I was also thinking about the hymn "More Holiness Give Me", and it talks about "more longing for Home". So that is good. To want that, to want to go back, but to want it so that you live well now. Anyway, my thought for the day. I love you!

Sunday, 10 April 2011

Well, I had intended to write something every day, but I have not even been on the computer every day. I've had a lovely time so far, and it has been a good and relaxing pace. I've seen relatives and eaten out, been to a ballet, and shopped at Deseret Industries and yarn shops, and had time for some TV with Oma and Papa and almost daily "teatime" in the evenings. When I went to Deseret Industries on Thursday evening with Gwendolyn, I thought of you and shopping at Salvation Army, and I thought of Napoleon Dynamite! I think you would like Deseret Industries. I only really looked at some clothes, but ended up buying a few skirts, but the shopping experience was nice, the racks are set up nicely, the store is clean and well-lit, much better than Salvation Army, which isn't a bad store, but you don't want to make that your choice for clothes shopping, by any means.

Today I went to church with Oma and Papa and to visit with Doug and Gwen for the afternoon. I'm very much enjoying my visit here, but it is different when I come alone than when I come with the whole family. When we all come, it is for a family reunion, or we make it a reunion, so everyone is gathered and it is basically party time every day, and we see all of the cousins all of the time, because everyone takes vacation time and makes a point of being together. Now, I am seeing people, but some people I'm missing. At Doug and Gwen's, there was Natalie, Amy, and Sarah, also Jimmy. The other kids weren't there, and Amy and Sarah didn't end up eating with us because they were doing things with friends and had eaten already or something. But we had fun playing Rumikub, and Amy made cinnamon rolls. Gwendolyn (that's what she wants to be called now, and I'm trying, but it is strange to call someone something different than what you had been calling that person the whole time you've known her) and I went for a nice walk, and we also walked around their yard and garden, and Gwendolyn gave me some good garden suggestions, which I wrote down. In Jimmy's

room there is a deep frame on the wall with a white shirt and tie, and his missionary nametag and the little handbook in the pocket. It is a neat reminder of his missionary time. At Oma and Papa's church I looked at the plaques on the wall for their missionaries. They have two young men serving from their ward, and one is in France Paris mission and the other is in the Ukraine (don't ask me to tell you which mission, because I can neither spell it or pronounce it!). He is speaking Russian. As I looked at their plaques, I thought of you and Ian and Ricky and Karen Ogden and Taylor and the other missionaries we know, and I thought of how you are all the Lord's Army, and what power there is in that, and what blessings! How wonderful to be able to be an instrument in the Lord's hands to bring His children the truth! Oh, and Ian wants Moleskine notebooks for his journal and study journal (another way in which you are alike!). He wants the little ones that fit in a jacket pocket, and I don't know if the ones you want come in a smaller size or not but I told Leslie I would let her know about the brand and such, so she can send him less expensive ones. Missionaries are amazing! Especially my missionary!

Dad texted me today when I asked him how our Ward Conference went (I missed two Ward Conferences today by being in UT), and he told me later on the phone more details, but he said Bro. Hawkins has a talk assignment for me for Easter Sunday. I find it funny that Bro. Hawkins will find you anywhere you are!

A few questions:

Who cooks your food? Do you eat the main meal in the middle of the day? Do you have very many dinner appointments?

How are you doing in keeping your apartment clean? (These are Mom-type questions, but I'm your Mom, so it's expected :P)

Do you clap instead of knocking on doors, the way Ricky says they do in Vitoria?

Well, I know I had other questions, but I will write them down for the next email.

Beverly is doing better, Heather said. Heather saw her at Friday Night Knitting, which I missed because of being here in UT. Sis. Blanchette is still pregnant, though looking huge, and she is having contractions. She needs to keep the babies in for a bit longer, and she needs to rest for that to happen. I have seen Deb Stevens a couple of times, and she is looking better than I think she was doing through the winter. I think I told you about Bradford. Keep praying for him, and writing to him from time to time, and love him. The Lord will take care of the rest. I will write to Priscilla when I get back to NH and am not in "vacation" mode, or maybe before if I have a minute. Michael Ogden is doing well, living in Boston and attending one of the Cambridge wards. I am doing daily life stuff, and knitting a bit and crocheting, also working out in the gym and doing yoga. I'm almost ready to get serious about fixing the house more . . . but don't hold your breath! (Just answering questions from your last email here). We'll be sending you some stuff soon. Do you want the pocket sized Moleskine type of books or larger?

One more thing, then I need to go to bed. Yesterday Oma and Papa and I had a wonderful experience in the morning of having Stanford and Robin come over to the house (Leslie was working and could not come). Stanford brought his laptop and microphones and such and set it up so we could record my parents talking about their life histories. It was so neat! I learned things I had never heard before, and some things were recorded that I had heard, but now they're saved, and not just in my memory. Stanford made three files, each almost an hour long, I think. Anyway, we also asked about my grandparents, and got some stories about them. I was thinking about my grandparents as we talked, and had the impression they were with us in the room as we talked about their histories. I don't know if that was my imagination or not. Sometimes I have a hard time telling that, but I'm beginning to think lots of things like that that I think are just fanciful are really my feeling the Spirit, and that I should not discount spiritual feelings, just because I can't prove them or have physical evidence of them.

The church is true, Phillip, as I know you know. God lives, and He loves us, each one of us. I can't imagine how He can keep track of so many spirits, but He does. I love reading your testimony of this restored gospel when you write your emails. Life is good, and we are blessed to live our lives when we do, and we need to enjoy every day, every minute! I look forward to your emails and to news from Brasil. Boa Noche and Ich liebe dich! (I know, two languages, and probably not spelled correctly, but you can hopefully understand my intent.)

Love,
Mom