



John Larsen <theclaw56@gmail.com>

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## Happy Birthday, Dear Phillip!

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Joyce Larsen <linenlady9@gmail.com>

Mon, May 2, 2011 at 11:27 AM

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

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

Hello, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen,

Happy Birthday! Have you let anybody in Brasil know that your birthday is coming up? Can you bake a cake? Julia said we should have a cake for you here. What kind would you like us to have? :)

I just read the email Dad is sending to you, which is helpful, so I won't repeat news. I went to the gym this morning, then did a little raking and the cans and rake are still sitting out so I can do more throughout the day. Then started laundry and now write to you. I wrote yesterday to Ricky (he responded already this morning), and Karen Ogden and Taylor Bentall, whose birthday is on the 7th, Saturday. Ricky reminded me that he had sent you an email (through Dad) in Portuguese, and wasn't sure if you had gotten it yet. I'm not sure what your time is, that is, in the hour you have for emails, do you have lots to do? I know you read the ones we send you, plus any others you may receive. (Lesley Bentall said they have send one or two emails, and I know you will have a couple of birthday ones this week. Do you get Ricky's emails?) And you probably have to email President Dias as well, about how things are going. Would you be able to write to Ricky, a quick response? Or maybe that would be better by snail mail, then you can take a little more time with it. Have you been able to get Brazilian stamps yet to send out some letters?

This morning at the gym I listened to more Portuguese. I wish I could see it written. But in the line you wrote in your last email, I UNDERSTOOD IT! I had to look up one word in a dictionary I had bought, but it was cool that I knew what you said! Bro. Noel said yesterday at church that it is at about two months after arriving in the country that the language sort of clicks. I'm sure it is a little different for each person, but that is good to know the time frame, more or less. Yesterday my fast was mostly for you, for you to understand and speak Portuguese and for you to not be as homesick, but love the mission even more. During and after fasting in March, I felt the Spirit very strongly, and it was the next day when we heard your visa had arrived. I know fasting can help, and I hope it helps a little bit for you now. Keep in mind that the Lord has sent you to Brazil, that He will help you with the language ability you need, and with other challenges you have, and that you just need to rely on Him.

Here is something Ian said in his last email (which was the 18th of April, because the following week he flew to Belgium): "So, my older siblings got to go to a fireside with John Bytheway on Sunday. I wonder if there's any way I can top that...Oh, yeah. We had a devotional with Elder Scott last night. :P It was really amazing. He talked about how we need to be guided by the spirit in missionary work. He also talked about how the Savior's the one who issues mission calls. Nobody else has anything to do with calls or changes if something happens. About halfway through the devotional, Elder Scott said that through the Holy Apostleship, he was conferring upon all the missionaries going to a foreign speaking mission the gift of tongues. It was really cool. And at the end of his talk, he said that he doesn't believe that Jesus Christ is a glorified, resurrected being. He knows that Jesus Christ is a glorified, resurrected being. It was really, really powerful."

And here is some from Ricky's email on the 18th of April, which I thought might be nice for you to read (though please let me know if you already get his emails, so I won't repeat things in the future that you already receive): "

Dearest Family,

I am loving this area! I have never lived in a rural farm-like place before and I have always wanted to see what its like. There are good things and horrible things.

**Good things:** My companion is very pleasant and easy to get along with. The branch is strong and the members are awesome. They make REALLY good food here and A LOT of it, we eat well everyday. We have a nice little house that I love and (not that I am naming ALL the good things for there are too many to count) the sights here are jaw dropping - Farmland with palm trees!!! Crazy!!!

**Horrible Things:** Mosquitoes are very numerous here. Elder Rafael and I have a battle with them every night before bed because they like to run into our room and hide during the day and then suck our blood as we sleep! But we have had enough. We keep the door and windows to our room closed, and when we are about to go to sleep we make sure all the mosquitoes in our room are DEAD! Yesterday I killed at least 11 and Elder Rafael killed more. We have no washing machine, it is really slow and tiring to wash clothes by hand and then hang them up after doing your best to squeeze all the water out. My hands and arms are always sore from all the washing of my clothes.

I am teaching a lot, we have no investigators progressing at the moment but we will have next week!

Love,

Elder Larsen III"

I thought it was kind of fun how he made little lists of good and bad things about his new area.

This morning when I woke up I had the hymn, "Oh, What Songs of the Heart" running through my mind. I do not have the words to that one memorized, so I couldn't remember it all, but I know it's about how we'll "greet with a kiss, and what joy we caress all our loved ones that passed on before". We have not sung that one recently, but it was in my mind anyway. I think that may be along the lines of the promptings Dad was talking about in his email. One of the things I'll send you is my talk from last week. I talked about Stanford, and how I know we'll see him again. And I think I told you about that experience I had one day in the cemetery. If not, I'll tell you again now. I did not talk about this in my talk, but only how we will receive more spiritual experiences as we pay attention to them. (I felt the actual experience is to be shared with only a few people.) Anyway, one day I was visiting the cemetery. As I walked toward Stanford's grave, I was praying, "Heavenly Father," I said, "My boy's body is buried in that grave." I expected to feel sad, because I often am when I think about not having Stanford around any more. But instead, a feeling of joy poured into me, and the words came into my mind, "Yes, but he'll get it back again." I just stood there and savored that feeling for several minutes, as long as it lasted. So I was sure to write this experience down in my journal. And awhile later, as I was studying the scriptures, I came across D&C 11:13-14. It describes EXACTLY what I experienced. I have a little post-it on that page in my scriptures to mark this spot. It is dated 3-1-09. This experience happened some weeks or months before that. Also, don't be afraid to talk to someone, maybe President Dias even, about your thoughts and feelings about Stanford. He is an inspired man, and is in place to help the missionaries.

This past week was April vacation for Julia. She and I had a lovely relaxing week. On Tuesday we rode our bikes on the rail trail. On Wednesday we spent several hours with my friend, Karen Buchanan, and her daughter Ashley. At this point, Julia goes with me to visit Karen and Ashley when I ask her to, out of politeness, because she and Ashley really have little in common. But they played with the Wii, and had a fairly good time. In the evening was a Youth Temple Trip. Heather and I went to Celebration of Needlework on Friday and Saturday, and Julia spend the day on Friday with Tracey Cole, and went in the evening to Sis. Blanchette's baby shower. She said there were lots of people there. I felt bad about missing it, but Heather and I had looked forward so long to Celebration. So we went and had a good time, and I sent a gift with Julia. I'll also be knitting some little sweaters for the babies for later.

Well, I'll send this out now, and add more in next week's email. I have your emails from the last four weeks printed out, and need to go through them one more time, to be sure I've answered your questions, and have made comments, and have gathered

the things you want us to send.

Some quick questions: Can you make a CD or something of pictures you've taken so we can see your mission and your companion? I mean, mail it back. I know Taylor Bentall has done that from time to time, but I'm not sure exactly how he did it. Is it starting to get a tiny bit cooler? Now that it is autumn there, I mean?

For our Mother's Day talk, we will be happy to make the call, if you just send us a phone number and time. Or, if you want to do it a different way, let us know that, too. I'm looking forward to talking to you!

I love you, and I'm so happy your testimony is growing, and you feel the Spirit. The Lord loves you, Phillip. I love you, too, but He knows and loves you even more. Every day things will get a bit better for you, easier to understand the language, and as you rely on the Lord, He will help you.

Love,  
Mom