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Email from Mom 8-15-11

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

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

Hello, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen,

I checked your weather, and it looks like another hot and sunny day for you today. I wonder why in the world they had you bring thermal underwear? It's raining here today, pouring most of the day. It is Emmy's last full day with us, and I'll be taking the girls and Jonathan to Barnes & Noble, then later the girls have an art class at AC Moore. We've done some fun things this past week, and I hope it has been a good mixture for them between relaxing and being at home, and doing away-from-home activities. I offered several day trips, but they seem contented to read, work on their drawings or writing or comics, and be on the computer, with occasional other things like baking. That suited me just fine, too! Then on Friday we did a day trip. Rachel showed us which house her grandparents stay in on Plum Island, and we would have parked there and walked to the beach, but there was someone there at the house. So we got ice cream instead. This was after a nice picnic in the park at Newburyport, and walking around, finding a yarn shop and a bookstore, and numerous gift shops.

On Thursday when I took the girls to their art class at AC Moore (painting Japanese fans and making Nori beads), there were a couple of adult women there with their daughters, and the lady teaching the class said she always encouraged Moms to come, too, so I went quickly and paid for the class and joined them. It was really fun, and I discovered I quite like watercolor painting, the little bit that I did. So I signed up to take the other class with Julia on the 23rd of August, after Emmy has gone. That one will be decorated journals, which should be fun, and will either encourage me to write more, or I will not want to write in it at all for fear of spoiling it! I know my Mom does not write in cute little books because she doesn't want to make mistakes.

I'm so glad you celebrated Stanford's birthday, and remembered it on the day. It really made me feel good that you did that, and it sounds like a very good way to remember him and think about him. This year for the cake, I did not get a cheesecake because everyone except for Julia and Stanford like regular cake better. So I bought a mix for a red velvet cake, which is basically a vanilla cake with a tiny bit of chocolate and a whole bunch of red food coloring. I figured he would have like that. And we got some fun candles that burn in the colors of the candle. So if the candle is blue, the flame

burns blue, if it's orange, the flame is orange, etc. I've always bought stuff at BJ's, but this time we got cake and cupcake making supplies at the grocery store and I let the girls choose decorations, and there is a lot more to choose from at the grocery store. It was really good to have people here yesterday. When I asked Julia to set the table, she asked for how many, and I said eight. Then she said, "I love setting the table for eight!". It's not that she loves the extra jobs to do, but that she loves having all of those people here. I thought of how we had people from three families here last night, and how I used to regularly make dinner for seven people. It's amazing how things change. I guess that's life. I have been watching a British series of mysteries, "Hamish Macbeth", and in the last episode I watched, one of the characters was taking a temporary job as an undertaker. He ended up doing it permanently, and had to move from his home with his father to the mortuary, and it showed how both he and his father cried (separately, and by themselves) when he left. I thought of how a person raises children and has a very intense life taking care of them, then they grow up and go out on their own, which is what you've been raising them to do, but still, it's a change, and everything is different. It's different stages of life, and no stage is permanent. So I guess we just need to do our best with each one, and enjoy every day that we have, no matter what it brings. Life is fleeting. How is that for Monday philosophy? :)

Here is one fun thing that you will like to know (and maybe wish you could do it too!): this is from Leslie's recent email:

Gideon and I will be traveling to Orlando this week so he can compete in the Nerf Dart Tag World Championship. He's been wanting to do this for over a year, so he entered the contest from which they would choose the tournament contestants. We found out on August 1st that he had won the trip for himself and his guardian. The official agenda says that we will fly into Orlando on Friday, compete on Saturday, and head home on Sunday--squishing Disney World in there at some point in time. However, the airline confirmation they sent me had us arriving in Orlando on Wednesday. When I called to let them know of the error, the travel agent who is arranging the whole thing suggested that she might be able to negotiate a hotel rate of \$53 a night for the extra 2 nights. I'm still waiting to hear if she can it (we should know tomorrow). If so, it will give us a couple of extra days to spend at Disney World and to relax and enjoy the trip. In any case, we'll be in Orlando over the weekend. Gideon has purchased a Nerf gun of the same type the tournament uses so he can practice. He will meet his team mates on Friday.

Isn't that cool?! Have you ever heard of the Nerf Dart Tag World Championship? Or Nerf Dart Tag at all? I'm sure it's something that is right up your alley.

Yesterday at church an interesting thing happened. After Sacrament Meeting had started, Max Quayle's Mom came in, along with a man whom I recognized, and set up

a chair up in the front of the chapel, facing the people, and he sat on the first row to face her. Then she did American Sign Language all the way through the meeting, so he could "hear" the talks. And during the hymns, the two of them "sang" with Sign Language. It was pretty cool. I've seen them before when I've visited other wards, and I don't know why they came to ours, but it was really neat.

Dad mentioned in his email how he took down the bed so Jonathan could sleep in it. Gradually I'll be putting your books on the bookshelf downstairs, and the other stuff in boxes, labeled neatly so that you can easily figure it all out and go through it when you are back. As he and I took the bedding off (and all of the other stuff in your bed!), he mentioned, at about the same time that I thought it, that it was like a time capsule, seeing all of the things you had in your bed! Books and journals, game things, an odd sock, and lots of blankets. I would love to see pictures of your house and room on your mission, to see how you keep it, and be able to visualize you there!

Julia will probably tell you this in an email or letter to you, but she might not get to it today, with Emmy here still. She has been called to be on SYC this upcoming year. She thought that only Laurels and Priests were on SYC, but I told her, obviously not, since she has been called to it. She is a bit nervous about it, and she will likely ask you about it, to know what to do. I think she will do really well with it. I keep hearing good things about her, from YW Camp, and Youth Conference, how she has a very strong testimony (though she bears her testimony at came, she doesn't in our ward, so I don't hear it), and how well she interacts with the other girls. Dad told me that Mallory Henkel relied on Julia to be the one to lead the other girls along and inspire them. That is really cool. Julia is planning to serve a mission, and talks about that pretty often.

How is Luis? Was he able to be baptized? I was thinking about people accepting the gospel, and what an act of faith it is to be baptized. My counselor, Nancy Carl, was released, and I'm needing to choose another one. I found out last night that I could have the help of my other counselor, Reta Brown, and my secretary, Judy Peterson, in making the choice. That's good to know. But I am having such a hard time. It's hard to know if the Lord has a preference on whom I choose. On the one hand, the Lord will direct the church to be run, and I won't be ruining things if I choose one person rather than another. However, it does change people's lives to have an experience of a calling like that. Any calling changes lives. Maybe I shouldn't worry about it so much, and just act with faith that the Lord will let me know if the person I want to call is the wrong one. Just like Luis and other investigators act with faith when they are baptized. They just do it. And the Lord leads them and guides them.

Well, my dear missionary son, the Church is true, and we are so blessed to have the fulness of the gospel, all of it! The Lord leads and guides His people, and especially His missionaries. I pray for you daily, to be safe, and to be inspired, and to have your

own testimony grow, and to notice the miracles you see every day. I love you, and I miss you, but you are right where you need to be right now.

Love,
Mom