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Email from Mom, 9 July 2012

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

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

Hello, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen!

Here we are, yet another week gone. The weeks just seem to fly by sometimes. Does it seem that way to you? This week I won't be caught in my pajamas by the Activity Day girls wanting to do some service, but it was fun last week, and quite hectic! Dad put on the two pictures to his email with the Activity Day girls and their leaders, Jenn Blanchette (who looks like one of the girls, herself) and Jinsun Hong. Both of them have daughters in Activity Days, plus there were three other girls. They loved washing our car! I'm glad I asked Dad for a suggestion, because the only things I could think of to do are cleaning the litter box (Zen garden?), or weeding the garden.

Speaking of service, this reminds me of the missionaries who came to our house on Saturday night. They asked if there is anything they could do for us, as they always do. I had thought earlier in the day that it would be nice to have someone help with the garden stuff, and even thought of the missionaries. But then I always think it's a trivial thing for them to be doing instead of teaching people the gospel. However, they said their new mission president has had meetings and interviews with the missionaries (as has your new mission president, and I'm excited to hear about it). The new Boston mission president has a new program, the Ammon Project (Dad suggested it involved cutting off arms, but I don't think that is it!). Bro. Theobald said in his talk yesterday that the Ammon Project is to have the missionaries do service, for about 30 hours a week. He said that Ammon, on his mission, did service, focusing on service, and that doing that led him to the opportunity to teach the king about the Plan of Salvation. Ammon wasn't tracting, or handing out Books of Mormon, or preaching in town squares, or anything that missionaries commonly do. He was doing service. Period. Then he was able to teach after that. So, maybe I'll have the missionaries help with the garden. I would have them help with painting, but they couldn't come into the house if Dad is not here. So that may have to wait until you get home, and you can be here, too.

The painting has gone quite well. I just have one more coat on the floorboards, plus the window woodwork and the inside of the closet, plus the two doors in the room to paint. I'm hoping to get lots of that done today. And finish up the painting this week! That will be wonderful. I have not chosen a floor covering just yet, but I'll look around for it. Also window treatments need to be chosen. Dad told you how we bought the book cases, and a chair for me. I'll also be looking for lighting, though that will need to wait more until I see what I need. And baskets or boxes to put on the shelves to hold yarn and other treasures. Bradford saw the room painted for the first time on Saturday, and asked if I had had help. I told him Kemper Ure had helped me to clear the room. Also, Julia helped a little bit on the first day with painting the edges along the ceiling. But the rest I have done myself. I think he's impressed the project is actually getting done. I don't like how stuff is a mess around the house for weeks with this project going on. But, I have a plan, and daily goals, which helps.

Julia gave a really good talk in Sacrament Meeting yesterday. The whole meeting was about service, and she was given the usual scripture in Mosiah to speak about. She ended up taking each letter in the word "SERVICE" and using it to talk about an aspect of service. I've asked her to send you her talk. Both she and Rachel said yesterday that they didn't know what to write to you about, because they had nothing to say. I guess I talk a lot, because I find things to say every week, even when Dad tells all the news already (like Miranda's mission call). I suggested things for each of them to write

about, so hopefully they'll write to you soon.

Jinsun Hong (one of the Activity Day leaders whom I mentioned earlier) also spoke in church yesterday. She said that service requires a big heart, and talked about how to make your heart bigger. You can do this by serving others and by being served by others. Amy Theobald bore her testimony then, as a last-minute request of the Bishop. The Theobalds are moving to the Merrimack Ward this Saturday, to live in a house near Amy's sister (who is Tasha Parker). We'll miss them a lot. Anyway, Amy talked about how Heavenly Father's plan is eternal for the whole world, but it is also for each one of us, and He knows about each intricate detail of our lives. She said if it matters to you, it matters to the Lord. And then Shawn Theobald also spoke, also on service, and he talked about the Ammon Project and about different aspects of service. It was a really good meeting.

Karen Ogden is currently in Brazil, visiting her mission. This is her second trip back to the country since she returned from her mission. One of the purposes of going down this time is to see one of the missionaries she connected with while she was there. He finished up his mission in June, and they are thinking about a future together. I will be anxious to hear from Patty how things go. Patty and David were going to Skype with Karen last night. And Patty said the young man (now a returned missionary) will be visiting later this year to get to know Patty and David and the family a bit.

Well, that's all I have for this week. This coming week will be nice and quite, I think. I'm planning to finish up the painting. And I will be alone, totally, except for Winston, on Friday and Saturday. Dad will be in Egypt, Julia will be at Youth Conference, and Heather and Rachel are going to the Pageant. I've invited Patty over to stitch on Saturday afternoon, and I'll be taking care of the Hawkins bunny and the Potter cats. And have Friday Night Knitting at Barnes and Noble. So, I guess there are things for me to do, and I'll actually enjoy the solitude the rest of the time. But it will be very strange to only cook for one person, and to only have myself in the house at night.

Phillip, you are down to weeks now in your mission. Amazing. Think of how it felt when you first started, how long it seemed to be. Two years is a long time to be away from home. And think of how much you have grown. Your testimony shines forth in each letter you send home, and your joy in the service of the Lord is very evident. You have helped my testimony to grow, too, encouraged me to be more diligent at scriptures study and prayer, and the things that help us be closer to the Lord, just by your example. We are so blessed to have you serving as a missionary. Keep strong, and keep working hard, and stay healthy and safe! I love you very much.

Love,
Mom