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Email from Mom, 27 August 2012

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

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

Hello, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen!

How are you this beautiful day at the end of August? This day with a touch of fall in the air? It will be warm today, 87 degrees, here, so we'll put on the AC shortly, but I love this time of year, with a hint of crispness and autumn. We've been eating tomatoes and cucumbers from the garden, and it's lovely to have them growing this year! The backyard grass looks really good, actually, which is also a change. Even our yard and garden are getting ready to welcome you back in nine days! However, you still have nine days of full-time missionary work, as you know, so endure to the end, and keep focusing on the people you're teaching, whose lives you are touching and changing.

This has felt like a very busy week for me this past week. Each day has been filled with activities and people, all of whom I've enjoyed. But I'm needing to re-group and slow down a bit, so I'm glad of a day at home, my own P-day, I guess! I'm looking at my purse date-book to see what I've done, and it's very sweet that Julia wrote, "All day smile" 😊 on Tuesday for me. (That is in addition to my knitting group, which was written in for Tuesday.) On that day, I took Rachel with me to knit, and that was fun for both of us. Julia opted to stay home because of wanting to work on some of her artwork for school. After our knitting, Rachel and I went to the mall so I could buy some birthday gifts for Craft and Chat, and for Sandy Cole. We ended up shopping for several hours, and Rachel bought a very pretty skirt and blouse, which she wore to church yesterday. It was a fun afternoon for both of us.

Julia and I took a watercolor class at AC Moore on Wednesday. I've been wanting to do this with her for awhile, and finally we did. I can see myself getting into watercolor a bit, though it is very new to me, and very different from other creative things I've done. I've seen some watercolor journals people have made (online), and they intrigue me. And I like the delicate nature of what you can paint with watercolors. We'll see what I can do with it.

Wednesday evening Patty and I got together to stitch. Julia was basically gone for the next three days, to YW for a "Dance Par-tay" (they met at the Noels'), then a sleepover. Then they went to Six Flags on Thursday, and she was home after midnight, then on Friday Cheryl Potter picked up her and Melanie Nelson and Tracey Cole, who all turn 16 by the end of the summer, and took them for the day to York, Maine. 🍷🍷 So it feels like I have not seen Julia much this week. Anyway, when Patty and I got together, I told her about Bradford's engagement, and also said Bradford had moved in with Amy. Patty said, "Well, yes," indicating that she would expect that where he is now in his gospel living, he would, of course, be doing things of the world. But then we talked about what a good boy Bradford is (I guess "man" is the right term, but all of my children are boys and girls to me, my babies.). Patty was very reassuring to me, and I think she can have a broader picture sometimes of this, because she has seen her own family through the conversion process, and through trials and troubles that we have not faced (like Michael's depression, and her own depression in past years). She helped to give me hope that one day Bradford will come around, and that Heavenly Father uses all of our choices for His purposes. And Bradford is a wonderful boy, even now, even with some of the choices he is making.

Thursday Sandy and I got together for lunch, to finally celebrate her birthday, which is in June. And our Home Teacher, Bro. Henkel, came in the evening. Then on Friday I was helping out most of the day with the blood drive. I bought a cake 🍰 from Hannaford, and had them put "Happy Birthday" on

it. I made a little display with a picture of Stanford, and some of his stuffed animals, and a couple of balloons. Since the cemetery is reinforcing its rules about what can go on the grave, I will do the balloons at the blood drive rather than at the grave, I guess. We'll see. I was thinking that for the blood drive next year I could bring some Avatar DVD's and SpongeBob, and have those playing, too. Some of Stanford's favorite things. That reminds me, Julia and I have been watching *Avatar, the Last Airbender*, and we've finished Season 2 now. I'm actually enjoying it, now that I know the story and the people! Friday evening I went to Friday Night Knitting at Barnes & Noble. Then Saturday I went to Raymond for Craft & Chat. All fun things, but I am overdone, and ready for a day at home!

Oh, and yesterday I attended the Littleton Ward, and got to hear a missionary talk from Ben Gentile, who just returned on Thursday from Guatemala. It was fun to hear that! His family went down to get him (I felt a bit of unfairness, there, that I'm not coming to get you because I'm trying to follow the guidance of the Church, but the Gentiles went to Guatemala to get their son, but when I told Dad that last night and said we would just have to plan a trip with you to Brazil in the future, he asked if I had my passport application done yet? So, I need to get busy with that, so the trip can become a reality.) I talked with Ben Gentile for a minute after Sacrament Meeting, and he didn't seem to remember you. So I'm guessing you didn't know each other very well. In his talk he said the best part of the mission is seeing the conversion process unfold in someone (including himself). He said a good thing is to point out to the family what they are feeling when there is a spiritually strong moment, so they know it is the Spirit they are feeling. And he said that on the mission, you change what you teach (which subject you teach) depending on the needs of the people being taught. He gave the example of teaching a family where they felt to not talk about Joseph Smith at that time, but to talk about Eternal Families, and how to obtain that. I'm sure these are all very familiar things to you.

Ok, here are a few things to think about for this upcoming week: I don't know how much stuff you have to bring home, but you might consider mailing some of it, because your suitcases were pretty full when you left, and you've acquired several new things that I know about. And remember cash, or probably the debit card, to pay for the suitcases you check onto the flight.

Also, Patty Ogden said when Karen traveled home, she traveled with three Elders (so there were four of them in the group), and they lost one of the Elders in Atlanta. It turns out he was pulled out for a random security check and missed his flight, and got the next one. I can just imagine how it may have been, and what his family may have been thinking as he was not getting off the plane when they expected him. And that reminded me that you do have some calling cards still, I think. Just be sure to carry them with you, with your other money and such, so that if the need arises, you can call to tell of travel changes. And, I mentioned this on a stitching group I'm in, and my friend, Gail Smith, whom I saw at Celebration of Needlework this year, and who lives in Atlanta (one of your stops), posted the following:

"Should anything happen to Phillip's travels, keep my number handy. My work number is 478*741*8877 & I am there until 6pm each night, so ifn ya need me, I am there for you. I can't answer my cell phone at work, during work hours, so call work if he needs to spend the night or what ever. I know you are counting the days. It will be good to see him & touch him again. How long is he staying or what might be his plans?"

Gail is not a member of the Church, but if you need someone, she is available. She is the nicest lady, and she could/would help you if necessary. And if that were the case, there is another opportunity for missionary work 🤗.

Russ Noel called me one day, and said they would like for you to speak in Heritage Park at the end of September. So, you'll just give the same talk you will give in Nashua 1st on the 16th of September, more or less.

There are a couple of other "when you get home" sort of things, fun things, mostly, but those can wait until you get home. So, I'll save the list, and we can talk about more later.

I love reading your missionary experiences that you have every week! What will you do today for P-day? How has your week gone? How hot is it in Teresina? You have a clock that tells the temp, right? Oh, in Littleton yesterday, they had a Linger-Longer after the meeting block. My lucky day to visit! While I was eating, Cynthia Pierce (who used to be the RS President) came to sit beside me. She and I got to talking, and it turns out she has several languages under her belt. She minored in French and German in college, then served a Spanish-speaking mission, all before she met her husband. Then, because he is in the military, they have lived in Asia as well as Europe, and she learned a bit of those languages (Korean, Japanese?). She said she could speak about gospel things, but when it came to setting up a phone line in the house they were living in, she did not have the vocabulary to do that in Spain. And she said she was asked to give a prayer in Spain, and gave it in English, because even though she had spoken Spanish on her mission, she had been speaking German for the previous three years, and had not made the transition to thinking in Spanish. Languages are interesting. I told her about my efforts to learn a bit of Portuguese, and she said I could get onto LDS.org and download the audio for Conference, and for the scriptures, then follow along in the books/magazines as I listen, so I could learn to read the language. I'll give that a try (in my "spare" time!).

Well, enough for today. I love you very much, dear Phillip Edward. I'm so glad to be your Mom! And so glad for your missionary service! I love hearing all about it, and love that you have had/are having such a wonderful missionary experience! Keep working hard, and doing things to feel the Spirit daily.

Love,
Mom