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Email from Mom, 14 November 2011

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

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

Hello, Dear Elder Phillip Larsen,

My, the weeks just fly by, don't they? I don't know if the time goes for you as quickly as it does for me. I was brushing my teeth the other night with the Oral B, and thought, "Didn't I just do this?". And it made me think of those scenes in *Groundhog Day* when they show the same thing happening time after time, and you realize lots of time has passed, but it's the same day all over again. That's how it felt when I brushed my teeth. We do the same things each day, but each day is one day older, one day closer to whatever is in the future. I guess the trick is to savor and enjoy the moment.

So, how's that for some Monday morning philosophy? I'm sitting here with the window open. Winston was enjoying the fresh air, but he's now sitting in a sun patch on the carpet in the hallway by his water dish. I have a pinecone that was covered with shortening, then in bird seed. It hangs on the rhododendron bush outside the kitchen, and it attracts quite a few birds. Mostly I've seen bluejays there, but I also saw one which was smaller, maybe a chickadee? I don't know my birds very well, but maybe I can learn about them. I still remember how amazed Grandpa was to see the bluejays, and he said he had never seen them except for her in New Hampshire.

The guys working on Beverly's property (It's actually not hers any longer, but I still think of it as her house.) started up early this morning. A new house has a first floor, and they're working hard to frame it all and get it ready to finish up. It's looking good, and will be very nice, though it looks generic, because nobody lives there. I called Beverly on Tuesday of last week (she sounded very good, because she has her chemo on Wednesdays and by Tuesday she is feeling better), and she said Maggie had driven by the house, and just cried. It is sad to see changes. I notice more and more as time goes by. But that's the nature of life.

Do you remember Al Beals, who worked with the music department at Elm Street and was active in Boy Scouts? He passed away on October 29th, at age 80. Heather and Bradford remember him very well, but I don't know if you knew him. There was an article in the paper about him a few years ago, about all of his contributions to the community and about his life. He did a lot. In the last couple of years, he lost his legs

to complications of diabetes, but he still had a strong positive outlook on life. His picture is on the slideshow, at a Boy Scout gathering.

Dad said in his email that this week has had no activities for photographs, which is true. It has been a less busy week, I guess, more routine and less extra. But Friday was Veteran's Day. Julia and I went to the parade, and I forgot the camera so we didn't take any pictures, but we had a good time. We were standing facing the hospital (so the sun was not in our faces), and there was nobody around us nearby, so if people in the parade waved in our direction, we knew they were waving at us. There were all of the bands, and the usual old guy playing the sax. There were men in the Army, dressed in fatigues, walking, and they shook our hands. I thanked them for their service. A Boy Scout gave Julia some candy (she said this made it worth it to come!). The NHSS Band looks great in their new uniforms. The weather was nice, and it was, all in all, a nice day. I found it interesting that Julia was the one who made sure we went to the parade. I was planning to go anyway, but she insisted on it. That's cool. She wanted to remember our veterans in this way. It's neat that things like that are important to her, and to all of you kids.

I saw a post on Facebook that Tasha Carrol has "42 days until the MTC". I didn't even know she was planning on a mission! I still can't figure out where she is going, but I think that's exciting. It will be good for her, as well as for the people she serves.

We had the last Ward Conference of the year in Billerica yesterday. It went well, I think, and I gave the lesson, as I have been doing all year in Relief Society. It is the same lesson, but I do different things, depending on what feels right. I always make it a matter of prayer to know what the Lord wants for the sisters of the particular ward I'm visiting. Next year we'll just visit the Relief Societies, not teach in them, and though it will make it less stressful (I tend to not sleep as well the night before, even when I've given the same lesson a number of times already), I will miss it. Maybe I'll plan to at least do a short spiritual thought. I'm not sure. We had FHE last night, because Heather and I are going to knit at the Toadstool Bookshop tonight, and I gave the same lesson to the family. I think it went well. It is on Ministering, and I used a section in the new handbook about it, and what it means. It's service, but not just service projects, but on being aware of what people need, and loving them. We talked about how in the church people are taught one by one, and how their names are taken (membership records) to make sure we know them. We talked about loving them unconditionally, and about establishing sincere friendship and visiting them in their homes and elsewhere (which sounds a lot like Home Teaching and Visiting Teaching, doesn't it?). There were scriptures in the handbook that talked about all of these things. In addition, I talked about recognizing the service we already do, and not beating ourselves up over the things we can't do. And how even little things are ministering. There is a quote by Elaine L. Jack (who served in the General RS Presidency a number of years ago. It is, "We cannot always lift the burden of

someone who is troubled, but we can lift her so she can bear it well." And I didn't tell this yesterday, but I did in one of the Ward Conferences: when we had gotten very bad news of one of Stanford's scans that showed the tumor had grown a lot, Deborah Carl, who was my visiting teacher at the time, called and said she heard we had bad news, and would I like her to come over? I thought to say no, because really, what could she do? But I said yes, and she came a few minutes later, with a box of tissues in one hand and chocolate bars in the other. I just laughed through my tears at that, and we sat down and talked and cried for about a half hour. I will never forget that. But that is a perfect example to me of ministering, lifting someone so she can bear her burdens well. Chocolate helps!

Well, I'll send this now, so you'll be sure to get it. I love you very much, Phillip. I'm so proud of you, and pray for you every day, that you'll continue to have your testimony strengthened, and find joy in each day of your missionary service. And, of course I pray for your protection, as well. The gospel is such a blessing! The church is true, and I know Heavenly Father loves us. There is evidence all around us, and spiritual experiences to be had for the taking, if we will only open our eyes and see them! So, that's my challenge for myself for this week, and for you, too. Notice the miracles! Feel the joy! I miss you, but you're doing the Lord's work, so you're right where you are supposed to be right now. What a blessing!

Love,
Mom