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Email from Mom, 5 December 2011

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

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

Hello, My Dear Elder Phillip Larsen!

Well, one thing this week is that Dad and I definitely won't have the same things to talk about! The time difference from Egypt to NH is so much that I seldom have a chance to chat with him when he's not going to bed or something. However, he'll be home on Thursday, and we'll rush around with Christmas things and concert rehearsals and such. What are people doing in Brazil to celebrate Christmas? Will you be having a Ward party?

Last night Julia and I went to the First Presidency Devotional at the church. Heather arrived after the first two songs. She came straight there from her drive home from CT. Today she also has the day off, and we'll be going out for a fun errand (yarn shop) and maybe lunch. Last night at the Devotional, the only people who were there was Bro. Gribble, whom Dad had asked to set up the equipment, and the Nashua 1st missionaries, and one investigator, plus us. That was all. I think most people listen on their computers or satellite TV's. I really liked the Devotional. It's a good way to start the Christmas season, though, really, it started right after Thanksgiving. Or right before, if you count the music I've been listening to for a couple of weeks now!

Yesterday in the hallway I was talking to the Elders from our Ward, Elder Jones and Elder Stephens. You've seen them in pictures that Dad has sent. They said transfers are happening again on the 15th, and though I would like them to both be here for Christmas, it's likely one will be transferred. We've had Elder Jones here since April. They both ask about you every time they see me, "How is Elder Larsen doing?" (Also, Sis. Hood asks the same question whenever I visit teach her.) The missionaries said they hope they can meet you some day. They said they would like to visit here after their missions, maybe even live here! I teased them, that they sounded like Ammon and King Lamoni, "yea, even until the day I die". They said how much they love their missions, love being missionaries. I know you love it, too. You work hard, but hopefully feel the Spirit, and know the Lord better each day.

On Thursday evening Julia and I went to Barnes & Noble to hear the NHSS Jazz Band playing in the cafe, the way they have done for several years now. It was really nice, very festive. Julia found a couple of friends from school to hang out with, and I

sat with Garrett's grandparents (Barbara's parents) at a table in the cafe to listen. This morning I filled out the order form for tickets to the Santa Fund Concert. And tomorrow Julia and I will attend Rachel's concert at her school. It's a very festive time of year. The weather has been unseasonably warm, and I actually don't mind it. It makes driving easier, and it's still pleasant to take walks. The concerts help us to feel more of a Christmas spirit.

Yesterday I spent some time writing in my Christmas journal. Maybe you don't remember it, maybe you didn't even know I do it. But since 2004 when I first got the book (which my friend, Karen Buchanan, made), I write in it for the month of December, more or less. I write one day in green, the next in red, and I put ticket stubs and programs and such in the book. I also keep track of gifts received in it. I had gotten behind so I took the time to write. And found that I didn't write at all last year, for some reason. I vaguely remember thinking it would ease things up if I didn't feel obligated to write every day, which it did, but now the details are lost. And yesterday I read some of the entries from 2006, when Stanford was sick. It made me cry. But I could also feel the Spirit, and thinking of that time gives me greater faith in the Plan of Salvation, and hope for the Resurrection. Our lesson yesterday in Relief Society was from the Gospel Principles book, on The Final Judgement. Shelly Scott gave the lesson, and did an excellent job. She apparently was assigned the lesson sort of at the last minute, but you would never know it from how she prepared. I really admire Shelly, the whole Scott family, really. She has faith, and an ability to serve and love, and not become stressed about things, but to enjoy the moment as well as working hard. She follows the Spirit, I think. I think that's how she does it. I'll have to ask her!

Sis. Blanchette will be having surgery on Thursday, to have her gall bladder out. She has had health issues of one kind or another ever since the babies were born. She has said that it was a miracle she could carry them as long as she did, and that they arrived safely, but that doesn't mean it was easy, or without cost to her. So she is dealing with this, and hopefully the surgery will help ease some of the things she has been feeling. She and I Visit Teach together, and I ended up doing it alone last week. I visited Kendall Hood (her baby Abby was sick, so it had to be this way). And I went up to Depot Farm Stand, which is owned by the parents of Stephanie Roth, and visited while Stephanie was working. It was different, and fun, and had the advantage of my being able to finish shopping for Oma and Papa, and their present will be on its way this week! I'll have to visit Stephanie there again this month a time or two. And we'll do the rest of the visiting teaching for this month at Jenn's house. It's amazing how you can serve, even though conditions are not ideal.

One funny thing about Jenn and her babies, well, a couple, actually. Every week at Church, Claudia Banks and Tammy Gribble take the babies into the Family History Center during Sunday School, then they bring them to Relief Society. Also, I think

Claudia will have them overnight this weekend after Jenn's surgery. She seems thrilled to be able to do it. So one week I told Jenn it was so nice of her to have two babies, so that Claudia and Tammy could each have one, and not fight over them. She said it was her pleasure, but she wouldn't be doing it again! Also, I noticed Ephraim (the youngest twin) has glitter in his hair all the time. We talked about that, and said that with four sisters, he had better get used to it! Then Tammy Gribble said it may be from people's lip gloss, which I can imagine, with all the women giving him kisses!

I already read Ian's letter from the Netherlands for this week. Do you get his emails? I can't remember. I just checked. It doesn't look like you do get them. Would you like to? I'm guessing you still print out the emails you don't have time to read every week? Technology is amazing. Dad could help Heather and Mandy in CT, from Egypt yesterday. And this morning while I was writing to you, Kelly Toth, who is currently living in Korea, messaged me on FB. Instant communication. How amazing is that? Anyway, on the letters she forwards, Leslie puts her own to Ian at the bottom. Here is a bit from the latest letter she sent to him:

"How are things going in your new area? Is driving getting any better? Do you have many investigators? We look forward to hearing how the work is going. We would also love to hear how Christmas is celebrated in the Netherlands. At the ward Christmas party, Bro. Roskelley spoke about his most memorable Christmas. He said it was when he was on his mission and his focus was on Christ and bring people unto him. He didn't miss the presents, the shopping, and all of the other stuff that seems to go with our American Christmases."

Well, I need to get ready for when Heather arrives. She and I will finish getting your box ready and mail it on the way to our outing. I'm not at all sure it will arrive in time, but at least there is a good chance it will actually arrive! (Unlike a Honduras mission, where things got stolen, or Lori's mission, where she got an empty box with a note saying it arrived empty.) Christmas this year is on a Sunday, and I found out yesterday that we will have Sacrament Meeting only, at 11am with the Nashua 2nd Ward. Heather will have Sacrament Meeting only at 1pm, her ward's usual time. So we'll need to be thinking about the phone call (yippee! I will get to talk to my boy, my missionary!), and when we want to have it, and where we will call you.

Oh, that reminds me of one more thing. I checked out German tapes from the library (the Portuguese ones were out so I requested them for whenever they came in.). So I've been listening to German again. And when they tell me to say a word or phrase in German, it's Portuguese I think of first! Learning these languages is really exercising my brain, which is a good thing. I can at least ask you how you are, in Portuguese (also in German), when we talk on Christmas!

One more thing . . . Julia actually bore her testimony yesterday. That's the first time I've heard it, though I know she has done it several times at YW Camp and EFY and Youth Conference. She said in her testimony she reads D&C 19:16-19 every week, and talked about that (a Scripture Mastery). She has a very strong testimony, and it's a pleasure for me to see it grow. Don't tell her I said anything, though, because she does not like a fuss made over her at all. She tried to make me promise to leave the room at YW in Excellence when it came time for her part on Wednesday because she doesn't like me to say anything at all or make a fuss.

I'm sure I can keep thinking of one more thing over and over, but it's time to go, and you'll also have other emails to read today :). I love you, and I miss you, but I'm so proud of you and the work you're doing. We are so blessed to have a missionary serving from our family. And we are blessed to have the gospel and our testimonies. Take care, and I look forward to reading this week's email, and maybe listening to another wave file! Love you!

Love,
Mom