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Email from Mom, 2-27-12

Joyce Larsen <linenlady9@gmail.com>

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

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

Hello, my Dear Elder Phillip Larsen,

Wow, the time is passing. Leslie posted on her FB that Ian just had his one-year mark on the 23rd of this month. So his mission is going quickly, as is yours. And Ricky will be going home in June, if I remember correctly. Then you'll be the only one on the map in South America! Amazing.

Monday is the start of Julia's school vacation. Technically she has been on vacation since after school on Friday, but Monday is the start of the sleep-in days (at least for me), and the vacation week. As I always do, I made a list of things for us to think about doing this week. I found out that we can pay \$12 (I'm assuming per person) to swim all day at the Crowne Plaza, so I think that's one of the things we'll do this week. We'll also go to lunch one day and go shopping for shoes for Julia, and a game that she was promised from Christmas. We'll bake cookies for the ladies I visit teach, and deliver them. And we'll clean things, sort through things. And write. And practice. So, lots of things to do, and I hope I can get enough sleep, too!

Well, as usual, Dad filled you in on all of the things we did this week. It was a pretty quiet week for me. Mostly staying home and doing home things, which I really need sometimes. I just wish I could get more done on my list! Oh, well.

So, there are still a couple of things to talk about. One is that I've been asked to speak for about ten minutes at the Relief Society Birthday Party in the Lowell Ward on March 15th, any topic I choose. Sister Hangen will also be speaking, about the history of Relief Society. I've thought about it, and prayed about it, and thought some more. Finally, one day I was watching a few minutes of news on TV while I made the bed, and that day everything seemed really weird to me. It struck me what a strange world we live in, and how these really are the last days, with so much wickedness and so many trials. And I thought of how you hear all these things on the news and can't really do anything about them, only argue with people about politics and write letters to the editor about things, and get attacked verbally for your stand on things like gay marriage. But I thought of how we can all make our homes a refuge from worldly things. And the sisters in Relief Society can do this, no matter where they are in their lives (single, married, home owners, living with a roommate, whatever). We all have

the ability and the duty to make our homes a place of refuge where the Spirit can dwell, and we can be recharged for each day's efforts in the world. Then when the missionaries came to dinner on Saturday night I told them about this idea. Elder Stephens said that they, as missionaries, can really feel the Spirit in people's homes. They spend their days among people who do not yet have the gospel, and whose lives are not yet to gospel standards, and who do not have the Spirit. And they can really tell a difference when they go to the member's homes in the evening (and for you, it would be at lunch time). He said it's like a reprieve. So maybe I could talk about that a bit, too. How our efforts will bless us, and our families, and those who visit us, as well.

The other thing is that our own ward's Relief Society is coming up on the 8th of March. They have had a Service Auction each year, and each year I've missed it, for one reason or another. They have a nice dinner, then the service auction, and you fill out a questionnaire about things you do (read scriptures, brush your teeth, give a compliment), and get points for that, that you use to pay for the services. And you also donate a service, some suggestions being that you might babysit someone's kids, or make them a meal, or help paint a room or provide chauffeur services. I have had a really hard time thinking of what I might donate, because I don't want to take on yet another knitting project, or babysit people's kids, and I'm not known for my abilities in any particular area, really. I know Shelly Scott is doing a basic will for someone. And Sandy Cole has helped paint a room (but I NEED help painting a room!). Finally, as we went to the Temple on Saturday morning, I thought that I could offer to be the chauffeur for someone who wants to go to the Temple for a 10am session or so, on a week day. I would drive, and go with the person to the Temple, then treat her for lunch after. I thought of who might want this, and it might be someone who doesn't want to pay for gas (which has gone up a lot in cost in the last week, and is supposed to go up much more), or someone who would like to go but just needs a bit of a push like having a buddy going with would provide, or someone like Sis. Favey who does not drive any more. So I could do that, and maybe bake cookies for another service.

So, anyway, that's my week, and it's really neat how the Spirit speaks to you. Those last two ideas (topic for my talk, service auction) are still in the planning stages, but I feel good about both of those, like I'm on the right track. The gospel is true, and Heavenly Father loves each one of us, and knows each one of us, and wants us to come back to live with Him. I'm so grateful for that knowledge. I have to keep reminding myself of these things, too, as we all do. We all have to keep working on our testimonies, keeping them alive, and growing.

I love you, and I'm so glad you're on your mission, and loving it! I can't wait to hear your week's news!

Love,

Mom

P.S. I told a knitting friend about how you sleep in a hammock, and she is very envious! She would like to try that, too!