

The Whites

Hi, Family! Hope you had a great Christmas. But not so wonderful that you didn't miss us! Ours was very different, but good. (And we missed you all! A LOT!)

I'll tell you about our Christmas. All the mail comes to the mission office, where we put on the correct address label and send it to where the missionary is presently serving. I saw a video about missionary work where the missionaries were spending a lonely Christmas with no gifts from home. I remember a scene where they make their way to the mission office, peer through the glass window on the locked door, and there are their packages, locked inside. We had determined from the first that we would spend our Christmas Eve delivering packages which came too late to be forwarded, to the missionaries, so no one would be without. (Little did we know that some of the Elders simply didn't get any gifts while their companion got lots! Pretty sad.)

So, on Christmas Eve, the Farrers and we set out to the East of Dallas with several stops to make. I had found out from Sarah that my 1st cousin, Lawrence Taylor, Aunt Bernice's son, lives in Whitehouse, Texas, RIGHT HERE IN OUR MISSION! I sent him a Christmas letter with a Joy to the World pass along card. But now, as we made our deliveries, I knew we'd be going very near his house. SO, I called him. I had no idea what his circumstances were. I remember him being a pretty worldly guy. Lots of money, several wives (not all at the same time.) But here was my chance! I could see a BLOOD relative.

It was a bit awkward since, it turns out, my cousin is a MINISTER! Yup, he said he'd love for us to come out after he made the rounds at the nursing home where he has a ministry and after his wife, Pat attended candlelight services at their Church. Was this the same cousin I knew? The one who got married to his second wife, Lana (pronounced Laaana) on his yacht amid all sorts of materialistic fanfare? We waited till he had filled his responsibilities and visited him! The Farrers are so great. They insisted that they didn't mind a bit. In fact, they said they enjoyed the whole thing.

Lawrence, or Larry, as he calls himself, had a rough life. My granddaddy and grandmother raised him because of all the strife surrounding his parents ugly divorce. (His father, Lem Taylor, had him kidnapped from Aunt Bernice when he was 4 years old. He was left to shift for himself in the home of a hooker until he was rescued.) At 14 the judge told him he could choose whether to live with his mother or daddy. Both choices looked so bleak that he struck out on his own. The tales of his existence as a young boy in a cruel world were enough to make you cry. So it was no wonder he turned to the things of the world. He went to night school for 10 years and got a profession which helped him earn lots of money. But not happiness. When he got down on his luck, lost all his worldly possessions and moved with his son Todd, then 15 years old to this little town, he says he was truly at the bottom.

He met his present wife, Pat, in 1983. She was a Christian and opened the scriptures to him. He began to study and reform and only after he was converted and became a Christian did she agree to marry him. So, they live a very quiet, middle class, rural town life, serving and administering in their church. He's 70 but still works to keep busy, teaches a men's Bible class on Tuesday, a discipleship class on Thursday and on and on. We found them both delightful. So hospitable and friendly (if a little too talkative. We had to work to get a word in.) We talked and reminisced for quite a while. He told us story after story. Aunt Bernice died in a nursing home in Tyler, Texas in 1989 and is buried in Bullard. So we plan to go and visit her grave sometime. It was a great visit and I hugged and hugged him.

I remember being with him every summer when Mother, Alta and I made our visit to Papa and Grandmother in Clarendon, Texas. Of course he was always closer to Alta than to me because of the age difference. Those two were great friends and he reminisced about their days together, stealing watermelons and going on adventures on their horses. I can remember being the tag along little sister who they tried to leave behind.

So, it was good. I left them a Joy to the World DVD and asked him to watch it. Before we went, I had determined to send the missionaries. But after talking to them I wondered if he would eat those little Sister missionaries up. I still may send them. But I wanted to at least introduce him to our Church and I think that DVD does a good job.

So Christmas day was quiet. The Farrers, the Butlers and we had dinner together. Plus Elder Jones and Elder Evertsen, who, we found out, had no dinner invitation for Christmas day. The missionaries have to stay in their apartment on Christmas day unless they have a specific invitation to visit. It might seem an intrusion to have them knock on doors. So we were glad to be of service. And we certainly would want someone to feed **one of you!**

Thank you all for the gifts. They meant so much. Santa kinda skipped right over our little apartment but we had lots of love from you, which was much more important than a lot of STUFF. We love you! PRAY THAT THE BOUNTIFUL HOUSE WILL SELL! Were getting kinda panicky!

Well, we live in Arizona now! Our new phone number is (520) 421-2067 and our address is:
1478 E. 10th Pl.
Casa Grande, AZ 85222

We sold our home on Dec. 1 and started driving west that evening. We had such a great trip and were so grateful that the kids did so well, considering that we drove 3500 miles through 11 states in 11 days. We only stayed the same place two nights in a row one time (at Lana and Aaron's). We saw over 50 relatives which was the highlight of the trip!! Being together was great and it was so nice to have such a memorable vacation. We swam at 4 different hotels and had fun doing lots of things. It was so neat to see so much of this BIG, beautiful country. We sang "Oh, beautiful for spacious skies" and other patriotic songs. We saw some wonderful things that impressed us deeply and inspired us and helped us grow in the gospel.



We had previously been to Sharon, Vermont (Joseph Smith's birthplace) and to Palmyra, The Hill Cumorah, and The Sacred Grove. On this trip we followed the pioneer's trail west. The first place we went was to Kirtland, Ohio. We saw the temple there. Though it's not dedicated or even owned by our church, we were amazed and felt the Spirit as we went through it and contemplated the things that took place there. We saw the Newel K. Whitney store. Actually, there were so many things that we saw on our trip that were amazing but there isn't room to tell it all.

We went to Nauvoo next and pretty much had the whole place and all the couple missionaries to ourselves because it's the off-season. We loved Nauvoo, especially Parley Street where the pioneers walked as they left Nauvoo to cross the Mississippi. We went to Carthage jail - what an experience! Our testimonies and gratitude have been increased a lot.

Winter Quarters, Nebraska was next, then we followed the trail up into Wyoming to stay with the Sorensen's. We went to church with them and had lots of fun, good food, and it was a great visit. We went to Dad's, Jacinta's, Lawson & Kelly's, Todd's sister's, The Pierson's, and the Dye's. Then we headed down to Arizona and got to Tracy's at 3 am. Lots of people helped us move in (including Todd's parents) and we feel pretty settled here already.



We had dinner at Larry and Jill's and they took us to the temple to hear a Christmas concert, eat cinnamon rolls, see the lights, and pick grapefruit. It was neat. Todd's parents came for Christmas. It was great to have them!!

We are enjoying our new ward and getting to know lots of people. Most of the people are under 3 years old since we have been called as the nursery leaders. I'm out of room so I'll stop even though I could go on. All in all, we have had some incredible experiences and



Hello from Texas: We had an exciting month. Leslie finished up her second to last semester at UTSA. Some of us who are tired of cooking every night are looking forward to her finishing up, I won't mention any names. We got Rich home on the 18th. He had a tough time getting here, they had to de-ice the plane's wings in Spokane and that caused him to miss his connection in Chicago so he had to spend the night in a cheap hotel in the projects.

Of course our big thrill this month was our Caribbean cruise. We left on the 20th and got back on the 27th. Our old friends Rick and Kimberley Patterson and their daughter Britnie flew over from Phoenix and went with us. On the 20th we left here and drove the 4.5 hours to Houston. Once we dumped everything off at the cruise dock I had to hustle over to the airport to pick up the Pattersons. The traffic was terrible and I just barely made it back in time. If you are ever tempted to take a trip to Houston for any reason I suggest you reconsider and go somewhere nicer, say like Cleveland or Barstow. We left at 4:00 PM and sailed the first night and all the next day and night and docked in Cozumel, Mexico on the morning of the 22nd. That turned out to be a great stop. We went and found a boat crew that just took our party out to go snorkeling. That was a great time, we were in an ocean national park over a nice reef. The ocean was just full of all those fancy colorful exotic fish. Rich got so excited he swam off and got lost. He had to find another boat and have them bring him back. I would have been more worried except we were close to shore and he is a very good swimmer.

The next morning we docked in Roatan, Honduras. It was pretty country but the city was very run down. Everywhere we went kids were trying to sell us conch shells. That day we just hired a driver to take us over to the other side of the island to a nice beach. The driver had a teenage girl stay with us to help out and be our guide. She was nice but when you asked her anything she would just nod her head and smile. The beach was nice but it rained the whole time we were there.

The next day 24 Dec (Christmas Eve), we docked in Belize City, Belize. There we hired a guide who drove us several hours into the rainforest and took us on a tubing adventure. We got our tubes and walked through the rainforest where he told us about the plants and animals. When we got to the river we tubed through a long cave and came out in the forest. The cave tubing was supposed to be the big attraction but I was pretty happy to get out of that place and just go through the forest. After we got out we had a nice lunch at a little bungalow and headed back to the ship.

That night we had a little Christmas program with the Pattersons in our state room. When I say state room don't get any big ideas. When all nine of us were in there we had to take turns breathing. On Christmas morning we got up and checked what Santa left in our stockings and docked in Cancun Mexico. We got off there and hired a guide to take us to see some ancient Mayan ruins that were several hours away right next to a nice beach. When we got there the ruins were very impressive but Amy skipped all that and went down and just played on the beach. We had to get back to the ship so we didn't stay long. I felt bad for the guide, his wife kept calling his cell phone asking him when he would be coming home for Christmas dinner. The next day we spent at sea and then we docked the next morning. The ship was great fun, they had several different nice restaurants where you sat down and ordered something and a nice one where you could go for a buffet. Rich and I would hit the weight room every day and then run for four miles around the deck and I still managed to gain five pounds. They had shows every night but by that time I was looking to hit the sack. Leslie is much more of a night owl so she would go see them with Kimberley and the kids.

The day after we got back Amy's friend from Tennessee (Lauren) came to visit. They have remained very close ever since we left Fort Campbell the last time. Amy has gone to visit her every summer since we left and Lauren came down here this summer. They have been having a good time just hanging out with friends.

Amy had some good news waiting for her when we got home and then got some even better news on the 2nd. She got accepted to both USU and BYU. She got a really nice letter from BYU on the 2nd, which was much sooner than we had expected. She just got all of the items for her application in before we left on the cruise. It looks like she'll be going there in the fall.

Well, back to the grind this week. We love you all and are praying for your various needs.

Love, The Wilsons



We've had a fun month. It was nice to have Todd and Loreen stop by for a while on their way through. Christmas went well for us. Here's a picture of our Christmas morning lineup. Meguire was still asleep. Santa showed up and the kids seemed pleased with their gifts. Tanner got new skis so we had to go try those out! Here's a picture of him doing the reverse snowplow... that ended up in the splits! It was a fun day except it was snowing and windy. They ended up shutting down the lifts early, so we got a pass to go back another day.



With all the snow, we went sledding one day. First time down, Cason went off a big jump and we thought he'd broken a bone! He just sat out for quite a while and when he finally got back to sledding, he stayed away from that jump! Thayne kept going off it headfirst! He'd hit the jump, go flying and hit his face on the landing... and then go do it all over again! Tanner took his skis. He'd hike up with his skis in hand and ski down. Seemed like a lot of work to me, but he thought it was great! Picture of Kelly and Landon sledding.



We also went up to Dad's for a day. We didn't know everyone else was going to be there, but it was nice to be there with the Piersons and Dyes. Here are a couple of pictures from that trip. Hope everyone is well.

Lana would like to know if anyone has some Genealogy that she could work on. She's looking for a specific project that she could do at home. She needs help getting started. Just give her a call 307-587-5878