

# *Lewis Family Memories*



*Our Ashford Tree, 2002*

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## Dad & Mom's Story

The Lewis and Nelson families were both members of the original St. Louis 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward. They met in the chapel on Elizabeth Avenue in Ferguson, Missouri. The Lewises moved into the ward in Florissant, Missouri about 1964 and the Nelson family joined them in 1968.

Their first memories were being in the same Sunday School and Primary classes together, and they found out many years later that they had actually been baptized on the same day: September 11, 1971. Their Bishop, R. Don Oscarson, had given each of them a signed copy of the Book of Mormon with that date on his individualized note to them inside the front cover.



Laura and Brad started to like each other in their early teens. Laura thought Brad was mature and had a strong testimony of the gospel. She also thought he was very cute, of course. Brad thought Laura was very kind and fun to be around. She was also wonderful with children.

They enjoyed being together in a strong group of youth throughout their teen years with great leaders to show them the way. They loved spending time together and their families were very intertwined through the Ward. Brad's dad was the bishop and Laura's dad was his 1<sup>st</sup> counselor for several of those years.



Laura and Brad wrote to each other while Brad was serving a full-time mission in the Arizona Tempe Mission from 1982-1984. They were married in August of 1984 upon Brad's return.

*Mom*

2 SEPTEMBER 1984

Dear family,  
Hello!

Brad and I have an excellent place to stay. It's really a good deal. Brad and I got back from our honeymoon Wednesday about 2:30 PM. We grabbed a paper from 7-11 and called two places from Shari's house. The first place we went to was a real pit. Then we came to the place that we are living in right now. It is half of the house that we're living in. It costs \$150 a month plus water and maybe electricity. What a deal! We didn't have to put down a deposit for it either. We are really excited about our place and now after a couple of days we've gotten it cleaned up.

We've had an excellent time since we last saw you. We've been to Park City, Jackson hole, Yellowstone, and Idaho Falls. The scenery has been beautiful. We've taken pictures so we will send copies when we get them developed.

After Labor Day I'll start looking for a job. We wanted to get our place looking nice before I took off to look for a job. Wish me luck!

*Dad*

2 SEPTEMBER 1984

Dear family,

Hi everyone. How are you all? Laura and I are just fine and really happy. We had such a great wedding and appreciate having our families there to share it with us. For part of our honeymoon we spent a few days in Yellowstone national Park. It was a beautiful site. We saw a buffalo, a bear, antelope, elk, and many other small animals. We even had tiny ground squirrels eating from our hands. It

was a lot of fun and the weather was fantastic. Laura and I saw so much pretty country. We really enjoyed ourselves.

We're back in Provo now, living in our house Laura told you about. It's a nice place in a pretty area, just blocks from the church. We're excited about starting our new life here. School starts Wednesday. I'm a bit nervous. It's been about 2½ years since I've been to school. I hope all goes well. Laura will find work soon I'm sure. If not will be fine. There's no rush for her to find a job. Our good jobs this summer have helped. I hope she's happy with her work this year.

We're doing fine. We are so happy. We miss you all and pray for you morning and night. Take care. Thank you for all your help and love.

Love, Laura and Brad







## Mom's Song for Dad

*A long time ago  
I had a dream of you  
You and me together... Forever*

*I knew what I wanted  
Then one day that dream came true  
Of you and me together... Forever*

*You, you inspired me  
I never realized all that I could be  
Just hold me in your arms, I need your love  
Our home is filled with children from above*

*Love doesn't last for everyone  
The world wants to tear us apart  
We have each other, our children, and God  
We'll build upon the love we've had from the start*

*It's a long hard road  
But deep down I know  
I know our love will stand the test of time  
Our love will grow*

*We'll raise our children well  
As we work with the Lord  
To teach, to train and bless their lives  
With our example of love*

*You, you inspired me  
I never realized all that I could be  
Just hold me in your arms, I need your love  
Our home is filled with children from above*

*Love doesn't last for everyone  
The world wants to tear us apart*

*We have each other, our children, and God  
We'll build upon the love we've had from the start*

*The years ahead will be beautiful and bright  
Our union was blessed, now let us walk in its light  
We'll live for each other, fulfilling our dreams  
Praying always,... that our love will grow*

*You, you inspired me  
I never realized all that I could be  
Just hold me in your arms, I need your love  
Our home is filled with children from above*

*Love doesn't last for everyone  
The world wants to tear us apart  
We have each other, our children, and God  
We'll build upon the love we've had from the start*

*YOU... You've made all my dreams come true.*



## Our Family Vision

We both wanted to establish a family that was active in the gospel of Jesus Christ as we had both been raised ourselves. We wanted a home where the Spirit could be felt; a home where there was love, acceptance, and support. We wanted a home that was peaceful, even though we know it was crazy at times. There was never much yelling or screaming, and that was important to us.



As children were born, we began to teach them the principles and doctrines of the restored gospel and did our best to live those principles each day.

We prayed together every day and always before each meal. After our nighttime family prayer, we would put our hands together in one large handshake and say, "Sure Love Ya!" We started reading the scriptures with our children when they were young

using the Scripture storybooks made for children. Laura read the entire Book of Mormon aloud with each child the year prior to their baptism at age 8. We did our best to utilize the inspired programs for children and youth, including Faith in God, Personal Progress, and Duty to God. We did this because we believed it would make a meaningful difference in their lives and help them develop their own relationships with their Savior Jesus Christ.

In the early years, Brad was very busy with work, church responsibilities and a master's program, so we made a point of setting aside time for us to be together as

a family. That continued to be a priority and a pattern we would follow throughout the years our children were in the home. Most of the trips we would take as a family were to spend time with extended family or to see Church



History Sites so close to us in the Midwest. We tried to be very deliberate about giving our children opportunities to feel and experience the Spirit and thus strengthen their own personal testimonies of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We felt blessed to live in an area where both our parents also lived, so our children grew up with strong, loving relationships with their grandparents. Their examples of faith and commitment to the Savior Jesus Christ and His Church were a great blessing to all of us.

As the children grew into their teenage years, we felt it was important that they be very involved with most all of the Church-sponsored activities for youth, like their weekly Mutual

activities. We also sacrificed to support them in larger youth events like Especially for Youth (EFY) during the summers. They would always return from those conferences with noticeable increases in their faith in Jesus Christ and testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel! Brad especially enjoyed serving as the Ward's bishop during the years that the older children were in the youth program, and then as a member of the Stake Presidency when the younger children had their time. They had a blast together on trips to Nauvoo and Independence, along with high-adventure activities and camps.





Our lives revolved around our activity in the Church - our callings, activities in which each of us was involved, serving others, and being with our ward and stake family.

We marvel at how blessed we have been as a family. We've been given so much, having been born into faithful families with goodly parents, and Heavenly Father has blessed us far beyond what we ever felt we deserved.

# Lewis Family Chronology

1984	Thu, Aug 23	MARRIAGE	Brad and Laura	Jordan River Temple
1985	Tue, Dec 10	BIRTH	Jessica Elaine	Provo, UT
1987	Wed, Mar 18	BIRTH	Christine Luella	Ogden, UT
1988	Summer	MOVE	Ashford home	St. Louis, MO
1989	Wed, Feb 15	BIRTH	Bradley William	St. Louis, MO
1992	Wed, Dec 23	BIRTH	Craig Neal	St. Louis, MO
1993	Sun, Dec 19	BAPTISM	Jessica	Elizabeth Ward
1995	Fri, Mar 17	BIRTH	Laura Abbie	St. Louis, MO
	Sun, Mar 26	BAPTISM	Christine	Elizabeth Ward
1996	Summer	MOVE	Parker Road Home	Florissant, MO
1997	Sat, Feb 15	BAPTISM	Bradley	Florissant Ward
	Sun, Jun 1	TEMPLE DEDICATION	St. Louis Temple	St. Louis, MO
	Fri, Jun 13	MOVE	Moondance home	O'Fallon, MO
2000	Mon, Oct 23	BIRTH	Emma Patrice	St. Louis, MO
	Sat, Dec 30	BAPTISM	Craig	O'Fallon Ward
2002	Thu, Jun 27	TEMPLE DEDICATION	Nauvoo Temple	Nauvoo, IL
2003	Sat, Apr 12	BAPTISM	Laura	O'Fallon Ward
2004	Summer	GRADUATION	Jessica	West High
2005	Summer	GRADUATION	Christine	West High
2006	January	TRIP	Christine	China
	Tue, Nov 21	ENDOWMENT	Jessica	St. Louis Temple

2007	Wed, Jan 17	MISSION	Jessica	Baltic Mission
	Summer	GRADUATION	Bradley	West High / SCCC
2008	Sat, Mar 15	ENDOWMENT	Christine	St. Louis Temple
	Sat, Mar 15	ENDOWMENT	Bradley	St. Louis Temple
	Fri, May 23	MISSION	Christine	Italy Catania Mission
	Fri, May 23	MISSION	Bradley	Utah Salt Lake City Mission
	Fri, Aug 8	MARRIAGE	Jessica and Jared	Mount Timpanogos Temple
	Sat, Nov 8	BAPTISM	Emma	O'Fallon Ward
2010	Summer	GRADUATION	Craig	West High / SCCC
	Summer	MISSION	Bradley	Nauvoo YPM
	Tue, Jul 20	MARRIAGE	Christine and Matt	Jordan River Temple
2011	Sat, Aug 11	MARRIAGE	Bradley and Mindy	Nauvoo Temple
	Fri, Nov 25	ENDOWMENT	Craig	St. Louis Temple
2012	Wed, Feb 1	MISSION	Craig	California Carlsbad Mission
	Summer	GRADUATION	Laura	West High / SCCC
2014	Wed, Jun 11	ENDOWMENT	Laura	St. Louis Temple
	Summer	MISSION	Craig	Nauvoo YPM
2015	Sat, Apr 25	MARRIAGE	Craig and Claire	San Diego Temple
2017	Summer	GRADUATION	Emma	West High
	Sat, Oct 7	MARRIAGE	Laura and Braeden	Logan Temple
2022	Sat, Mar 5	ENDOWMENT	Emma	Payson Temple
	Sat, Dec 17	MARRIAGE	Emma and Jake	Payson Temple





## Jessica's Birth Story

### *Mom*

9 JANUARY 1986

I went to the doctor on December 9. Brad came with me. I was talking to the nurse and she said, "I bet you want to be induced." I said yes. She said, "Dr. Rees is good that way, he'll do it for you." Sure enough, he said he could induce me as soon as I wanted. He wanted me to come into the hospital in the morning. Brad had two tests the next day, one at 7:00 and one at 11:00. We talked about it and decided I would go to the hospital with Becky and Brad would come after his first test and cancel the second one. It was strange driving myself to the hospital. I never thought it would happen like that. I was so glad that Becky came with me. I checked in about 7:30 and they started dripping Pitocin into my arm about 8:00 AM. The nurse gave me an enema which was definitely uncomfortable. Yuck. They put a monitor on my stomach which measured the contractions. I hated it because it kept going out on me. As the contractions got really bad it didn't register them. Brad got to the hospital about 10:30 and Craig took Becky home. I started to feel the contractions about 12:00 and they got really bad about 2:00. They gave me an epidural about a half hour after that. What a relief. The contractions felt like cramps. Bad cramps. Brad helped to keep my mind off them but when they finally gave me the epidural I was so happy. About 4:30 the nurse had me start pushing every time I had a contraction. Brad really helped me a lot during this time. I just kept thinking if I push real hard, I'll have the baby soon. The doctor came in and one time as I was pushing he told Brad to come and see the head of the baby. Brad said the baby has hair. I started laughing a little. I

really wanted a baby with hair. At 5:22 PM I had Jessica Elaine. She weighed 7 pounds 14½ ounces and she was 20 inches long. After she was born they put her on a little bed that had heated lights over it. I didn't hold her till about 45 minutes after she was born. I saw her and thought she was beautiful. That night in the hospital was such a wonderful experience. Brad slept in the room on a sleeping bag. Neither one of us got much sleep. Jessica wanted to be held most of the night.



I wanted to hold her so that was OK.

In the morning we were supposed to leave by 6:00 AM. The doctor's orders for Jessica were that she could not leave until she went to the bathroom. She had already messed in her pants a couple of times but she hadn't urinated. It was 5:45 AM and we thought we would have to stay. They took her to get her PKU shot (Brad went along) and it's a pretty traumatic ordeal for a newborn. She went to the bathroom all over, she was crying so hard. We left right at 6:00.

When we got home Brad put me to bed right away. Aunt Martha got there about 10:00 AM. She brought tons of things. Food, porta-crib, all her clothes to stay a couple of days, and herself. At first I was a little wary of having anybody but Brad, but what a relief it was to have someone to cook delicious meals and help me with Jessica.

The first night home aunt Martha and I paced the floors with Jessica. We were up until three in the morning. We couldn't believe a baby could stay up that long. She took to me really well, but when aunt Martha tried to take her so I could sleep, she refused. Secretly I was so happy.

*Dad*

19 DECEMBER 1985

Well, it happened! It really happened! Tuesday, December 10 at 5:22 PM Laura gave birth to a beautiful, gorgeous, adorable baby girl! She weighed 7 pounds 14½ ounces and was 20 inches long. We have named her Jessica Elaine Lewis. The doctor took her out, turned her over and said, "looks like she's of the... girl gender. She looks like she's about a week overdue and weighs about 8 pounds." He was right. I stayed the night there with her and the baby. Everything went fine. Laura was fantastic! She didn't complain at all and did such a great job of pushing that baby down. That had to be one of the neatest experiences of my life. I just wanted to cry after seeing our baby come into this world. It is a definite miracle. It really strengthens your testimony to witness such a beautiful event. The Lord really was watching over us and has blessed us more than we deserve.

Laura came home after a 12-hour stay and it wasn't long before Laura's aunt Martha was there hauling in food and her suitcases to spend the next three or four days with us. I couldn't have done it without her. She took care of Laura and the baby while I studied for and took finals up on campus. She did so much for us I don't know how we can ever repay her. My finals went great thanks to her. I love her like my own grandmother.







## Memories with Jessica

### *Christine*

Jessica, my built in best friend, my constant example! I think birth order is decided by God and it just makes sense Jess was called to be the oldest. She knows how to lead. But she does so in quiet, kind ways! I thank Heavenly Father I got to be second in line to have a front row seat to observe her become one of the most amazing women I know.

My favorite and most dear memories of growing up with a sister just 16 months older.... Playing house! Playing dress up! Pretty much think we LIVED in dress-up slips. Which now that I think of it, was pretty risqué! Ha! If I close my eyes, I can see Jess and I running around in the backyard at the house on Ashford, or playing for hours in the house under the stairs that Dad built us. How grateful I am for those memories and my best ever playmate!

Growing up, I feel like I was Jessica's shadow. She let me follow her around and COPY her constantly! That continued through teenage-hood. Jessica's friends were my friends, because I hadn't quite learned how to make friends on my own yet. And she was ok with that! She let me tag along. I idolized her as did EVERYBODY else in our friend group (especially the men folk). I eventually learned not to be such a copy-cat, but continued to follow in her footsteps and still do till this day!

Maybe it's my poor memory, or maybe it's the fact that adulthood allows you to take more significance from experiences, but some of my most cherished memories

with Jessica have happened in the last 15 years. Out at college, Jessica was my saving grace! If I was struggling or nervous or even just bored, I would run to her to solve my problems. The only reason I felt like I could stomach the huge life change of moving to Utah for school was because I knew my sister would be there. She has always been my safe place. Which I now recognize added SO much more to her plate but she never made me feel like I was imposing.

Her letters on my mission continued to save me. And then the way she cared for me after my mission when I was not only the weirdest I've ever been, but the most torn between decisions, should've earned her a medal! I remember sleeping IN HER BED one day or night or maybe both because I was in such a rough place. Rewinding backward, I now know and can fully appreciate what that meant as that coincided with some of the most challenging and tumultuous years of HER life as well. But she continued to give!



As we have become mothers together, literally within months of one another, I have marveled at her ability to take it all in stride. I know that my being pregnant with Bennett was so bitter sweet for her. When we were grappling with names and discussing our options with her (a conversation that in and of itself must have been very painful), she suggested the name Bennett. When I look at Bennett and think of his name, or when someone asks me how we came up with it, I tell them the story of my selfless sister and friend!

Jessica is one of the best humans I know. Grateful to have had her as a guide and example. I hope I can be half as strong, resilient, and gosh dang beautiful as her one day!

## Brad

I remember you coming to visit me and Christine in the MTC when you had just recently returned. So glad they let us do that, because I remember that being such a motivating and empowering experience for me. Having just come back from your mission, I can imagine you might have felt apprehensive given you knew what we were "getting ourselves into" by putting on that badge and heading to the field. It was a sons of Mosiah type reunion and I remember feeling pure joy that we were all living our lives the way we had to in order to be worthy to serve.

I also remember visiting you and Christine out at BYU during my senior year. I was so ready to be out there myself, and seeing how much freedom and fun you guys had out there was such a motivating experience to help me finish out my last year of school strong. I remember we watched "Step up" and you and Christine explained to me that the two main characters were from "two different worlds, but they came together," haha. I remember I was supposed to help drive you guys home but then we ended up flying cause of weather or something – hey free Utah trip! It was great.

I remember going to seminary through the same route every morning in the dark. I may or may not have driven the entire school year when I had only my permit, but hey, can't remember exactly. We listened to the same "now that's what I call music" mix every morning and those songs, with those streets, with that drive is probably cemented deep in my subconscious. One of those times I think Christine thought she saw a cat that we ran over or by, and we stopped the car to see and it was just a cardboard box or something.



I remember you driving me to Dairy Queen right after you had gotten your driver's license. We listened to Avril Lavigne on the radio and although it was like a mile from our house, it felt like

we were so free to have you having "wheels" to take us places. I similarly remember getting into All American Rejects, Good Charlotte and other punk bands



as we were living as rebellious as teenagers could who were Mormon, in Missouri, in the Midwest – haha. We were hard core.

I also remember driving to Wichita together to visit the Barbers. Christine stayed behind as she was right on the verge of getting her first boyfriend. We listened to Nickel Creek's This Side album and I believe we got lost in no man's land and we were on some nondescript prairie roads as the sun was setting and I remember being terrified of getting lost out in no man's land Kansas... We must have found our way, because we had a good time that trip and I remember being in a Dillon's (grocery store in Kansas) when Christine called us on the cell phone to let us know she had a boyfriend. I

remember watching you having such a pure happiness for Christine and what this meant to her—it was such a cool experience to see that sisterly love in action.

To sum it all up—I have a lot of memories of music, driving, our teenage years, missions—the good stuff.

Life since then is obviously more on the "adulting" side of things, but in my adult years, I've always felt your confidence in me and my abilities—a trust—that has been motivating. Thanks for the memories and hope you've enjoyed driving down memory road with these random recollections.

*Craig*

Jessica, I actually feel like you have similar traits as me. Your organization, love of pens, personality is often a lot like mine. I look to you a lot to learn how to handle life. We are quite far apart in age so we don't have a ton of memories together



but I've loved that as we've both gotten older and moved out of the house that we have gotten closer and had more memories together. I honestly feel that way about a lot of our siblings, which I feel is so cool. Your constant texts of encouragement or "thinking of you" goes a long way in keeping our relationship strong and alive.

It's been fun having you live in CA and stop at your house on the way to see Claire's family. We've had some special moments with your girls and seeing Bradley shortly after he was born. I've enjoyed our talks on the phone regarding taxes and your accounting classes. You and all of my sisters have taken Claire in so well as another sister and for that I am eternally grateful. Thanks for being an incredible older sister, Jessica! I love you!

### *Laura*

Oh man, where do I even start, and how can I write this without just crying and blubbering like a baby? For being the oldest of the fam and me being more towards the younger end, I feel so blessed to be able to still feel extremely close to you. I've always looked up to you for your amazing example to me. I've been blessed to be able to live close to you and visit often when we were further away (Kirkville, California). I know that's rare and I'm so grateful!

Braeden and I pretty much always talk about what an amazing and patient mom you are. We know that the girls have been difficult (probably an understatement) and on top of all that you've had to do it with Jared being gone most of the time. We just admire you so much for your patience, faith, and strength. I think others around you probably see it more than you do, but you are really doing an AMAZING job. I'm so proud of you and all you've accomplished!!! With being a mom and doing amazingly in school, you're an inspiration to me. I've learned a lot from you in your example of being a mother.

You're also an amazing friend! I love my Marco Polos and texts with you. You always say what I need to hear and are so very REAL and HONEST. I love that





and I crave that. I love that I can tell you that things just suck sometimes and you don't try and fix it. You just agree and can relate. I know that we really are so blessed in the big scheme of things, but I'm also really grateful that we can relate to the fact that this life isn't perfect. We do our best and try our hardest even when we're exhausted and have a lot we're juggling. You are an amazing example of that to me! I know I joke about

surviving not thriving, but I feel like you really are thriving. You definitely wash your hair more than me and I don't even have 3 kids to take care of as an excuse. Thanks for being the best oldest sis any of us could ask for! We love you so much!

### *Emma*

I feel so blessed to have a sister like you. Even though we are 15 years apart I still feel close to you, which I think is pretty special. You have always been there for me when I needed it the most.

Some of my favorite memories:

- Visiting you guys in Kirksville. We would play Phase 10 and Bonanza, go on walks, and watch movies. I remember coming to Kirksville with Laura and Courtney after the girls were born. That was a blast!!!
- When you turned 30 and you realized you had a mouse problem in your apartment. I think you took the girls over to our house and me and you went back to your apartment and started tearing apart the couch to see where those little rascals were hiding. Haha one of us would stand back while the other would rip off one of the cushions and jump back because we were so scared the mouse would be right there. Hours later we found out that the mouse had come from the ceiling. Who would've thought? I'm sure this is not your fave memory, but I thought it was hilarious.
- Freshman year of high school, Mom would drop me off at your apartment and you would help me with math homework. I really struggled that year with my

math class and you were my saving grace. It really meant the world to me that even with a ton of stuff on your plate, you would spend hours helping me.

- You were there for my plays/musicals! You even did my makeup one year when I was in *The Little Mermaid*.
- You taught me how to curl my hair! You were basically like a second mom, always willing to help out with anything I needed.
- When mom and dad went on vacation, I would stay with you. That was a lot of fun for me and I cherish those memories.
- On my birthday one year, you showed up in the morning with breakfast before I went to school. You are always so thoughtful.



I love you Jessica. I'm so grateful for the example you are to me. You are truly AMAZING in every way. I don't know what I would do without you.

## *Dad*

When mom and I talked this morning about it being Jessica's birthday, my mind reflected back to my junior year at BYU. It was finals time in December. Mom was overdue and was going to be induced to deliver Jessica, down at Mountain View Hospital in Payson UT. I had a final that same day. Back then, I guess I didn't realize I could ask to take it at another time. Mom had a good friend Becky Rahm take her down to the hospital that morning after I headed up to campus to take that morning final. I can still remember thinking, "I gotta get outta here and get down to Payson. I gotta finish this test up and get rolling!" When I finished the exam, I booked it to the car and headed down there as fast as I could to be with Mom. Jessica was born later that afternoon. I was a daddy! No way. I couldn't believe it.

Jessica was a beautiful baby girl. I can still see wheeling mom and baby Jessica out to the car just 12 hours later, at about 6:00 in the morning. This was because we had no medical insurance, and the 12-hour stay was the cheapest way to go—

and you know Mom was going to go with the least expensive option (at least then).

It was such a blessing to come home to her after a long day at school. She was so much fun for Mom and me to have around. I taught her all kinds of tricks and fun things to do that she would perform on cue whenever family or friends visited, "What does a doggie say?" "What does a fish do?" "How old are you?" Good times. Good times.

Jessica grew to be such a wonderful person, so kind and caring with her younger siblings. She was always so attentive with them—like another young mother around the house. How she stewed over Bradley getting too close to the surf at Galveston Bay in

Texas on a visit to Patrice & Ron's one year. Those were preparatory years, as she continues to be the attentive, caring mother to her own children today.

I marvel at her inner strength, her commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and her love for the Lord. She cares about people. She ministers to her family and others. She is so supportive of Jared. We all feel so blessed to have her in our ETERNAL family. This doesn't end. Jessica will always be one of our choice daughters, and I can't think of a more wonderful thing!



### *Mom*

I love being able to put down in words our thoughts and feelings about each other, our experiences and memories. I have such a feeling of gratitude for how blessed we have been.

I was due to have Jessica at the end of November but I was two weeks overdue. I was so anxious and excited. My Mom had planned to come out to be with me but because Jessica wasn't born until December 10, she was unable to come. Dad made it to the hospital after his test and everything proceeded to the point where Jessica



Elaine Lewis was born. That hospital stay was so unique. Dad stayed that night and slept on the chair and floor. He was responsible for caring for me for the most part. I loved that experience and memory; just our little family there together. Like

Dad said, we only stayed 12 hours, but I was so ready to come home.



My Aunt Martha came and rescued us. She stayed with us for 5 or 6 days. One night Jessica was really fussy and my Aunt Martha got up to rock her and walk with her. Jessica just wouldn't settle down. I got up and took Jessica from my Aunt and she quickly settled down. That made me feel so good.

Some memories:

- I caught Jessica when she was in kindergarten throwing one of her school papers away. When I looked at it and asked Jessica about it she was so angry; the teacher had marked it with a red pen and had ruined her paper!
- Jessica bought a typewriter at a garage sale and all of a sudden she was wanting to type up all her notes (in elementary school!).
- I remember when we "lost" Bradley on Ashford Street. We said, "let's say a prayer" to help us find him. Jessica dropped immediately to the front lawn as we said a prayer (she was so worried). We found Bradley soon after, in the car looking for Tic Tacs.
- When we got into our house in O'Fallon Jessica loved to vacuum! She would at times vacuum all three floors for the enjoyment/fulfillment of it. That was a huge help to me, though I thought it was very unusual.
- Jessica was an amazing help with all the children. By child number six I would get pretty tired getting up at night. Jessica offered to do this on some of the week-end nights and I let Emma sleep downstairs as a young baby with Jessica. Emma could take a bottle sometimes, so Jessica was able to feed her and take care of her. Amazing!
- I remember preparing our first missionary, Jessica, to go on a mission. Wow, what an experience that was for me and her. We practiced getting everything

to fit in her luggage. We used vacuum bags for consolidating her clothing into smaller spaces. Dad and I got to fly out to Utah to be with her as she went into the Provo MTC with Grandpa and Grandma Lewis!

I am so grateful for the example that Jessica and the older children have been. This set an example and pattern for the other children to follow and that has been an amazing blessing in our family.

I have loved talking and visiting in the years since Jessica and Jared married. I have seen and heard how she has approached all the joys and challenges that have come their way. It is a blessing to put our lives within a gospel perspective to help us meet whatever comes our way.



## Christine's Birth Story

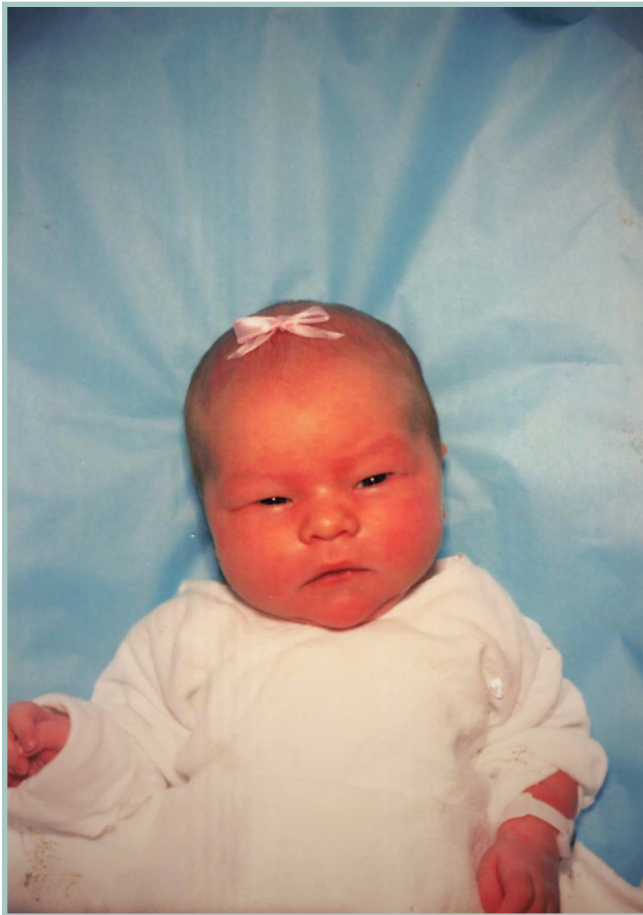
### *Mom*

25 MARCH 1987

We got home just in time to make it for my doctors appointment. I was a bit depressed as I sat there waiting for the doctor. I didn't really think the baby would come while mom was here. The doctor came in and checked me and said that I was dilated between 2-3 and that my cervix was ready. He said, "Well, if you don't come by next Tuesday I'll induce you." Of course I didn't care about next Tuesday. I mentioned to him that my mom was here now and would leave on Saturday. He said, "Well, you're ready so if you want I'll induce you tomorrow morning." I couldn't believe it; just what I wanted him to say but I was scared. I told him that was what I'd like to do but I'd have to talk with my husband. I called Brad when I got home and he said he thought that it would be fine. Mom and I went on a couple of errands after that. We got home about four and I started making some chicken noodle soup (homemade). I started getting pains along the bottom of my stomach. At first I didn't think anything about it. When they came back over the next hour or two or three times, I started to wonder. Brad got home from work and after we ate we went on a long walk/jog around the mortuary. They (the pains) kept coming so I figured they were contractions. I ended up going to bed at 10:00 and wondering what would happen. All of a sudden I remember it being 11:45 in the pains were intense and 5 to 6 minutes apart. We were admitted into the hospital about 12:30 AM and when the nurse checked me she said I was dilated to six. They said, "WOW." I sure was happy because they gave me an epidural right away. No pain after that, it was

wonderful. Brad brought the VCR camera and narrated what was going on. That made it fun. I remember it being about 3:15 AM and thinking that we would have a baby very shortly. The doctor got there about 10 minutes before the baby was born.

I had been pushing for about a half hour and I could even see the top of the baby's head. It was unbelievable. It was as if I was doing this for the first time because with Jessica I didn't have a mirror to see all that was going on. The doctor came in looking as if he had just gotten out of bed which I'm sure he had. He told me to push a couple of times and then he did the rest. It was excellent. He yelled, "It's a girl!" and I thought Christine Luella Lewis. That's the name Brad and I had picked if the baby was a girl. Immediately the doctor put Christine on my



stomach (after he had suctioned her nose and mouth). She was beautiful. She had all this creamy stuff all over her. The nurse took her and she and the anesthesiologist started rubbing her. The nurse took a tube and put it down Christine's throat to get all the stuff she had swallowed. It was a lot. Brad was worried for a while and I was a bit anxious but I figured they had everything under control. After the nurse had taken care of Christine she came over and started kneading my stomach. The doctor had already sewn up my stitches and left. That part (the kneading) really hurts and I felt like throwing up. They put another IV on me.

Brad got the VCR running just as Christine was put on my stomach.

After watching the tape, I am so glad

mom brought it. What a wonderful thing to have for history. Mom took it home to show the kids and to make a copy for the Lewises. A little later they took Christine away to the nursery and I stayed in the delivery room for a while. I was bleeding a lot and they wanted to watch me a little longer. Brad left to go home and get some sleep and then they wheeled me into my room. I dozed on and off



until Brad, Mom, and Jessica came to see me at 10:00. Jessica was so cute. She kept saying, "baby, baby." She was a bit wary though. She looked confused. Mom was so good with her while she was here.

## *Dad*

22 MARCH 1987

We had our baby! We had our baby! Laura had our second girl on Wednesday morning, March 18 at 3:32 AM. She was going to be induced anyway on Wednesday, but she started having contractions Tuesday evening on her own. By 12:30 that night her contractions were about five minutes apart and we knew it was time to go into the hospital. When

we got her in bed there she was already dilated to 6 cm, which is great! They gave her her epidural immediately and by 3:30, three hours later, the baby was on its way. Everything went so fast and so smooth the nurses were loving Laura, and so was I. When the baby was born she had sucked a lot of fluid down into her tummy, so I think it was a little touch-and-go for a while. They worked fast to clean out her nose, mouth, and throat so she could breathe freely. I felt so helpless, but so grateful that she was in the right hands. Well we had a little girl, Christine Luella Lewis, and she weighed 7 pounds 10 ounces and was 20½ inches long. She is beautiful.



I was so excited about having her and didn't dwell on the fact that we didn't have a boy. I was just happy to have her, well and safe with no problems. I called everyone in our family and told them the news. It was a lot of fun. I didn't get much sleep that night, but I caught up on it later. It helps so much to have Laura's mom here with us. It made it possible for me to keep working and going to class in Provo the rest of the week. She was so good to Jessica while Laura was away. I grew to really love her, more than I already did. She is an INCREDIBLE woman

and mother. She left yesterday morning after being with us for a week. Thanks Mom Nelson!

More good news has come my way in terms of interviews. I am making arrangements for a third interview with a third division of McDonnell Douglas during our April visit! Things are really starting to happen there and fall into place for us. We are so excited about the possibilities and so are our families. This has been a major blessing in our lives. I thought that was great, then Friday morning I received a call from general dynamics in Fort Worth, Texas and they want to fly me down for a plant trip the first week of April! I was pretty excited about it. Now I'm finally being rewarded for all of my effort in school is what I feel like, and it feels so GOOD. I wanted to tell everybody, and then again I didn't want to sound like I was bragging or hurt anyone's feelings. So it has basically been a wonderful week in every way for my family and me. We are being blessed in so many ways I can't even number them.

I talk to my grandparents Lewis and home today. They all sound well and are happy for us with our new baby and job prospects. It's great to have family and loved ones to share these good times with us. What else can I say, we are so blessed and so happy. Until next week...



## Memories with Christine

### *Jessica*

Being so close in age (just 15 months apart), Christine and I shared a lot—a room, clothes, friends, life experiences. For much of my life, it felt like Christine was just one step behind me. That's since changed and Christine has paved the way for me and our whole family in so many meaningful ways. Christine was the first to struggle with mental health and most of us kids have benefited because of her hard-earned wisdom and experience. She has opened up family dialogue and communication about difficult, sensitive topics like anxiety and depression, which has greatly increased our family's ability to empathize and relate with one another. Christine has never shied away from deep, tough subjects in conversation and I believe our family is better and closer because of it.

Christine was the first adventurer in our family; the first to leave the country when she chose to live and teach in China for 6 months. Did anyone see that coming?!? I remember feeling so proud and in awe of Christine for being brave enough to go to a completely foreign land to teach English. That was a wild experience for her and for our whole family to follow along with. I think Christine's China travels ignited within her a love



for people of all different backgrounds and cultures which blessed those that she later served on her mission in Italy (and many more to come in the future, I'm sure).

Christine was the first to become a mother. I'll never forget that phone call after Christine had baby Bennett (does everyone remember that I was the one who came up with his name? Okay, just wanted to make sure...) I was in Mexico for work and Christine had just delivered baby Bennett (which had been a traumatic experience!). She sounded shaky and exhausted. It was just her and Matt there at the hospital. I remember wanting to be there with her so badly; I had usually been right there or close by for most of her important life experiences and it was hard to be so far away. I cried in my hotel room as we talked about our 4<sup>th</sup> of July guy. My little sister was a Mom! I have cherished memories of spending time with Christine and Matt after they had each of their sweet boys. Watching them parent is like a live tutorial in parenting; I learn something new every time. Those boys are so blessed to have Matt and Christine!



I remember getting into physical fights fairly often (does that sound right, Mom?) with Christine when we were younger. Christine usually won. She was always shorter and a bit smaller than I was, but she was fierce and resourceful. I can see that same tenacity, intensity and grit in the way that she lives her life, her faith, and as she faces her personal battles (small and large). Christine doesn't do anything important half-heartedly. She is all in. She gives her whole heart to the Lord, to her family and to those that she serves and ministers to.

Christine has been one of my greatest cheerleaders and supports, especially throughout our rollercoaster ride of adoption and parenting. Her active love, thoughtfulness, compassion and care have been some of the sweetest tender mercies and evidence of Heavenly Father's love in my life. She is for me a voice of understanding during challenging times when I've wanted so desperately to feel understood. Christine leads with her heart which makes her the best kind of



mother, sister, friend, leader and disciple. Love you to the moon and back, Christine!!!

### *Brad*

Wow so many memories to share about Christine. I wonder if I would have been able to navigate my teenage years without her. I was a little rough around the edges, socially, and Christine brought me along with all her friends, which became my friends. Hanging out with the John Fryhoff, Landon Hendricks clan first, then with our local Brian Simpson, Jason, Adam clan. Coming home late and messing with Mom and Dad by giving random answers when they sleepily asked us, "Did you have fun?" "What did you guys do?" "Who was there?" I remember jamming to mix tapes on the way to seminary with Jessica and Christine—and driving a few months before I should have been. Christine might have scared off several girls when she told them that they had to go through her if they wanted to talk to me, but in all seriousness it has been great to feel like someone has always had my back growing up. Letting me bum around and live with Matt and Christine for the summer before my internship, which proved to be a very eventful summer as I ended up dating and getting engaged to Mindy at that time (thanks for letting us use your place as a crashing ground for the time we were engaged). There's obviously the countless Conan late night shows we watched, the summer of Brad Goodloe where we had to fight for the basement, night in and night out. I guess it's just pretty special when you get to grow up with (especially go through the awkward teenage years) with someone by your side who doesn't judge you, rather somehow always sees the best in you even when you don't always see that about yourself. Thank goodness for it. I remember the play-by-play instructions Christine gave me of how to walk across the street from Heritage Halls to BYU campus (which I could see from my apartment). I also remember opening mission calls together, preparing for missions together, being in the MTC together, and Christine yelling out "I'm going to give my brother a hug so don't freak out" as missionaries poured out of the Tuesday devotional the day before she left for



her mission. The fresh batch of missionaries who poured out the door (and who hadn't heard her yell that) watched in horror as two opposite gender missionaries hugged each other, haha. Too many memories to count, but for so many of my memories Christine was there and that's a cherished part of my teenage years in particular when her and Jessica's example steadied my own desire to live and believe in the things that we'd been taught by goodly parents (but was so important to see Jessica and Christine living of their own free will when they would come back from college).

Many times Marie reminds me of Christine with her personality so it's fun to be reminded of that when I interact with Marie.

### *Craig*

My best memories of Christine are the most recent ones since we were a bit far apart in age and not in similar life circumstances until I was in college. Christine graduated and married with one or two kids. I was new to BYU and struggling to



get by. She taught me how to study. She taught me how to put away my distractions and get down and dirty with books and study guides. I am convinced that my study skills came from those few months when Mom had me study with Christine each week. I think Mom paid Christine to help me? Who knows what the arrangement was! Haha. All I know is it was worth it and more. I was given a rare scholarship at UVU that helped pay my way to finish my degree. By the end of my time at UVU, I was getting paid to go to school because of my good grades.

Another memory I have of Christine is the excitement I felt when she told me she was pregnant with Bennett while I was in the MTC! It made me an uncle for the first time so I was pretty stoked. I remember audibly yelling out to my roommates (the other elders in my district) that I was going to be an uncle. I

couldn't wait to meet him when I got home and I knew Christine was going to be such a great mom!

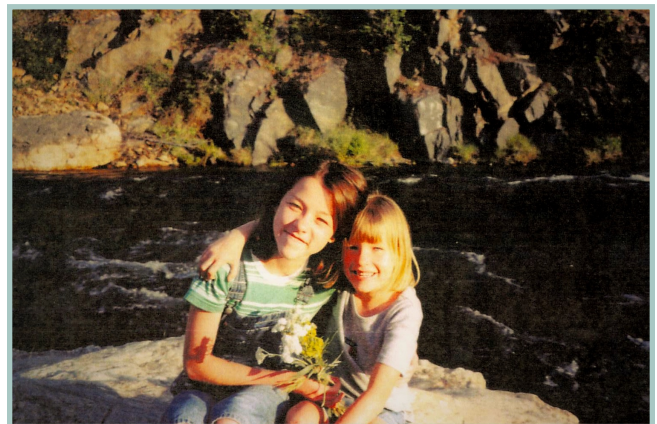
Christine is the most empathetic person I have ever met. Claire and I talk of it often how much Christine is so understanding because she has been through so much. That makes her a great sister and an even greater friend. Claire looks up to you so much and it makes me so proud to have such awesome sisters that my wife enjoys being around and seeing. Christine, you are an incredible mom. I love being your brother. Sure love you!

### *Laura*

Let me just say, reading these messages made my whole day!!! Christine always has great ideas like this that bring our whole family together. The family councils are now something I look forward to! Brings me back to the good old days when we used to Skype on Sundays as a family. Christine is inspired with wonderful ideas and the talent to execute them in an organized and meaningful way.

I'm so proud to be Christine's sister. It seems like she knows every old lady in our ward and their life stories. She's so good at visiting and serving others. I remember feeling really grateful that Christine was such a committed visiting teacher because she made a lot of connections with the families of the young women now under our stewardship. I know that was no coincidence. She's constantly praying and thinking of and serving our young women. She's really a great example to me and I don't think I'll ever serve with someone who I work with quite as well as her.

What hasn't Christine and Matt done for us? They found us our dream house in Daybreak, found Braeden a job, found me my dream job at Rivet and so much more! I've never felt closer to Christine. I will always remember these years we lived so close together and were so much a part of each other's lives. It's a two-way relationship that she and I would be willing to do just about anything for each other.



Through Christine's battle with mental health, I have been in awe of her strength, faith, and will to hang on even when she's so darn tired. She's a fighter. She doesn't give up. Even in her hardest times, she shows up to serve and help others. She's the person I want to be when I grow up! She's the best listener, gives great advice, and loves with her whole heart.

She's raised two of the cutest and sweetest boys. Even though we joke about Neal, he really is a sweet little guy with so much passion and goodness. Bennett is the kindest brother and such a smart little guy. That didn't happen by accident. She is an incredible mom and has her two awesome boys to show for it.

### *Emma*

Christine is probably the most hilarious person EVER. She makes me laugh like no one else can. Everyone just feels good when they are around her. I've always wanted to be like her because she is so talented, fun, and beautiful in every way. I remember being so happy when she came home from college, China, and her mission. I missed her so much and hated saying goodbye to her each time she left. We seriously should count the amount of times I have had to say goodbye to all you guys. I should get an award or something for goodness sake.

I love seeing her being a mom to Bennett and Neal. She treats them with so much love and patience and makes the boys feel special. I hope I can be that kind of mom someday. I also remember loving Matt right from the moment I met him. I love being with Matt and joking around with him. When Bennett was born me and Matt spent a lot of time playing Temple Run on our phones. Haha what great memories.

Christine and I have this connection with music and I absolutely love singing with her. It was a lot of fun getting to teach her how to play the guitar and





she caught on real fast. By the end of her visit here we were playing the guitar and singing together at the same time.

I remember when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade I was in the play Annie. I was at play practice one night at the high school. I saw mom and dad in the corner talking very secretly. I didn't know what they had been talking about until the next morning. I think mom woke me up the next morning and when I looked up, Christine and little Bennett were there at my bedroom door. I was super tired and confused, but I still remember how much that meant to me that Christine came all the way from Utah to see me in a play.

That support from her has continued on throughout the years! She has given me a lot of much-needed advice and said very encouraging words to me when I have struggled. I don't think she knows how much she has helped me.

I love you Christine. I'm so lucky to have you as a sister.

## *Dad*

My little Christini. Christini-bo-bini is what I often called her when she was young. I still sometimes refer to her as Christini even today. When she was born, she had my eyes and my Grandmother Luella Lewis' chin, so it's appropriate that her middle name is Luella.

I have so many good memories of Christine growing up. She was always singing something as she bopped around the house, always doing something creative with the other kids. She directed several fun home videos that the kids made. Who could ever forget "The Spirit". Such fun.



Christine and Bradley drove to seminary over at the Oak Valley building for a few years and harassed kids walking to school each morning as they drove away from the building to head home. They would roll down the windows and make funny sounds at them. Today they'd probably get put in jail for it. Haha.

Christine was a great friend to many other youth. She was sensitive to try to include others, and she came by that sensitivity honestly—from her mother. She

was always someone fun to be around, and she seemed to draw a crowd of young people wherever she went. Christine was in the Young Women's program while I was bishop of the O'Fallon Ward, so I have such fond memories of being together with her, Jessica, and Brad on ward youth trips to Nauvoo and Independence, youth conferences, and mutual nights. Those were a highlight of the years I served as bishop.

I remember one year while Christine was in Provo at BYU, it was winter and she was driving AND talking to us on her cell phone. All of a sudden we hear her gasp as she was involved in a fender bender accident while driving in the snow and talking to us! We quickly told her to put the phone down and make sure everything was okay. Luckily, the damage was minimal and no one was hurt. A lesson learned there.

Picking Christine up from her mission in Italy was an incredible experience for us. We could see so clearly just how much she loved the Sicilians! And how they loved her. Her Italian was stellar and she sounded just like a native. I remember being so glad she could help us make our way around Italy for that week or more we were together, including translating an entire sacrament meeting for mom and me. She was a powerful force for good there.

We were so thrilled when Matt Swensen and Christine chose each other as eternal companions! A match made in heaven for sure. We have loved Matt since the day we met him at the Sigonella, Italy branch building our first Sunday in Italy. Together, they are raising a beautiful family and we couldn't be more proud of the person, wife, and mother our little Christini has become.

I love how she trusts in the Lord, how reliant she is upon the promptings of the Spirit, and most importantly how she ACTS upon the promptings she receives. She is an example to me every day.

### *Mom*

We lived in Ogden, Utah when Christine was born in the McKay D hospital. I had been so late with Jessica and was overdue on Christine, also. My Mom flew into Salt Lake and we decided to go and visit some of our relatives in Utah while my Mom was there so I didn't go crazy. Luckily I started to feel some contractions on March 17. When I woke up early in the morning Dad and I knew it was time to go to the hospital. My Mom was able to spend a few days there in town with me before she left to go home.

Dad and I were happy to show Jessica her new baby sister. She was very excited and attentive. We had so much going on at that time of our life. Dad was finishing up with an internship, his college education and a few months later we were in St. Louis.

Christine was little and petite but solid as a baby. She was very attached to me as a baby which made it difficult for Dad and I to get away sometimes; luckily we had family close to help us out. Christine and Jessica loved to play together and that was wonderful. When Christine was little she could sing on pitch really well. She sang in Primary one Sunday all by herself. That talent and joy has continued.

Christine was maybe three or four when she got her finger stuck in a slide in our backyard. The edge was digging/slicing into her finger. There was a lady from church at the house that fortunately helped me to pull her up and get her finger off the jagged part. We had to take her to the doctor and get stitches in her finger.

One time we went to some tryouts for the Muny. I couldn't believe how crazy it was when we showed up at a high school and how many children were there to try out. Christine was a wreck and almost didn't come to the try outs. She tried out and a short time later we got a phone call that she had made it. She was in Muny Kids that summer and also in Annie at the Muny. It was pretty unbelievable that she made it. We didn't realize that most of these girls were from some very elite dance places in Chesterfield and around St. Louis. That was a great experience and fun for the whole family. Christine ended up making it the following year but was going to have to miss girls camp and other church activities so we decided against it. We found Young People's Theater close to home and Jessica and Christine did some musicals there at St. Charles Community College.



I loved that all the older children were in Rising Generation together with so many close friends. Christine had many

opportunities to sing in groups and to sing solos, too.

Christine did well in school and had her sights set on BYU Provo. She was very nervous to go out to Provo but was able to learn so much with the help of Jessica that first year. Christine found out about the International Language program at BYU and she went to China in January of 2006. She taught English to the children there. It was fun keeping in contact with her on the phone regularly while she was there. With that experience I knew that Christine was prepared to serve a mission a little later.

What an incredible blessing that was for Christine to be able to serve her mission in Catania, Italy. She had a wonderful experience serving the people there and learning how to teach the gospel to those in Italy. Meeting Matt Swensen was the top best blessing of her mission; he was also serving a mission there in Italy. Dad and I flew to Italy to pick Christine up and happened to meet Elder Swensen the second day we were there at church. As we drove around Italy the next week we happened to listen to Matt Swensen's music on the CD player; little did we know that was a foreshadow of future events.



## Bradley's Birth Story

*Mom*

19 MAY 1991

Dear Bradley,

I wanted you to have a journal while you are young. I will fill it with your experiences so that you will know about yourself as a child. You have been a joy in our lives as you have grown these last two years. We pray that we can teach you about life and how to be happy here on this earth. We would like you to grow up learning of the gospel of Jesus Christ and how we as a family can return to our Heavenly Father.

Forever my love,  
Your mother

Bradley William Lewis was born on February 15, 1989. He weighed 8 lbs. 13 oz. We named him Bradley after his father and William after his great grandfather Reading, William Gilbert Reading.



I was overdue with Bradley and my doctor said I could come in and be induced. I came in with Brad, and with Luella and Abbie who were going to be able to be

in the delivery room. They had me on the bed, in a hospital nightgown, when they asked me if I could answer a couple of questions. They asked me if I had eaten anything in the last 12 hours. I had. I was sick during the night and had eaten a small piece of an apple. They said I would have to come back. I couldn't believe it. We all went to my mom's and sat around for a few hours. When we



came back at 12:00 noon they said that Dr. Kovac wanted me to come back the next day. I refused. I can't believe it but I refused. I was so upset by this time that I told them I had to do this today. Shari Barber had the other children and I didn't want to have to do that all over again. They decided to let me go ahead. They started me on Pitocin. A few hours later I was given an epidural. Those things are miracle workers. Luella and Abbie were a big help to me. They kept me company and that helped to make the time go faster. Shortly before I delivered they realized that I was further along than they had thought. Everybody was dashing around trying to put on their clothes. Dr. Kovac came

in and delivered my first baby boy. Brad and I were so thrilled. I remember calling the girls and wishing that they could have been there to see Bradley right after I had had him. The hospital stay was wonderful. I stayed about 2½ days. With Jessica I stayed 12 hours and with Christine it was maybe 14 hours so I felt spoiled on this one. Jessica and Christine came with Brad to see little Bradley at the hospital. They were so excited to see their little brother. Brad came to the hospital to check us out and then we went to my mom's because she had the girls. I wanted that moment to be a special one. Within seconds of arriving the girls were both upset and crying. Everybody wanted to see the baby at once. I realized very quickly that this was going to be a BIG job.

*Dad*

Well, we have had a very exciting week! We had a baby boy! Laura gave birth to a healthy 8 lbs. 13 oz. boy on Wednesday, February 15 at 7:20 PM! We are so excited to have a boy after having two girls. We named him Bradley William Lewis, Bradley after his father and William after his great grandfather William Gilbert Reading. He is such a cute little boy. He even has his dad's eyes, which I don't mind at all. Everyone thinks he's a doll.

Wednesday was a long day. We were up at 5 AM to get Laura to the hospital at 6:30 AM to be induced. We got her all checked in and then found out that they couldn't start her on the drug to induce her because she had eaten an apple earlier that morning. So we went home to Laura's parents and spent the morning there. We headed back to the hospital and had her readmitted at noon. They started her on the drug again at 1 PM. About an hour or so later about five nurses came running in and put Laura on oxygen and gave her another drug to stop an extended contraction she had been having. This long contraction had caused the baby's heart tones to suffer so they were concerned for the baby. Laura and I were both kind of scared when this happened because at first we didn't know what was wrong. Laura really became upset because she was scared and because the day hadn't gone as planned. I failed to mention that when we came in to readmit Laura, the doctor had left a message for us to just come back "tomorrow morning." This enraged Laura and she demanded to stay. I don't blame her for feeling that way. So anyway, it wasn't exactly the "perfect day" for Laura up to this point.

By 3 PM she was back on the inducing drug and we had our first real blessing of the day. The nurse whose shift began at three came in and was so nice

Laura and I both "fell in love" with her from the start. Her name was Jane and she really was able to relax Laura. She seemed so concerned and efficient, a real professional. We were so grateful to have her.



Well, at about 7 PM I left Laura's mom in the waiting room after talking with her. When I came in to Laura's room they were prepping Laura to have the baby! I didn't expect it would come in till 9 PM or so. Well, I rushed to get dressed, as did Laura's younger sisters Luella and Abbey who had permission to be in the delivery room. After we were dressed, we were there for about three contractions and the baby was born! It happened so quick! As the baby came out, I checked to make sure it was a boy as we had been told during an ultrasound 1½ months earlier! It was still a boy! Everything went fine, although Laura said it was more painful than either Jessica or Christine. It was such a beautiful experience. Luella and Abby were crying, they were so touched. I was so proud of Laura and so thankful for a healthy baby and wife. I cried at my bedside that night. I've never felt such gratitude and humility.

## Memories with Bradley

*Jessica*

When I close my eyes, I can see Bradley in our Ashford home in the basement with a sword in his pant loops. We had some great times down there playing house and family. I remember Bradley begging me and Christine to be quiet at night when we would stay up singing "By the light, by the light, by the light, of the silvery moon." I remember spending afternoons at the creek at our Moondance house and sledding in the winter. I can picture Bradley sitting at the piano composing songs and writing music. I was always jealous of his composing skills. I had learned to play the piano and read music well, but music just seemed to pour out of Bradley effortlessly. He has a special gift and skill, for sure.

Everyone knows that I love my sisters but there is something pretty special about having a younger brother. I have always had a special adoration for Bradley. He was (and is) a peacemaker. He was (and is) so talented and intelligent; it was easy to be proud of him. Most of us 6 kids are of the "louder" variety, Bradley and Emma excluded. Bradley wasn't the loudest or the most talkative, but when he did say something I remember thinking that it was often profound and evident of his thoughtfulness and his skills of observation and reflection.

On to the mission years, I remember "bumping into" Bradley at the reflection pool in between General Conference sessions. I was always so nervous and excited, hoping that we would be able to meet up with him. We'd share lunch, he would introduce us to his companion and we'd talk and take pictures. Didn't Christine introduce Bradley to Matt during one of these gatherings? Bradley was such a





focused missionary so I know this may not have been easy for him to do, but I always appreciated being able to see him, hug him and talk with him.

Christine and I were able to drive up for Bradley's "dying" testimony as a missionary. We felt more righteous pride as we watched him interact with missionaries and past companions and especially as he shared his testimony. I knew he had made a real impact as a missionary. And of course the summer in Nauvoo! No family clapped or cheered louder than we did.

One of my most favorite memories of Bradley is talking to him on the phone after he met Mindy. I was at Mom and Dad's and I was out on the driveway pacing back and forth (must have gotten that from Dad) while we

talked. As he talked about her and their time together I had this incredible sense that Mindy was THE ONE for him. It's amazing to look back and think about the prompting that Bradley received while on his Salt Lake City mission to audition for Young Performing Missionaries. We loved cheering for Bradley as a YPM that summer but the greatest gift we all got from Bradley's time in Nauvoo was Mindy. Sure love you Bradley!

### *Christine*

Growing up, Bradley was so easy-going. He was never one to ruffle feathers or get in the middle of any argument. He is and always has been a peacemaker. Some of my favorite memories with Bradley are focused around our time together as teenagers. Because we were so close in age, we ran with the same group of friends. Bradley was someone that EVERYONE wanted to be friends with. And he was especially popular among the women-folk. It didn't matter if they were older or younger, the girls just kind of flocked around him. He was very cute, of course, but

their desire to be around him was about much more than that. He had a very quiet, respectful way of treating women, and they really responded to that.

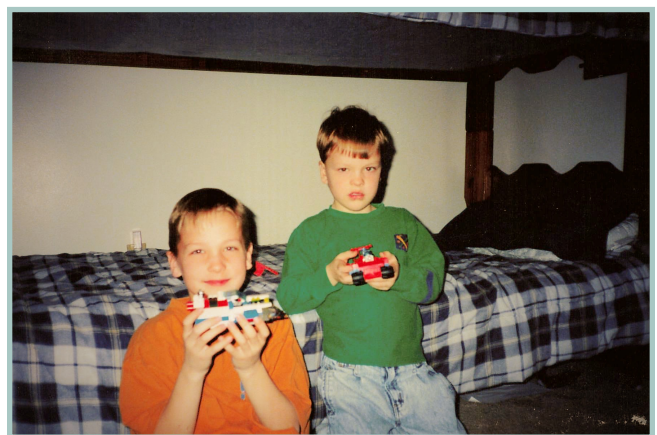
When Bradley first began attending dances, I remember him being a bit nervous about the "dancing" part. But pretty soon, he found his signature move that quickly became known as "The Brad". Our group of friends, plus dozens of other random kids would come stand with us in a circle and all do "The Brad" together. Everything he did, even out of his own insecurity, became COOL.

Bradley and I always shared a deep love for music. As teenagers, it seemed our day revolved around the burned CD-disc we currently had playing in the green Mazda we shared. Some of our favorites were: Copeland, Mae, Nickel Creek, and of course I always loved to throw in some Rascal Flatts here and there. To this day, when I hear some of these bands, I am transported back to that time, hanging with my brother Bradley. Other memories that bring on all sorts of nostalgia: spending time at Lake Saint Louis, QT runs, friend's houses, sitting out on the roof, watching Conan together on our blue couch after getting home from hanging with friends. I wouldn't ever trade these memories or that relationship Bradley and I were able to build as we grew up together.

### *Craig*

I remember always stealing Bradley's Mae CDs or any other music that he liked because I wanted to be just like him. We lived in the same room together for most of our childhood years so that brings plenty of memories. From Bradley playing the drums to us staying up late shooting air-soft bullets at Adam Vinateri's head. From staying up shooting hoops on our mini basketball hoop together, betting on if we would have school on a snowy day or not to putting up cool pictures of our favorite cars.

I remember Saturday morning football with Dad and the memories we share with that. Bradley and I had one year where we overlapped on the church basketball team. It was so fun to play with my brother. He scored all the points and I probably wanted the ball so bad trying to be like him. We spent so many





days outside on our hoop playing ball with neighborhood kids. I'm so glad we shared a love of sports growing up.

One great memory I have is when Dad and I took a trip to visit Brad and Mindy in Chicago. It was really fun to spend time with Bradley, go to a baseball game together and get to know his family better. I remember Bradley coming to visit Nauvoo when Claire and I were there. He was in the bishopric in his downtown Chicago ward and all the YPMs were so surprised, asking how young he was! I was so proud to call him my brother. I love you, Brad!!!



### *Laura*

I can look back and remember a fight I had with every sibling (which I feel like is pretty normal)—except Bradley. I remember him always being the example and trying to get us to stop fighting. He really was, and still is, a peacemaker, so I totally agree with Christine on that point.

I remember thinking my older brother was so talented. Brad would watch a movie, go sit down at the piano, and after fiddling around a little bit be able to play an arrangement way better than the movie. I especially remember him playing the nice piano at Grandma and Grandpa's first house in Nauvoo, the one with the sun room and the porch swing out front. If he saw a piano anywhere, he would automatically sit down and start playing. It really was fun and beautiful to listen to. Then you add his guitar playing skills and beautiful voice, and he really had it all.

One of my favorite memories of Bradley was when he was a young performing missionary in Nauvoo. I can't remember the final count of how many times we went to Nauvoo that summer but I know it was A LOT. That was the Summer I basically memorized the words and line to every song in every play in Nauvoo. It got to the point we noticed when somebody was missing or sick or if a change had been made. Every time we went we would try to guess which performing sister missionary Bradley would marry. Little did we know, we were just looking



at the wrong sister missionaries. Nauvoo became our Disneyland that summer.

A funny memory I have with Bradley is when I was in the fifth grade. I had been having really bad stomach aches for like two weeks. They were so painful that I was missing a ton of school. One night pretty late, my stomach was hurting so bad and mom had had enough, so we went to the

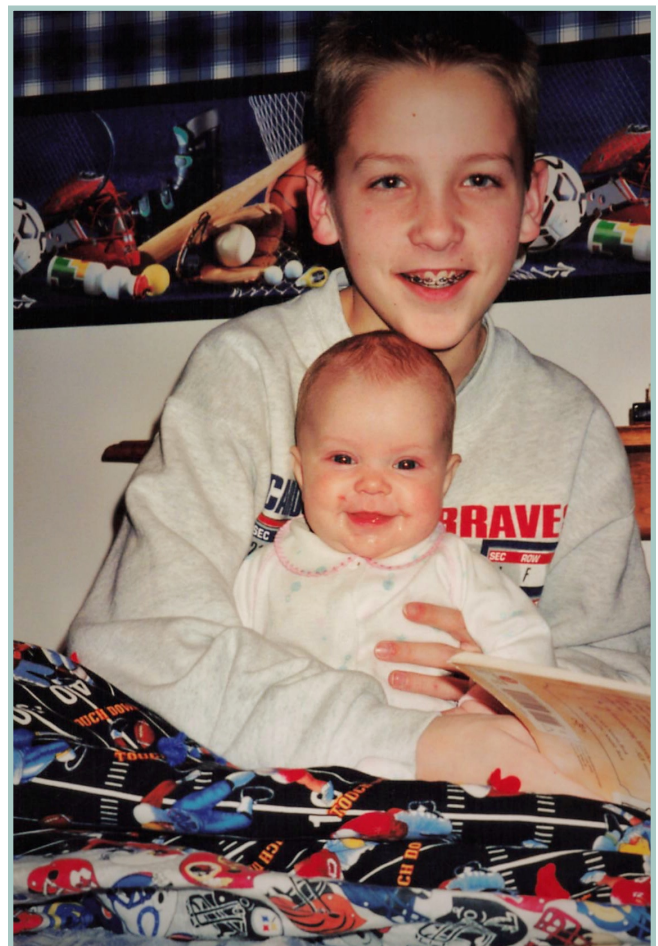
emergency room. When we got home a couple hours later at like 5 am, Brad was just getting up for seminary. I can't remember exactly what he said, but he kind of relaxingly was like, "What were you guys doing up?" Mom and I were so tired but I think she sort of laughed and explained that we'd been at the ER all night. Bradley was just like "Oh" and left for seminary. He was such a chill guy. He didn't really let things get to him and he was always respectful of others. Love you, Brad!

### *Emma*

Some of my favorite memories of Bradley:

I was always so proud to tell others that MY brother was a young performing missionary. I thought it was the coolest thing ever! The summer that Bradley was in Nauvoo was one of the best because we were constantly making quick trips there just so we could see him perform. I think the other YPMs became a little weirded out that we were there so much, I'm sure they were thinking, "Are they really here AGAIN?!"

Like Laura said, we had pretty much



every word memorized and unfortunately made critiques if the other actor's performances were not up to our standard. Of course Bradley always did so good up on stage and our family could always be heard cheering and clapping the loudest after each song he sang. Hearing Bradley share his testimony through music that summer was so special to me.

I've also felt really lucky to have lived pretty close to Brad and Mindy throughout my middle school, high school, and college years. I was so excited to visit them in Chicago where they lived. I remember one evening we were walking and exploring around Roscoe Village with Brad when it started pouring rain. We ran all the way back to their house and we were SOAKED. Brad & Mindy have lived in the coolest places and it's always been so fun to visit them. They are the best tour guides! They show us around some fun places and of course we ate some awesome food too!

Bradley has been such a wonderful example to me of what it means to be a great father. Samuel and Marie adore him. I always see him playing with them and playing pretend imagination games with Samuel like pretend astronauts,



monsters, or whatever Samuel is interested in at the time. I think this is so special to me because he did the same with me when I was younger.

I've felt very connected with Bradley through music especially. I love to sing with him. I remember one Christmas at Grandy's a long time ago he played the piano while I sang The Nativity Song. A couple years ago at

Thanksgiving he even went to a music store and brought back an amplifier for me. He's always made me feel like I was great at singing/playing the guitar. That always made me feel good about myself. I just wish I could be as talented as him! I love you, Bradley.

## *Dad*

I have such fond memories of Bradley's early years and have loved to see him turn into such a tremendous husband and father. I recall Bradley learning all the names of the different types of dinosaurs when he was little, and he knew more



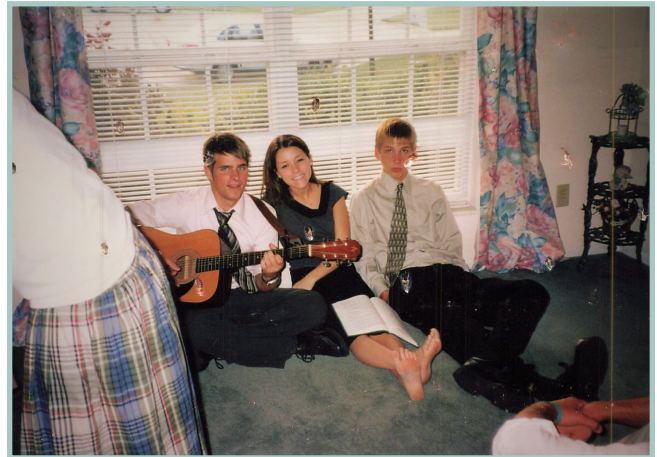
than just their names. He knew how big they were, what they ate, etc. That was impressive to me. From the time Bradley was first ordained a deacon, I remember how seriously he took the responsibility of holding the priesthood. He always wanted to be sure he did his duty to God and do it well. That continues to this day.

I remember Fathers & Sons outings with Brad and Craig. Brad was always so excited and seemed to just love being outdoors, exploring, taking it all in. He seemed so comfortable in nature. I looked forward to those events each fall, but probably not half as much as he and his brother did!

Brad has always been a great athlete. He was especially smooth on the basketball court. His 3-point shots were always so sweet to watch. I must admit, I was so proud he was "my boy" out there hitting those shots. Most important though, is that I don't recall him ever losing his cool or being a poor sport in victory or defeat. Impressive once again.

I was so excited when Brad was called to serve in Salt Lake City, Utah and Spanish-speaking no less! I just knew they only sent the very best young men and women to Salt Lake City! He went on to be an outstanding missionary and leader, and his Spanish was incredible. After his mission was, of course, his other mission as a YPM in Nauvoo. I didn't get up to Nauvoo quite as much as mom and the other kids, but whenever I was there, my buttons were bursting with pride over what he was accomplishing and sharing! That really was a summer of sacrifice for him, and for me since he didn't make a single dime toward his next year of college that summer! Ha!

We were thrilled when he found, courted, and then married Mindy! They are such an amazing team. I have been grateful for his willingness to serve in the Church in various capacities wherever they have lived. I have absolutely loved having one of my married children live close enough (Chicago, IL and Madison, WI) to drive to see them and our adorable grandchildren. (subtle hint to my other children with children – haha)



To say I love that boy of ours doesn't do it justice. But, I'll say it anyway. I love you son.

### *Mom*

We lived in the Ashford house when Bradley was born. I had woken up during the night on February the 14<sup>th</sup> having contractions so I decided to go up and down the basement stairs to see if I could get things going. No luck. I was already scheduled to be induced on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February so that was fine. During the night-time hours the next night I was feeling kind of nauseous so I nibbled on an apple. The next morning as Dad and I went to the hospital for me to be induced, they sent me home because I had eaten part of the apple and they told me to come back in after lunch at noon. When Dad and I came back in at noon, one of the nurses told me that the Doctor had said to come back the next day. I was so frustrated by this time. I said, "NO, I'm here and I'm not going home". That didn't start things out too well, but I had reached my breaking point. Luella and Abbie were there in the delivery room when Bradley was born. We were excited to have our first son.

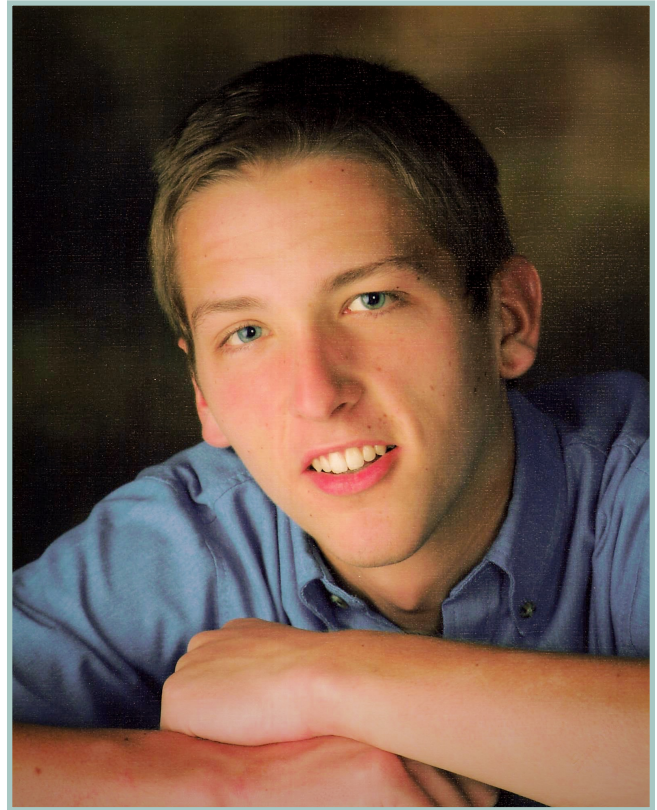
Jessica and Christine were so excited to have a brother and to take care of him. Jessica was 3 and Christine was 2. They loved to play with Bradley as if he was a baby doll. He was a good baby and they entertained him a lot.

So many memories:

- We couldn't find Bradley when he was about 2 or 3. We told the girls and said, "Let's pray so we can find him." Jessica dropped right down on the front lawn to pray, she was so worried. We found Bradley in the garage in the car eating some tic tacs that he knew were there.
- Bradley had a little doll that kind of looked Mexican, called Cordell. That was the start of him becoming an attentive father.
- Bradley loved to collect things that he became interested in (kind of like Samuel). He went through a phase with tools that he carried around in a little red bag. He loved dinosaurs and later little frogs, so we collected a lot of dinosaurs and frogs.
- Bradley loved his recess time at school!



- Bradley told me one time, "I don't want to grow up"... The responsibilities of being an adult, a husband and a father can be daunting.
- Bradley loved playing the piano and would spend hours playing and experimenting with his arrangements. I loved to sit in the room while he would play the piano. I enjoyed going to Guitar Center with Bradley and that started our Keyboard stage. That's been a great blessing to all because later I decided that would be a great way for everyone to have a "piano keyboard" in their home.



- I was able to help Bradley clean out his Raintree apartment the summer before he married Mindy. He was going to stay at Christine and Matt's before he came home to do his internship with Nestle. I got to clean the bathroom. It was kind of crazy; the bathtub faucet was so corroded there was no getting it clean. Bradley only had 2 plates and 2 cups that he was responsible for. The sink was full of dirty dishes and I thought we should clean them. He said none of that was his and that was the way it usually looked.

Those are just some memories I have of Bradley. He was/is a wonderful son. Love you Bradley!



## Craig's Birth Story

*Mom*

2 NOVEMBER 1993

Dearest Craig,

I hope you will enjoy this journal that will be filled with experiences in your life. Your Mom and Dad love you very much. You are very fortunate to have many family members who love and care for you. You were named after your Uncle Craig, your Dad's brother, and your middle name is Neal, after your Dad's father. You have been very blessed to come from a family who loves the gospel of Jesus Christ. We hope that you will also love the Church of Jesus Christ and will be happy by obeying the commandments.

28 DECEMBER 1992

We have a beautiful baby boy! His name is Craig Neal Lewis. He was born on December 23, 1992. He weighed 8 lbs. 9 oz. and was 21½ inches long. He was born at 1:50 PM at St. John's Mercy Hospital.

Dr. Kovac said he wanted to induce me on the 23<sup>rd</sup> if I didn't come before then. He said he doesn't like it when anyone goes over 41 weeks. Well, I was induced. I was ready by that time. I was glad I waited though. Brad will be able to be home till January 4<sup>th</sup> so that will be a great help to me.

The children spent the night at Grandma's and that helped out a lot. Brad and I got up at six and got ready to go. I had had contractions during the night but nothing that continued. I was a little disappointed that I hadn't had the baby on

my own but things ended up working well. Brad and I got to the hospital at 7:30 am. The nurses were friendly and I was happy about that. That makes a big difference when you're about to have a baby! There was one nurse who was basically in charge of my care. Her name is Mary Ann Mayer. She was such a big help a number of times when I needed a hand to hold. My Mom was able to be there and that was very special.

She is so encouraging. I was on Pitocin by eight. Dr. Kovac came in an hour later and put some leads on the baby's head. That hurt because he had to try it about 6 times. When I was dilated to 4 cm they let me have an epidural. Yeah! I really wasn't too miserable at that point but it was nice to get the epidural before I was feeling awful.

My blood pressure was low a number of times which made me feel dizzy or out of it. They kept asking me if I felt sick but I didn't. I was dilated to about a six when Dr. Kovac came in and said, "You're ready!" I couldn't believe it. I had even been taken off the Pitocin for a little while because my blood pressure was low. Well, Dr. Kovac prepped me and Craig Neal Lewis was born at 1:50 pm. It was a beautiful birth. I was able to see everything with the mirror in place. I feel so blessed to have four healthy beautiful children. I thank my Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ for the great blessings that have been given to me.



## *Dad*

28 FEBRUARY 1993

Since writing in November, we had our fourth child, a beautiful baby boy! He was born December 23, 1992, on Joseph Smith's birthday. He weighed 8 lbs. 9 oz. and was born at 1:50 PM! We named him Craig Neal Lewis, after my brother Craig and father Neal. Everything went so well. Laura was induced again – another baby that wasn't so anxious to come to the earth. We were at the hospital by 7 AM and Laura gave birth that afternoon. Laura did wonderful again. She is able to endure an awful lot of pain. Our nurses were wonderful, especially the one who was there most of the day – Mary Ann. She was so thoughtful, kind, and caring, like it was the first time she's ever helped bring a

baby to this earth. Laura's mom and I were there for the birth. It was tremendous to see the miracle of life again! I had tears in my eyes as I held him just minutes after he arrived. I felt I knew that God lives and that He has a wonderful plan for us, His children.

Later that day the children came with Grandma and Sheila to see the baby in the nursery. Then that night I took the children back to the hospital again. They were able to each take their turn holding the baby – first Jessica, then Christine, and finally Bradley. They were so tender and gentle with him. It was very cute. I captured it on video tape. Since we brought Craig home, the children have continued to be very careful and gentle. He's only been dropped once by Christine. Oh well, I'm sure it won't be the last time.

We brought Laura and Craig home on Christmas Eve day. It was a cold, but sunny day. It was very exciting to have that newborn boy in our home on Christmas Eve and through the holidays. Jessica wouldn't leave the baby's side.



She stayed home from our Christmas Eve activity over at the Nelson's and my parents'. She has been a super help to Laura and the baby, holding him constantly. She was very possessive and protective for some time, and she's just now getting over that.

The holidays were wonderful – could not have gone any better. The whole timing of the birth was great because I was off on vacation around and during

the holidays. Laura really appreciated having me home and I loved helping out. It was hard for her to have me go back to work, but she managed.

Now little Craig is 2 months old, and what a cutie he is! I like holding him when he's calm or sleeping. It really helps me to relax and unwind and remember where my priorities should be. Laura is a wonderful mother. She's so good with the children, it's amazing. She never seems to let the children "rattle" her, like they do me.

Well, we're now settling into this "family of six" idea. It is nice to have a baby at home again, but I am beginning to feel crowded here in our small 3-bedroom



home. We're talking about moving into another home, but so far all we're doing is talking.

This month I received some fantastic news – I received a 12% raise in salary! That makes a total of 23% in raises in less than 2 years! Is that incredible or what?! I'm really excited about how things are going. I even received a bonus early this month, as well, for a big effort we all put in late last year, and I'm loving my new position as supervisor. I look forward for more good things to come.

Well, I guess I don't need to say that we feel richly blessed. A new baby boy who's healthy, and a good job that rewarding me for my work – it doesn't get much better. We are very fortunate to have all that we do. We're trying hard not to take all this for granted.

## Memories with Craig

*Jessica*

My childhood memories of Craig are mostly in the backyard of our Ashford house. I remember you getting whacked pretty good over on our neighbor RJ's swing set. Somebody was swinging really high and hit you right across the forehead as you walked by; I think you were only a few years old. This ringing a bell? I'm pretty sure you had a goose egg for days. Speaking of goose eggs, I'm pretty sure you always had a bruise or bump on your forehead as a kid. You played hard, Craig. You still do. Was it you that got burned (a few times) because you touched Dad's lawn mower?

Another fun memory of you is in our Moondance house. I'm sure just about every one of us remembers coming into that front living room and seeing you playing ball. You were either swinging away with a bat or dribbling a (maybe pretend) basketball. You had such incredible imagination and confidence in yourself. I also remember that as a kid you felt deeply. You expressed yourself with emotion and passion. These are some of my favorite things about you as an adult: your confidence, your emotional sensitivity and the passion and drive you have for the things that matter most to you.

Craig, I feel like you and I share pretty



similar personalities. I started noticing that as you became a teenager and started dating. We both dated a lot, didn't we? Yikes. Glad that is over! Now we can relate to more important things. Like our love of pens! You are outgoing and confident, organized and neat, ambitious and determined. It's been fun chatting with you over the past year about accounting; I can see why you love it (and tax) so much. I feel a deep sense of satisfaction when debits finally equal credits, so I get you.

I remember sitting in the back room of our house before you left for your mission listening to your last two songs before being set apart. I could hardly keep it together but you were just over there with a smile on your face soaking up and singing every note. It has been fun living in California and going to Oceanside, Escondido and other cities where you served as a missionary. I know the people there were so blessed to have you serve in their areas, because I know you.

A more recent memory that means a lot to me is the concern and excitement you shared with us as we adopted baby Bradley. You were on your mission when we adopted the girls, so this whole adoption process was new for you. As we waited for the time to pass and Bradley to be ours, you texted and called and I just remember feeling your love and support. It meant so much to me! Then, just weeks later as you visited Claire's family in California, you got to stop by and meet our baby Bradley. I loved sharing that short, but sweet time with your little family. Oh how we love you and Claire. She is hands down the best decision you ever made and we are all blessed because you chose her and she chose you. You two are raising a beautiful, strong family together and I am so proud, and so grateful that we get to share in it with you—through text, FaceTime, and Marco Polos. We love you!



## *Christine*

Craiglet! What a guy! I can honestly say I don't think anyone has a brother like mine. You are one of a kind in personality and heart!

If I close my eyes I can see you in the "piano room" playing football or any other type of ball game with... yourself! When I hear my boys talking to themselves as they are fully engaged in imaginative play, I think of Craig! His imagination was so vivid as a young child.

Something that I have always been so envious of is Craig's ability to dream big. When he was little he was torn between his dream to pursue either the NBA or the NFL... or was it the major leagues? Some might say, oh that's just what kids do, but I have watched as Craig has continued to dream big and shoot for the stars! Attending BYU, being a YPM, graduating in what I consider to be a very lofty and challenging field, etc., etc., etc. Craig has always been confident and sure... qualities that few have and that I myself struggle with a great deal. Because of that I look UP to my little brother.

Craig is fearless. He has always been not only able but willing to talk with anyone. He has never been ashamed of who he was, of us as a family, or of what he believed. Because I wasn't home to witness Craig in high school, I remember hearing about him sharing the gospel with all sorts of people, friends, acquaintances, even strangers. That was so challenging for me growing up so I marveled at his natural ease in being exactly who he was and sharing exactly what he believed during those growing up years.

Craig always wore his heart on his sleeve. He wasn't afraid to FEEL, and not even just at a young age, all throughout his adolescence as well! You always knew what Craig valued because he was comfortable getting emotional about





those things. This has translated beautifully to adulthood and parenthood for Craig. No one doubts that his family is everything to him! And not just his wife and babies. His OG family as well! Us! Don't tell Craig he has to miss out on a family gathering because the FOMO sets in something fierce and he'll pull out all the stops to be there.

So grateful to have a brother like Craig. There's no one like him! Love you so much, buddy.

### *Brad*

Craig – it's so nostalgic to look back on our growing up times. I think you and I had a great balance of interests in common, as well as personalities that complemented one another that made things pretty easy to get along.

I remember you being the person with whom I played the most – in particular, sports. I think so fondly on all the backyard sports and neighborhood buddies that we had throughout our O'Fallon years. It was always competitive, larger than life matchups in my young mind. It was as if we were really in the world series, or super bowl, or whatever sport we were playing in the moment. I have vivid



memories of specific moments in those games. One in the field down by the creek where we were being challenged by Ryan Kumar and some of the boys from the other side of the neighborhood. I believe we played tackle because that's what they wanted to play. I ran headfirst into Ryan and I think we were both out for a couple seconds or two on our backs. But it showed him I wasn't going to be a pushover.

I of course remember all our basketball games we'd tape putting the old handheld video camera in the nook of the mailbox. I remember seeing and rewatching your broken arm situation. I remember another time we played



football in the rain in the Ballard's backyard. It was so slippery that I ended up slide tackling Daniel in a perfect "upend" type tackle where he went flying. I even remember getting into hockey and combining hockey with tennis balls and basketball type moves of going between my legs. It was whatever we wanted it to be, and it's interesting how the type of play I enjoyed mostly with you is the model for what I hope my kids will have as we move into our first neighborhood in which we plan to stay for more than 2 years.

I remember going on Father's and Sons campouts with you and playing football or capture the flag there. I remember your younger years where you'd burn your hand time and time again on the mower and where you would display your assertiveness when you felt you weren't being listened to by resorting to grabbing a tool – haha. Hey, I mean that tenacity has been a great asset in your life as you've gone after things you wanted, always believing in and advocating for yourself.

I always looked at your strengths as things that I wanted to emulate – your way with people, your confidence and boldness, and now – your finance / tax skills! But honestly, I've always looked up to and been impressed by you. To me, you're in the spitting image of Grandpa Lewis personality wise (fitting with your middle name), and I think it's safe to say he turned out pretty darn good.

In my later teenage years, I remember finally having more crossover activities together as I was a senior and you a freshman I believe. At least one year, I believe we got to play young men's basketball together and that was so natural.

You're now such a great husband and father and it's so cool to see the full circle nature of you coming into those roles and passing on your passions to your kids.

Here's the song I wrote for you as you left on your mission. For me, it encapsulated the poignant feeling of all those years of play and the lessons we learned and worked out through those experiences.

*Brother come, walk with me now down the path of our past, years ago  
Those long days, backyard baseball, sun sank low as we ran home to mother's call  
Makeshift bases, all the same we were kids and we lived for those games*

*Remember once on our swing set you walked right in front of me  
I tried to stop, but it was too late, you wore that black eye like a badge  
Life will knock you down sometimes, it seems that backyards made us wise*

*Growing up, splitting bunk beds, handmade posters we made hung on walls  
All your life, shared a room, watched you grow, then time came, to go off on my own  
Off to school I left our home, as they took the bunk beds down*

*Ain't a kid any longer you've grown a foot or two since back then  
And me well I never thought this time would come, but now it's you headed out that door  
As you go off on your own, we know you'll make us proud*

*Our childhood room'll sit there still in our home once alive now vacant left alone  
As you go take one last look around remembering bunk beds and those long days of backyard games  
Though life might knock you down sometimes, remember backyards made you wise*

## *Laura*

Craig... man, where do I even start?! I feel so lucky to be so close in age with you and to have grown up together. Sure, I didn't always (or ever) like your choice of girlfriends and sometimes you annoyed me, but I always knew that when it really mattered you'd be there for me. I have so many great memories of our time together and I felt pretty proud to be your sister. Everybody loved you and your friends and I felt almost famous just being "Craig's sister."

A couple of favorite memories together:

- When you taped the sprayer by the sink and video taped me getting sprayed all over while doing the dishes. Nice!
- Me pretending to know new songs you'd heard just to bother you
- Us being in Rising Gen together, going to dances, youth activities, etc. together



- Our secret trips through the McDonalds drive-through to get cinny minnies

You've always held your family relationships really close. I love that you are always the first to FaceTime, call, or set up some time to do something together. It has always meant a lot to me to know that you value our relationship and you put the time and effort into keeping it strong.

I've loved watching you throughout the years and learning from your example. Especially in the years since you married Claire and started your family, I've loved being able to spend time with you and learn from you. You chose a pretty

amazing wife, and even though I was sad to miss the wedding being on my mission, I knew you were marrying the right one! I love you!

### *Emma*

Craigy!!! I'm so blessed to have a sibling like you! You are such a great example of what it means to be a wonderful father, husband, and worthy priesthood holder. I look up to you in so many ways and I always will. Thanks for always keeping in touch and checking up on me. It's so nice to know that you're just a phone call, text, or FaceTime away.

Some of my favorite memories with you:

- When I was pretty young, me, you, and Laura would go fishing at the creek. We'd take the fishing poles, dad's buckets (that I think we still have in the garage), and corn. Once we got to the creek we would fill the bucket up with creek water and that's where we'd keep the fish after you and Laura had caught them.
- Christmas time!!! I remember playing that game with you and Laura where we would hide the Acorn ornament in the tree and someone would have to find it. That was so sweet watching you and Erin carrying on that tradition!!!
- Our Pere Marquette trips when you still lived at home! After Dad had set up the tent he'd ask us to go find some wood for the fire. We'd spend quite a bit of time gathering as much wood as we could. We also had a lot of fun passing a ball or playing baseball with your yellow bat on the campsite.
- I was so excited when you were called as a YPM! We had a blast coming to visit and watching you in the shows that we were already so obsessed with. When you have a brother in the shows it makes it 10x better!
- Summer of 2017 you and Claire visited St. Louis and we went to



Nauvoo. We stayed in a hotel room with Nora, Braeden, Mom, Dad, Shari, Dave, and Grandma. Haha it was crazy but that was the best couple days ever! I had so much fun with you guys. We went to 'The Promise' a couple times and we had the best time critiquing the performances.

- Your trip this last April! We did so much in that week that you were here and it was the best! Steak 'n Shake (rest in peace), the Zoo, touring those model homes, City Museum, and watching so many Marvel movies. I'll never forget seeing the movie of the year, Avengers Endgame, with you, Claire, and Dad. Thanks Dad for paying for those seats!

You are so amazing Craig and I love you to the moon and back! I feel so lucky to have a close relationship with you. I can't wait to make more fun memories with you and your family!

## *Dad*

When I think about Craig and his life and his part in our family, I just break into a smile, a big smile. Craig was a lot of fun to have around – from the time he was very young until even now when he comes to visit. Craig has a special talent of being able to talk to anyone. He can strike up a conversation with people of all ages and backgrounds, and within just moments that person warms up to him. I think they can tell just how good a soul and heart he has. He sincerely cares about everyone. He has taught me about being more outgoing.

Fathers and Sons outings with Craig and Brad were always one of the highlights of the year for me. They ate that stuff up! They would organize and lead games of capture-the-flag in the pitch black darkness of Sioux Passage Park – the only light coming from the glow of the campfire. I knew I could trust Craig to have fun and then come find me when the game was over. He would come back to the tent



completely exhausted and sleep like a baby the entire night while his dad tossed and turned trying to get comfortable. When Brad became too old for those outings, Craig carried the torch of continuing to organize those night-time games.

Craig was a natural athlete at any sport he attempted. Football, Baseball, and especially Basketball. I will never forget the years Craig was allowed by Pres. Slezak to play in the Stake YM Basketball games even though he had played high school basketball that same season. I was worried Craig would get a bit cocky and just pound guys with his speed, shooting process, and ball-handling skills. Instead, he played hard, but never did anything to show anyone up. He sometimes even slowed down to give his opponent a chance to cover him. I loved him for his good sportsmanship in that setting.

Craig took his priesthood offices and responsibilities very seriously. He understood that the priesthood is a sacred gift and power. He knew he had to be worthy to exercise that priesthood on behalf of the members of the Ward. He had many opportunities to serve as a leader in his Aaronic Priesthood quorums, and he really tried to magnify his call.

I remember how excited I was when he was called on a Spanish-speaking mission in the states, just like his dad and older brother Brad. I felt my sons and I could relate to each other even better knowing that we had all experienced the challenges of learning a language while being in the U.S. Then, when Laura was called to Utah Ogden Spanish-speaking, it continued! Though I wasn't with Craig while on his mission, I knew he was a good missionary because I knew how seriously he took the things of God. Stories he related to us made it clear he loved the Lord, loved the people, and that they loved him!

In recent years, I have been particularly impressed with how hard he works to get his education, support his family, and care for his wife Claire, daughter Erin, and now his son Craig James. He has excelled in these endeavors because he has tried to put God first in his life and then care for his wife and children next. He has already learned the pattern of success in this life as he keeps his covenants. I love you Craig.

### *Mom*

My Craigy. Craig was such an active child... Fortunately he came with such a fun, sweet personality. The older children were such a great help to me holding and taking care of him throughout the day. When he was born on December 23<sup>rd</sup>,



I think I only stayed a day in the hospital. On Christmas Eve I was at home and Dad went over to Grandma's for the Christmas Eve celebration. Jessica acted as if she was sick so she could stay home with me and help with Craig. I thought that was so sweet.

Some of my memories with Craig:

- When he was about 3 or 4, Craig was obsessed with watching Dad mow and he just wanted to play with the mower. We would sometimes let him just move the mower across the lawn for fun because he enjoyed it so much. I remember that he burnt his hand on the mower twice because he just wanted to touch the top of the mower (right after Dad had just finished mowing). His little fingers were blistered and we felt so bad. Right after his fingers healed, he touched it again!!! Ouch!
- Craig had a thing for Windex and vacuuming so I let him go to town with a rag and Windex occasionally (I would monitor his Windex-ing). With vacuuming I just let him go back and forth whenever he wanted. I didn't want to keep him from his desire to clean, because I knew it could benefit me later.
- When Laura was born, Craig was almost two and a half and very busy. When Laura was up in her crib, he climbed up to take a look. As he reached out, his nails scratched her face. He wasn't trying to hurt Laura, he just wanted to touch and "play with her".
- Craig loved music and dancing and gymnastics. I had him enrolled in a gymnastics class to get out some of his energy. They let him climb up a big huge rope to the ceiling and use the trampoline. He was pretty good at cartwheels and round offs as he learned that, too. As a family we would turn on Aladdin music and have Craig do



some dance moves and little cartwheels and flips in the living room. We got a kick out of his stunts and energy.

- We had two doll houses in the house and I got rid of one of them because it wouldn't fold up in size. Laura was pretty upset about the whole situation. There was a garage sale in the neighborhood and Craig saw a doll house (that folded up) and bought it for Laura. I think he was only eight or nine. I thought that was so sweet of him to be so concerned about Laura. At an older age, Craig went to EFY and then traveled a little with the Hamp's. Craig bought a little bird for Emma that was so cute and it made chirping sounds. I thought that was so thoughtful of Craig to do that at the age of 14.
- We love being able to keep in contact with Craig. He makes it a priority to keep in contact with all the family and that is a special gift.
- As Craig is an adult and married, he and Claire have both added family traditions that they enjoyed growing up and brought into their own family. These traditions are important to Craig and it is a blessing for me to see that some of the things we did while he was growing up were meaningful to him.



## Laura's Birth Story

### *Mom*

19 MARCH 1995

Exciting News!!! We just had a baby girl. Her name is Laura Abbie Lewis. She is a beautiful baby. What a surprise it was for me when she came two days early.

Friday I got up and went to my exercise class and hurried home. It was going to be a busy day. I went to K-Mart and Aldi's. I had some contractions that hurt bad but I wondered if they were just bad cramps. I took a short nap because the evening was going to be busy. I was going to a bridal shower and Brad was in charge of the Stake Young Men's basketball tournament starting at 7 pm. I kept having contractions that hurt so I started timing them. They were very irregular. Then my water broke. Brad was already on his way home. I told the children I needed to go to the hospital to be checked. The three oldest got pretty nervous. Jessica started to cry. I was a bit nervous myself. I explained to Jessica what was going to happen and that everything would be all right. She was very concerned for me and my safety. I talked with Christine and Bradley to let them know what would be going on. They were going to Grandy's and if we went in and they said, yes,



your water has broken, we would stay in the hospital. If not, we would come back and get them. Brad arrived home and was very surprised about the turn of events. He took the news very well and got on the phone immediately to make arrangements for not being at the tournament. We left shortly after that and dropped the children off at my Mom's. Jessica was concerned but we told her we would call right away when we knew something. We went in and my water had broken so they put me on Pitocin to get the contractions more regular. Wow. I could not believe it. I had prepared myself the whole nine months that I might be two weeks late and here it was two days before my due date. Amazing. I had not yet prepared myself mentally so I was kind of thinking of my gosh I can't believe I'm getting ready to have a baby. Incredible. I talked on the phone with the children and they were feeling much better about how things were going. They gave me an epidural a little after the contractions were getting pretty bad. Yeah! Joseph and David came in after their basketball game over at the Stake Center. I was pretty surprised to see them come in but I was glad they did. Ed and Howard dropped by also. I was feeling pretty good at that time because they had given me the epidural. We were all talking and I was wondering how far along I was because I was feeling the pressure of the baby. The nurse came in right after Ed and Howard left and said you're dilated to a 10, you're ready to have the baby. The nurse left to call the doctor who lived ten minutes away. The nurses started preparing the room and me for delivery. I was amazed at how good I felt. The doctor showed up and after I pushed two or three times, the baby was delivered. Laura Abbie Lewis was born at 10:49pm and weighed 7 pounds 11 ounces. What



a cute baby. I was thrilled to have a little baby girl to name after myself and my sister Abbie. My Mom brought our three oldest children and they were able to come in right after they cleaned me up. The children were so excited to see the baby. They were amazed at how small she was. It was a beautiful evening having so many family members stop by. Wayne and Libbi came by. Dad and Matthew

came over after the Friday night basketball tournament. My Dad always makes me feel good (special) after I have a baby. I cherish those times. Brad and I said good-night to each other around 1 am. It's always a little lonely when he leaves. I was cold during the night and didn't sleep as well as I would have liked. It was so



good to see Laura Abbie again in the early hours of the morning. I just held her and let her sleep with me after I fed her. The next morning Brad called me. I told him to go on over and finish up the basketball tournament. He said, "People are going to think I'm crazy." I needed rest and that was a good way to get it. Mom had the children and came to the hospital at about 12. It was Christine's birthday. Brad came straight from the church and brought the presents I had already wrapped. We gave Christine some scriptures, a van for her doll house, and some clothes. It was fun for her to have her birthday celebration in the hospital. Of course the children were thrilled to see baby Laura again. Craig saw her for the first time. Brad and I ate lunch in the hospital and then we packed things up and left. Insurance companies are only giving one day stays. I am always ready to go home.

## *Dad*

27 MARCH 1995

On Friday, March 17<sup>th</sup> a very exciting and wonderful thing happened in our family! Laura gave birth to our fifth child – a beautiful baby girl we named Laura Abbie Lewis. She was born at 10:49 PM and weighed 7 lbs. 11 oz. and was 20¼ inches long! What a fantastic experience and tremendous blessing.

Laura wasn't due until March 19<sup>th</sup>, but our baby had her own arrival time in mind. As I was driving home from work that evening thinking about the young men's basketball tournament that was to begin that evening, Laura paged me on my beeper. I wondered why she would be paging me? Was she just trying to see if I had left work yet? Surely the random contractions she had been having hadn't developed into anything more substantial—had they? When I pulled up to the house and went inside the house, Laura was there at the door with a worried look on her face. She said she thought her water had broken and that her doctor wanted her to come in. My first thought was, "Oh no, not now! I've got a basketball tournament to run tonight and tomorrow! You can't be serious. This isn't happening." Then, before I said anything, I made myself understand that somehow it would all work out. I made calls to my counselors and turned it over to them.

Well, before long we were off to take the kids to Grandy's (Elna's) and then Laura and I made the short 5 minute trip from their home to Christian Northwest Hospital. It was so nice to be close. We checked Laura in and they verified that

Laura had in fact had her water broken. They started her on Pitocin to move contractions along even more regularly—then just 3 hours or so later she had the baby. It was so incredible to see just the baby's head come out, then slowly the rest of her tiny body. I eagerly looked to see whether it was a boy or girl. How excited we were to see it was a beautiful daughter! The doctor asked me to cut the umbilical cord, and I did. That was a first. It was 10:49pm.

Laura's mom and the kids came over a half hour or so later. I went to the waiting room and told them it was a baby girl. The girls' faces lit up! Bradley's face dropped as he snapped his fingers in disappointment and said quietly, "Oh man!" The children loved to be with baby Laura. They all had to hold her and be with her. It was neat to see. So much love for this tiny baby—it was great to see.

When we got Laura all checked into her recovery room for the night, I headed home alone. Before retiring to the bed, I knelt down and poured out my soul to the Lord. I broke down and cried as I thanked Him for blessing us with such a beautiful daughter. I felt so overwhelmed by the great responsibility I have as her father to protect her from harm and raise her in righteousness. It's a sacred job, and one that will not be easy.

Laura and baby Laura came home the next day, March 18<sup>th</sup>, which was Christine's 8<sup>th</sup> Birthday. We made sure to try and make it a special day for her too. She opened gifts at the hospital and enjoyed much of the day with me at the basketball tournament (which Laura insisted I go to) and with her mother and baby sister at the hospital. It was a busy, fun-filled and exhausting day! We all "died" in bed later that night.

Everyone was so thoughtful once we brought baby Laura home. My mom brought in the meals, and so many others brought meals in or gave us a gift. My



boss sent flowers. Some sent cards. It's been a real out-pouring of love to Laura, the baby, and me. We feel very blessed.

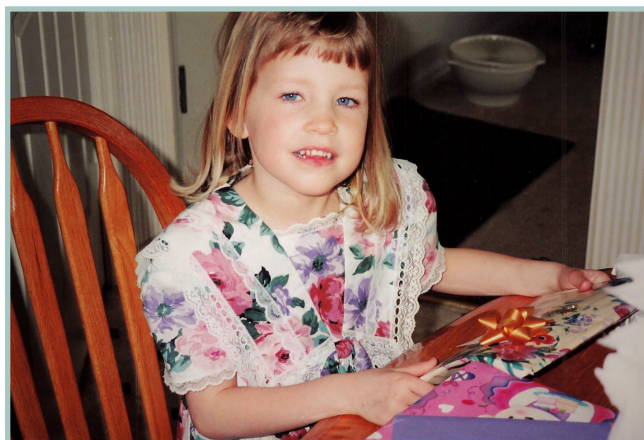


## Memories with Laura

### *Jessica*

I can't tell you how many times I've forgotten that Laura is over 9 years younger than I am. I think Laura has an uncanny ability to live in a way that feels young and fun and carefree, while still being spiritually and emotionally mature beyond her years. Being 9+ years apart, our lives didn't overlap in school or church. Laura probably remembers me as a bossy big sister, asking her to straighten her shoes on car trips or help clean the house while Mom and Dad were gone on dates. I'm grateful for all those trips home from college, even once Jared and I were married, that helped me stay close to Laura and all my younger siblings.

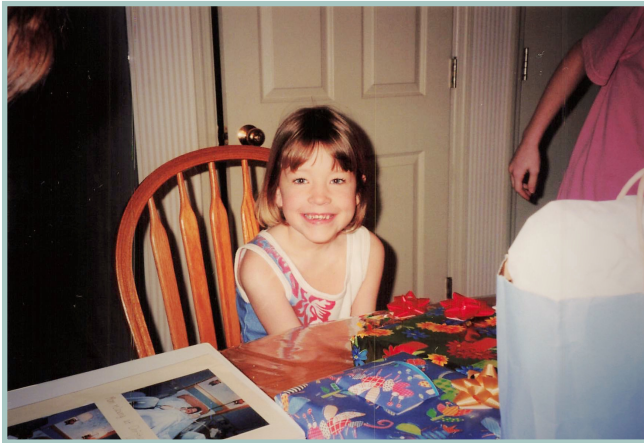
Jared and I lived with Mom, Dad, Laura and Emma back in 2011-2012 before Jared started medical school. The memories that stick out from that special time "back at home" are cheering Laura on in young women's basketball (I was always so proud of her! Not just her mad skills but the kind way she treated the other girls, how she included them. Laura was a natural leader.) I also remember going to the dog breeding farm ("don't shop, adopt!" whoops....) and picking out Mason with Laura and Emma. We have some pretty cute pictures from that day! I remember a





camping trip to Pere Marquette; Laura was always so full of life and fun. There was never a dull (or quiet) moment with Laura. She has a way of making everything fun; I admire that about her.

One of my most poignant memories is more recent, after Laura got home from her mission. I remember a few particular phone conversations talking to her about her friend Jacob. I could sense that she was concerned, confused and struggling to understand and wrestle with this sensitive situation. I learned so much from Laura as we talked and tried to make sense of it all. Laura had so much love and compassion for Jacob and I believe that is what has allowed her to be the best kind of friend not only to Jacob, but to so many people that she has touched throughout her life. Laura feels deeply for people. She's struggled enough in her own life to be able to relate to others in their struggles, no matter what they are. I can think of so many people on her mission and since her mission that Laura has



been able to help comfort and support because she was willing to share her own personal challenges. Laura has a gift of relating to others, connecting and communicating in such a beautiful, meaningful way. Laura has friends and makes friends everywhere she goes.

I'm grateful that regardless of separation by distance and age, I've felt increasingly close to Laura

throughout these last several years. She is an encouraging and supportive sister and an amazing Auntie to our kiddos. So grateful for you, La, and all the light, goodness, laughter and love you bring into this world! And thanks for picking such an incredible guy to be by your side throughout eternity. We love you both!

### *Christine*

Laura and I are eight years apart ALMOST to the day. I remember opening up my birthday presents in the hospital after she was born. Those eight years seemed like such a large age gap when we were younger, but over the last few years, that gap has felt smaller and smaller. She is both my little and big sister, because of our stark height differences, but she has also filled the role of "big" sister on so

many occasions as she has cared for me, supported me, and loved me in my difficulties...

One of my special memories of Laura as a young girl is the time I spent orchestrating and carrying out a wedding between her and Craig. They couldn't have been older than 6 and 4? Somebody pull out those pictures, I mean, what a hoot! Laura followed me around and was most likely subjected to all sorts of elderly sibling bossiness, but I don't remember her ever complaining. Laura was always quite the talker, a real conversationalist! I think she's always just worn her feelings and heart on her sleeve, so ready and willing to share and be open with anyone and everyone. I also remember Laura always curled up with a book. She would spend what seemed like hours and hours in her room reading book after book. I always admired her for following her passions, whatever they were at the time.

Speaking of passions, I remember when Laura first started to find an interest in videography. She poured every ounce of her creativity into those fun music videos with friends and family. It's pretty incredible to see how far she's come in her talent to tell a story behind a camera. I have always felt so proud to be "the sister" of the girl who created this and that video that people just can't get enough of. I can't wait to see where that gift takes her.

Laura and I have grown especially close these past few years. After she came out to BYU as a Freshman, I felt an increasing responsibility to look out for her and help her find her way. Turns out she hasn't needed all that much help – she is SUCH a go-getter! So driven. So strong. So resilient. Watching her decide to serve a mission after it was the last thing on the planet she wanted to do, and then undertake adventure after adventure since then (my most favorite being marrying the PERFECT guy for her!) has been such a joy (and relief!) to me. I will



always treasure the time we've shared living close to one another, being in the same ward, and serving together in Young Women's. Just hoping and praying this stage of life never ends! Love you more than you can know, Laura.

### *Brad*

Laura was the first "younger kid" that I was able to really be old enough to watch grow up. I have great memories of reading to Laura and taking care of her – much like we all took care of Emma as she grew up. So much of what I naturally knew about being a father and taking care of children I believe started with my learning experiences with Laura. I remember Laura's awesome straight bang hair cut as a child, remember how she always tagged along with Craig. Most of all when I think of Laura I think of her amazing ability to connect with anyone – an ability I greatly admire. She has the way of cutting through any formalities or fluff and talking about and being there for what's real. That makes her an enjoyable person to be around because she's authentic and real. I remember when Craig went on his mission Laura really, really missed him. I always thought it was interesting that some of Laura's best friends growing up were her Young Women leaders – she has a great ability to build relationships with people of all ages – even leaders. Laura is comfortable being herself, and contributes so much to our family. I think she has a unique ability to bring in people around her and always keep relationships first. I've really respected her example of how she's loved her friend Jacob and continued to be his friend, regardless of differences. A really good example of loving others yet still being able to maintain your own beliefs – that sort of set a model in my mind of how I should interact with others that I know. She's a younger sibling but there's a lot of things about the way she enjoys life and makes things fun that I look up to and really respect.

### *Craig*

Oh, Laura. The memories we have together. The first one that comes to mind is when you were on a softball team. The team you played on wasn't very good but I loved practicing with you during the summer and watching you get better. Every time you made a good play I would be so proud. You guys literally got killed every single game but it was so fun going to watch and support you!

I also remember helping you with your skills in basketball. You were so tall and had such a bright future at the sport. I wanted to be a part of you being a

basketball star! I was probably really bossy and super annoying but I love sports and it was fun that you loved them too. We shared some good memories playing sports together. That makes me so happy!

I remember sharing a lot of memories going to stake dances together. I can't remember exactly how many years we overlapped but stake dances were looked forward to each month big time! It was so fun to have a sibling at each dance. I remember that it made me want to be an example. I tried to make sure you felt included and had a fun time. I'm sure you just loved that Spencer and I were sometimes the DJs haha! JK.

The night before I was set apart as a missionary, you and Emma jammed out to a Mae song with me. I know we have a video of that somewhere, and it's fun to see that we share that memory together. We were all crying because we were going to miss each other so much. Then you had to go and write that essay! Where is the Good in Goodbye? I remember you sent that to me when I was in the MTC. After I read it on my P-day, I printed it out and proceeded to soak it with my tears. That essay motivated me to work hard and make my family proud!



One of the battles we had growing up was that you never really totally approved of the girls that I liked. Mainly because they were your friends first before they were mine! Ha ha! I remember when you were on your mission and I started dating Claire. I knew you were going to be sad that I got married while you were gone and I wanted you to approve of her and like her. So we set it up to meet up with you at General Conference during your mission. I think you actually met Claire's family before you met Claire. You made her feel so welcome during that encounter and once you got home. Claire feels like one of the Lewis sisters and that makes me feel so happy. You had finally approved of the girl that I liked and it was the only one that really mattered. I'm so glad you and Claire get along and enjoy each other's company.

I love you Laura!

## Emma

Laura has always been my BEST friend in the whole wide world. This started when I was just a young kid. Apparently she was obsessed with me (I don't really remember that but it kinda creeps me out haha).

I always felt lucky to have been able to hang out with her when she was a teenager. We did some of the weirdest stuff when we were together. I remember being in the QT gas station parking lot with her and Courtney playing with doll hands and laughing our heads off. We also made tons of music videos. One in particular was to "When I Was Your Man" by Bruno Mars. We spent the entire evening doing some pretty creepy stuff for that video. When we finished the video and showed it to Mom to ask if we could post it, she said "Absolutely NOT!" Those were the best times. I have a ton of memories teepeeing with Laura too. She was the teepeeing professional. She taught me how to unroll a toilet paper roll and wrap it carefully around landscaping and trees. She taught me how to keep quiet and hide when people came out of their house running after us. This is knowledge that I will carry with me forever.



I remember when she left for college, that was probably the hardest day of my life. I said goodbye to her at night because she must've left early the next morning. All I know is that I literally cried for hours in my room. It was really tough seeing her go and knowing that I was going to be the only child at home now. She wrote me a note before she left and to this day I can still see the tear marks on it from me crying so much as I read it so long ago.

I love being with Laura because I feel like I can always be myself around her. She has made me feel so special and acts like I'm the coolest person ever. I love how we can be really goofy one moment and then have a really serious conversation the next (about *This Is Us* or Lori Loughlin).

Laura has been such a great example to me and I've always looked up to her. She went on a mission even though she had said for years that she never would. But she went anyway because she knew that Heavenly Father wanted her to. Thank



goodness for that, because then she met Braeden. She really got lucky with him. I remember the first time I met him, he brought pizza over and I knew right away he was the one. I've had a lot of fun with both Laura and Braeden these past couple years. They are perfect for each other.

I love you Laura.

## *Dad*

Laura, you just keep getting better and better. You were an amazing person before Braeden, but now, with Braeden, you are magnified and even more powerful in your gifts and talents.

Laura was always a fun child to have around. She was a talker, boy, and I recall several times her coming home from school, starting to tell us some tale from her day, giving us all kinds of unnecessary details, and we'd have to tell her to give us the short version. It was hilarious. She loved being around other people and how they loved hanging out with her. Laura was always so good to include Emma in so many things she was involved in. I never ONCE heard her complain about having her younger sister tag along. It really was unique. To this day, they have a very special relationship and bond, and I think that's very special.

Laura was another one of our children with such a beautiful voice and she sang often around the house. I loved that.

Besides being a beautiful young woman, I always felt Laura had a perfectly shaped nose. I would tell her that, and I'm not sure if she liked knowing my opinion about her nose or not. Look at it sometime... it's the perfect, beautiful nose!



I love how Laura would whoop up on the neighborhood boys as they'd play "bucket" on the basketball hoop in the street in front of our house. The boys really respected her for her shot and hustle. I thought it was great how comfortable she was around the boys and how she didn't allow herself to be intimidated by them one bit!

Laura led our Ward YW basketball team to multiple stake championships. I'll never forget one game in which she hit like 11 straight free throws, including several at the end of the game to win it all. She blew us away. She was so good, and yet she was such a good sport and humble in her success. I really admire her for that in those years.

Laura always knew how to have fun. I'll never forget driving by myself to the Lake St. Louis building one Sunday morning and seeing Laura's plastic white snowman tied to the base of a street sign, almost appearing to wave at traffic as it passed by, as you came around a bend heading to the Church. I just knew it was Laura's snowman and that she and Courtney Jewkes had been out late the night before having snowman fun.

I was so grateful Laura followed the promptings of the Spirit to serve a full-time mission. She knew she had to go, and she did. She was an incredible missionary like her older sisters and brothers. She was so good with the people and the other missionaries, even the Senior missionaries. She had a great impact on many and she learned much about herself during those months of dedicated service to the Lord.

How we love you Laura! We are so grateful for the important part you play in the Lewis family!



### *Mom*

Laura was born when we lived in our Ashford house. I had so much help after she was born. All of the children loved her and wanted to hold her. The first week we were a little concerned because Craig got up into her crib and accidentally scratched her. It really was just because he wanted to get close to her; we had to keep a closer

watch on him for a while until he understood how to be gentle.

Laura was so much fun and had a lot of energy as she grew up. With Craig and Laura combined I had my hands full. When Laura was two, we had the four oldest children in one room and Laura in her crib in the next room. It was always important to make sure the baby could sleep well.

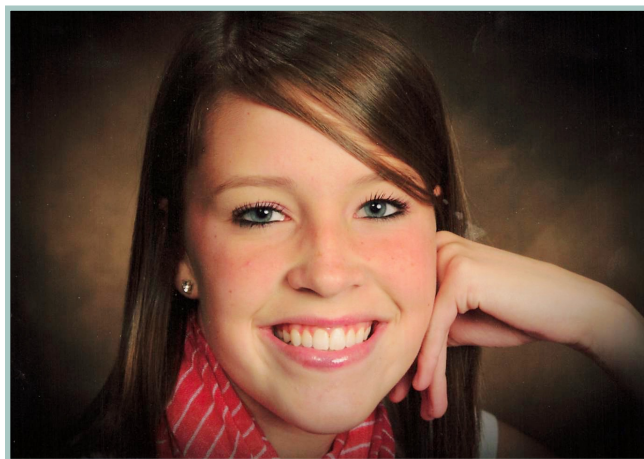
We loved moving out to O'Fallon because we had more space for everyone. I remember Laura running around in a white slip singing on the swings in the backyard. For a while I had to lock the door in her room because she kept changing clothes and I never knew what I would find her in. She didn't have girls her age in our cul-de-sac but she made friends with the boys Clayton and Brian and played a lot with them.

One of the sweetest things about Laura is how she has loved her younger sister Emma. It hasn't let up through the years. I would go to school and everyone was asking me about Emma because Laura couldn't stop talking about her. She was a big help to me with Emma. When Laura was 10, I could run up to Schnucks knowing that Emma would be fine. As Laura got older she willingly took Emma with her to some of her weekend activities so that Dad and I could have some time on our own. She never complained and I know Emma enjoyed it, too.

Laura was involved in plays at school and Cats at the Young People's Theater. We loved going to support Laura in whatever she was involved

with. Laura was also involved in Rising Generation and she met a lot of different youth from different stakes through that experience. Laura has a beautiful voice that has been a blessing to her.

Laura was unusual in a good way at church. She probably had more adult friends in our ward than youth (our youth group was a little smaller at the time). I was amazed by this and those adults had a good relationship with her in different ways. It was fun to see that during her young women years. Laura had fun during those years playing basketball with the young women. They did



really well during the years she was there and made it fun for all the younger girls.

I have loved seeing the adventure Laura has had these last five years, BYU, mission, college, marriage, graduation and now a job. Amazing.

## Emma's Birth Story

### *Mom & Dad*

23 OCTOBER 2000

Emma Patrice Lewis,

We are so excited to have you here in our family, at last! You have had so many anxious people awaiting your arrival into this world.

This journal is to keep a record of the special events in your life. As you grow and learn we hope to fill it with many exciting occasions that will help you to remember some of the early years of your life.

Our greatest wish is that you grow up knowing about your Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. We will teach and guide you and pray that you will always stay close to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

23 OCTOBER 2000

What a special day!

Emma Patrice Lewis was born at 12:06 pm. She weighed 8 pounds 1 ounce and was 21½ inches long. She was greeted into this world by her mother and father and her brother Bradley and her sister Christine. Christine then ran to the waiting room to get Jessica, Craig, little Laura, Grandy, Abbie, and cousin Mary Nothum. Within a minute or two they were all in the delivery room looking at beautiful Emma Patrice.



The day started early for mom. She awoke at 1 AM with a hard contraction. She and daddy timed the contractions for about two hours. The contractions hurt, even though they were still 10 minutes apart. The doctor said to go into the hospital. We woke the children up. They were so excited to finally be able to go to the hospital. We called Grandy around 4:15am to tell her to come to the hospital. Mary Nothum happened to be spending the week-end with her so they both came.

Checking into the hospital was easy. They hooked Mom up to the machines. The contractions had stopped! How discouraging. They told Mom to walk the hallways to see if that would start them again. Mom didn't just walk the hallways, she ran the stairs, two at a time. There was no way she was going to leave the hospital without a baby! Luckily the contractions started again. They put Mom on Pitocin and then the contractions really started to be more regular. Ouch, it hurt! During all of this, the children and Mary and Grandy were in the waiting room. Craig was munching on candy and Laura was concerned that she was going to miss show and tell. Each of the children came in and visited with Mom in her room. Mom was excited when they gave her an epidural. Mom felt great after that. The nurse called the doctor and told her to hurry. Soon after, Doctor Klabi arrived. Christine and Bradley came into the room and stood in the back of the room. Within about five minutes our baby was born. Christine yelled excitedly, it's a girl! She ran out to get the others. Jessica, Craig, Laura, Grandy,



Abbie, and little Mary came in within a couple minutes after Emma Patrice Lewis was born. Bradley walked over to where Emma lay in the warmer. She held onto his finger! Laura's eyes got so wide when she first saw her baby sister. Craig stood by Bradley as they looked at their beautiful baby sister. Mom and Dad were so excited to see and hold Emma. She was so perfect. Grandy took a lot of pictures.

Dad had taped Emma as she was being born. The Lewis Family was so happy! Abbie Nelson Kipp was keeping everybody posted on what was happening via E-mail.

The day was wonderful. Jessica, Christine, Bradley, Craig, and Laura spent most of the day in the hospital. They helped Mom and Emma move up to her hospital

room. After getting settled Dad took the children home. Brad stopped at Schnucks to get pink balloons and a balloon that said, It's a girl. They came down the street and saw many of the neighbors out in the cul-de-sac. Kim called out what is it? Daddy said, it's a girl! Everybody started clapping and yelling. The neighbors have been very excited about this new baby, too. The children were very proud and got to tell the neighbors about the baby being born. Dad put the balloons on the mailbox to let others know we had had our baby.

That night at the hospital the children and Daddy came back to visit and to hold Emma Patrice. They were so anxious to be the first to hold her when they arrived. Emma was so good. Abbie and Eric, Elaine, Eric, and the children, David, and Dad all came to visit. It was wonderful to share our excitement with our family. Mom was tired after a long day, Daddy and the children said good-bye to Mom and Emma.

Emma wanted to be with Mommy a lot that night. Mom loved that and cuddled with her all night. Mom and Emma had a couple of visitors. By that night Mom was ready to go home. The pediatrician checked Emma over and said she was beautiful and ready to go home. The children were all excited and helpful. We gathered up all our things, dressed Emma, and drove home. Darin and Aimee and their children came over for a quick visit that night.

Daddy was able to stay home all that week and help Mom and Emma.



## Memories with Emma

*Jessica*

Emma, It was such a fun experience being a 15 year old teenager and having a brand new baby sister. I felt so cool and so special. I think all my friends were jealous. All of us bigger kids were just so in love with you. You were OUR baby. (Not just Mom & Dad's baby.) I remember sitting around just watching you sing or dance. You were our entertainment, our pride and joy. I really think it was a unifying thing for our family to be blessed with our little M&M.

Emma, you were just three years old when I left for BYU. I remember being worried that you wouldn't remember me or feel close to me or that we wouldn't be able to relate to one another. I feel so grateful that I got to come back home for Christmas holidays, summer vacations and eventually got to live WITH you the year before Jared started medical school. Then, we were just 3 hours away in Kirksville and you got to be a part of our experience adopting the girls. The ups and downs, the joyful experiences and the really tough times, too. You were there when we brought Eva & Nora home (to Mom & Dad's house). Some of my favorite memories are of the times you and Laura (and Mom and Dad) came to visit Jared, me and the girls in Kirksville. It was so fun watching you become an Auntie and seeing the love you instantly felt for our little ladies. You were a natural, Emma. Our girls have sometimes treated you more like a big sister than an Auntie (little stinkers). When I close my eyes to picture those first few years with Eva and Nora, I see you, too. And I love that.

I remember that great sister surprise when you performed as Annie in the school musical. That had to be one of our proudest moments as big sisters watching you



up there on the stage, singing and acting. We always knew you could do hard, amazing things like that so watching you in one of our favorite roles (oh how we all love Annie!) was priceless. You have given us so many reasons to gather, to come together as a family, to show our love and support for you and for each other.

I love how much you love being together with us as siblings, and as a family. You're not loud about it (like some of us are!), you don't need the spotlight (like some of us do!), you are content to just BE together. I love that about you, Emma. I think that quality and the love and fulfillment you find with family will serve you so well throughout your life, especially as you become a wife and mother.

You have grown and matured so much these last few years. You have been a part of or within earshot of a lot of adult conversations over the years. You've been exposed to a lot of life experiences and challenges through your older siblings and in many ways I think you are wise beyond your years and know so much more about real life than many of us did. You are well prepared for life, for college, for all of it. We are all rooting for you, cheering you on, just like we always have been.

### *Christine*

Emma. Eminem. Emma bo bemma.

The best "caboose" there ever was! Each of us as siblings take such pride in you, Emma. It has been such a joy to watch you grow into adulthood. I remember when Bradley and I were in the hospital room when you were born. You came so fast (or, at least, it seemed fast to me... we'll let Mom confirm that one!)... and we were all just so excited to have you in our family. That hasn't changed.

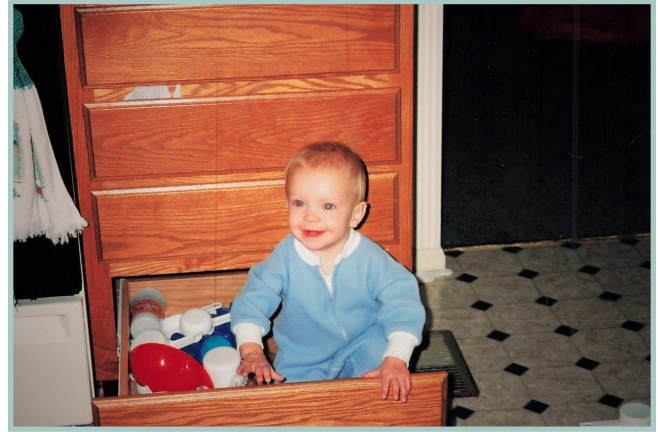
When I started homeschooling, I would act as a sort of second mom to you at home during the day. I LOVED that. I have such clear memories of feeding you



while you sat in your highchair. You made being home during the day so much fun.

When Bradley and I had friends over, we would call you into the room and have you dance around, act strange, or "do your water"... haha! We used you as our personal entertainment! All of our friends loved you and thought you were the cutest thing!

I remember being devastated to leave you when I left for college. I couldn't imagine missing out on your growing up years and it made me so sad to think about our relationship changing. But I am convinced that our family being set up the way it is, birth order and timing and all, is exactly what it needed to be for each of us to grow into the people we needed to become.



I have watched you in awe these past couple years especially. You have done one hard thing after another. I know you have pushed yourself more than ever before and I just couldn't admire you more for that. Emma, you are an exceptional human being and I can't wait to see how you change the world with your goodness. I love you!

### *Brad*

The adage that the youngest gets the talents of all the older kids seems to be dead on in the case of Emma. While you're still relatively a youngin' it's wild to see you mature into such a talented beautiful woman. It's so cool to see how you're the universally adored aunt who globetrots to see her nieces and nephews who talk about you fondly all the time. You're so special to all of us siblings because you're the one we all shared – even the next oldest Laura was old enough to remember your growing up.

For one, I'm glad you made it through the first year of your life with all your pseudo mom and dads playing house with you. Gosh, I remember giving you baths in the sink when you were so little. We did everything for and with you – reading to you, setting you on the ground for tummy time and playing with toys. Keeping you from getting too close the brick fireplace, getting you a bottle, the

whole nine yards. One wonders where mom was during it all? Through taking care of my younger siblings, in particular you given how old I was when you were born, I learned the basics of what has made me feel like I can hack it as a dad.

I remember vividly the night / early morning hours when mom went into labor. We were all conscious of how it could be any day, and it was in the middle of the night when dad came in and opened Craig and my door and told us it was time to go to the hospital. I remember it honestly like it was yesterday. A LOT of waiting. Craig and I weren't too bummed because ESPN Sports Center was playing the top plays from the previous day over and over. I remember the talk of that day was that Roger Clements a famous pitcher had thrown a pitch and the



batter broke his wooden bat when swinging. A shard of the bat flew towards Roger Clements, who out of anger, picked it up and threw it over to first base as if it were the ball. Super random memory, but that's how locked into memory that day was. I also remember being starving as we hadn't eaten and then finally Abbie Kipp showed up with "food for everyone" and it ended up being Imo's pizza – yugh!

But more importantly, I remember standing over Mom's shoulder with Christine as you were born. I'm actually incredibly grateful I was able to do that. I assume that's not very common, but again, my experience

having been there for your birth provided the template for what to expect when we had Samuel. I wasn't afraid, which was really important as I was supporting Mindy.

From that time forward, I honestly remember pretty much every milestone – your first steps in me and Craig's room to lift yourself up. I remember we must have been packing for a trip at the moment because I seem to remember there being suitcases – actually, that might have been what you used to stand yourself up. I

remember your interesting belly button fascination – and it helps me to know that you turned out all right as Jonah also does some interesting things like pull his hair out randomly. You did turn out all right, didn't you?

As I headed off to school and missions, my memories of you were intervened by bigger chunks of time away, which made your teen to adult years appear to fly by for me at least. But the awesome thing is that you've been able to visit my family everywhere we've lived I believe (which has been a lot of places) so I feel like you kind of have been around the world to come and see us, which we and especially our kiddos so look forward to and appreciate.

Love you so much and so excited to see what adventures the Lord has in store for your life.

### *Craig*

I remember me and Bradley being the first ones to see you walk. You were in our bedroom climbing on the bed and playing with toys and we remember you taking your first steps in our room. That was awesome! Not sure you remember that, but I do! I remember you showing us your "water" or prancing like a horse. Learning how to play with and take care of my little sister has helped me become a better dad. I remember how cute you were as a kid, I still remember how little you were when I left on my mission and that's still sometimes how I think of you know because I didn't want you to get older, you were such a cute baby! But wow, I am glad you have grown up. You have grown into such a beautiful, talented young woman who loves socializing with others and prioritizes family, friends, and the gospel over everything! You have an amazing singing voice and you are so skilled with the guitar.

A lot of my memories are more recently with you, Emma. My family and I really enjoyed being able to visit

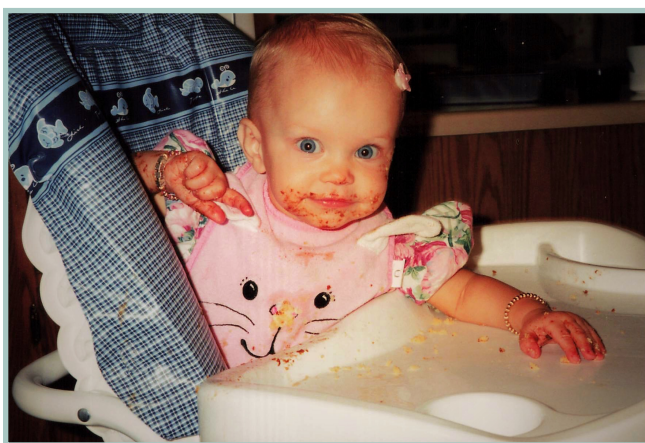


St. Louis in April and get you, Mom, and Dad to ourselves. I loved eating at Steak 'n Shake with you, and Fritz's, places that hold so many memories for our family. I loved staying up late with you and watching Marvel movies in preparation for going to see the Avengers End Game movie. That was so fun getting the sweet seats with Dad and going to B&B Theaters and hearing the music they play in the parking lot. Erin always talks about the train she went on with Grandy and Emma at the Zoo. You are such an incredible aunt! All of the nieces and nephews just love you!

In the last year or so, I've felt that we've developed a good relationship via texting, and FaceTime. Even though we have lived so far apart recently, I've been very grateful for technology because I feel like I've still gotten closer to you. It's been fun to text you and talk about the shows we watch or things going on in the Lou. I hope you feel the same, that we are close even though we are so far away in age. I hope you have an incredible time out at school. You learn so much about who you are and your testimony when you go out and live on your own. I am confident that you will be a beacon of light there in Rexburg to those that surround you. I love you!!!

### *Laura*

Emma Lew – I'm convinced I'd be an entirely different person had you not been born. Having you as my little sister motivated me (and still motivates me) to try and live my life in a way that you would be proud or could look up to. In a lot of ways, I've taught you what NOT to do by my example (wasting hundreds of



dollars at Mickey D's, not listening to mom like I should have growing up, eating crappy food at college, the list goes on and on). I hope in some ways I've been able to be an example to you, but I think you have been an example to me and the rest of our family far more than you even know.

There is just a general goodness about you! You are kind and you work hard. You're positive and mature even in the

midst of challenges. You've relied on the gospel and developed a testimony far earlier than the rest of us. I'm amazed how often I've heard you say, "I didn't want



to but I knew I should so I did it anyways," where often my life looks a lot like, "I didn't want to, so I didn't and stayed home and watched TV instead". The attitude that you have will help you to continue to grow and become an amazing, grounded, kind person that others will want to be around. You are a beautiful, self-aware, extremely talented person!

You are the best of both worlds as a sister and best friend to me. You are mature and give great advice but you also know how to have fun and be silly. YOU JUST GET ME. I love talking, laughing, and just being with you! You make me want to be better. I've loved our time together just since you've moved out to Idaho and look forward to us partying in a few days and celebrating the beautiful life that you've lived so far.

Some of my favorite memories with you:

- You coming teepeeing with us or hanging out with me and Courtney. It was never a burden to have you around. Even as a youngin', you were my best friend.
- Making weird music videos with you (especially the crazy strange ones that mom never let us show anybody because they were disturbing)
- Me forcing you to sit on my lap at church till you were like 12 or older and it was probably weird. You had to be the one to end that tradition and it was probably for the best or I may have still kept it going to this day.
- You visited Utah for my birthday a few years ago. I was being all whiny and crabby and saying I didn't know why Braeden even liked me. You said you didn't know why he did either, lol. And it's true! He was and still is too good for me, and that's what made me realize I needed to lock this relationship down and marry the guy because he would always help me to be better. Your brutal honesty has always meant a lot to me.





- Me coming to Missouri in March this year. It was so fun to be with you, eat yummy food, reminisce about the good old times, get fake tattoos, and just have some good old fashioned quality time with my baby sis.
- You coming for General Conference the other weekend. I loved staying up late with you and just talking. I loved listening to good music with you!

Basically, while I always thought having a little sister would mean I got to set the example for you, you have set an amazing example for me. I'm amazed by you and your strength, maturity, and kindness. I'm so grateful to be your sister and so excited to see where life takes you! It rarely takes us where we've planned, but it always takes us where we need to be. Here with you for the ride every step of the way, little chickadee!!!

## *Dad*

Emma... I simply don't know where the years have gone. Emma, you're the child of ours I've never sat with at church – for your entire life – other than special occasions like General Conference and when we were out of town attending another ward/stake. Those special occasions were so choice for me. You on one side, and mom on the other. I felt like the luckiest man alive to be with you.

Emma, you are such a beautiful, kind, and caring person. You remind me a lot of your mother in that way. You tend to see the good in others, and you can also appreciate the funny things about other people too!

There are so many memories of you growing up. The ones I remember best, with my fading 56-year-old memory, are those from the last 5 years or so. It has been during this time that I feel I've been able to spend a fair amount of one-on-one time with you. Though I could never convince you to watch a Cardinals game with me on T.V., we found plenty of things to do together. We saw movies together, and went out to eat, or we'd just run up to



Mickey D's so you could get some fries and a blue Power-Aid.. We loved driving over to the church together, running errands, going on drives to find fireworks going off in the sky during summer nights in June and July, doing Trek together, youth conferences, and on and on. You are just plain fun to be with. You emanate goodness and love, and people just like to be around you. When we are with you, we feel good. We feel loved. We feel peace.

One experience I'll never forget is when Elder James B. Martino asked you to come into the stake offices at Hazelwood and meet with me, mom and him after he had extended the call to me to serve as Stake President in November 2014. You came in, and he told you that he had just extended the call to me. He then asked you if you felt you could support and sustain me in that new calling. There wasn't a moment of hesitation. You quickly said, "Yes." You taught me a lot about trusting in the Lord, accepting the call, and sustaining others. Thanks for always

supporting me and never complaining about the time I was away.



We've had the chance to share in special experiences with Elder Martino, Elder Joaquin E. Costa, Elder Rawson, Elder Carpenter, and Elder Stacey visiting our stake and some even staying in our home with us. When Elder Costa said to you, "It's ALL TRUE Emma. It's all true!" I could tell you felt the same witness I was feeling – that a servant of the Lord was teaching us both truth! It will always be an important part of our foundation of faith.

Emma, I'm so grateful for your inspiration and encouragement in the

recent planning and carrying out of our Stake's 1<sup>st</sup> Mental Health Fireside. It was a huge success, and you had such a large part to play in helping me to put together a program that would bless all in attendance. I feel as though you were inspired by our Father in Heaven to share things and details with me that would be critical to its success. My only regret is that you could not be there to witness it and feel of the Spirit that night, in person. Thanks for all your help!

I love you Emma. I couldn't be more proud to call you daughter. I'm blown away at who you've become and the courage you've shown being the only one of your siblings to travel to far away Rexburg, ID to continue your college education. You are amazing, and I love and miss you hun.

## *Mom*

Dearest Emma:

It's so hard to believe we're to this point in life.

I love thinking back to 19 years ago. We had so many looking forward to your birth; from neighbors to lots of family and your sisters and brothers. I realized at that time how fortunate I was to be able to have 6 children. During the middle of the night I felt some contractions and we decided to bring all the children with us (I don't know if that was planned out). We called Grandy and she met us there at the hospital. The hospital staff really wanted to send me home because I wasn't having enough contractions BUT I decided to walk the stairs and Grandy walked the stairs with me. Finally they admitted me. The children were able to come



back into our room and visit a little with me and Dad (I don't know what I was thinking). The delivery went well and Bradley and Christine were in the delivery room at the head of my bed as Emma was delivered into this world! One picture that I loved was Bradley standing next to the baby bed and Emma had her finger wrapped around his.

I was in awe as I experienced the incredible love and devotion that all the children had for you from the time you were born to years later. The children were obsessed with you and were helpful in many ways. I sometimes felt like I didn't get enough time with you. Each of the children had different times that they would

help out with her. Jessica would take Emma on week-ends so I could get some rest during the night and that was so helpful. Christine was there half day and during those first few years I could get out and run errands and shop without taking Emma out; that was amazing. Bradley would come and get Emma and spend time after school with her. Craig and Laura were amazing helpers in the morning when the older children were off early to seminary. Dad and I were still able to get out for some date nights. I remember getting home a few times when Emma had been fussy and the children were rocking Emma in a big blanket and she was able to calm down with their help. The biggest problem we had was when we would go to church during sacrament meeting. The children would start to argue about who got to hold Emma. I eventually had to make a list of whose turn it was at church so that we could get through the sacrament meeting without problems.

So years have gone by since then... I love how the older children have loved and appreciated Emma. It's not easy being the youngest and by so many years, but it has also been a blessing. She has learned from you. Emma has gained so much by watching you grow up and live your lives. She has great examples in her older sisters and brothers and those they have married! She had been able to be an AMAZING Aunt Emma. She has had to say a lot of good-byes and those have been hard. She has had some experiences that the older children haven't had. One on One time with Dad and Mom; for good or bad?

I guess for me, I have had a lot of time with Emma and I have been blessed by that. We have been buddies and friends when Dad has been gone (which was frequent). We tried not to complain because we also got to spend time with Dad, just the three of us. We have had some great times together. I needed that time to prepare for NOW.

As Emma left this fall, I knew this was the next step she needed to take (just like her sisters and brothers before her). She couldn't grow anymore here at home with me and Dad. Emma needed to go off and learn and grow without us. Sure Love You!





## Memories with Dad

*Jessica*

I've shared this story with Emma recently and many times before, but it's still one of my absolute favorite memories where Dad really came in big for me. Being the first child to go away to college was a big deal for me and for our whole family. Nobody had ever left our house! The longest I had ever been away was for EFY or Girls Camp. I went out to Utah early for our Lewis family reunion and stayed out to get ready for the BYU semester to start. Ashley and I stayed at Grandma's before the dorms were opened and we moved ourselves in. I remember bawling my eyes out in Grandma's shower, feeling so homesick and sure that I had made a mistake. I remember talking to Mom and Dad on the phone and Dad reassuring me that "I was only a plane flight away" and that he would be willing to pay for me to come home anytime. When I heard him say those words, it was like the pressure valve inside of me released. I didn't feel stuck or so far away anymore. I knew I could come home if I needed to and knowing that is what gave me the determination to stay. Those first several weeks of college were pretty brutal but I felt Dad's loving, reassuring words ran through my mind. I'm sure glad I stayed because I met the man of my dreams that semester!

This is going to be an emotional memory to put into words but it's another time in my life where I felt Dad's complete love and support for me. It was about two weeks after Eva and Nora were born and I had been sleeping at Mom and Dad's house and going to Mercy Hospital to spend each day with the girls. Jared was in Kirksville in medical school and I was busy getting to know and falling in love

with our new daughters. I was at home in the morning before going to the hospital for the day when the social worker called and said Danielle had something she wanted to tell me. I knew this was bad, really, really bad. We got on a three-way call and Danielle told me that she had changed her mind and she was going to keep the girls. I fell apart on the phone. Mom was home or close by and she (and I think Emma) came into my room and I told them the terrible news. Mom called Dad, who was at work, and pretty soon he was at home with all of us. He suggested that we say a prayer. I still remember kneeling down in the bedroom with Dad, Mom and Emma praying for a miracle. In my time of complete devastation and crisis (with Jared 3 hours away in Kirksville) it meant



so much to me that Dad dropped everything to be with me.

I have memories of going over to Mom & Dad's house when we lived in Kirksville or O'Fallon to spend time with them. When I'd go to leave, often my van would be washed and my gas tank would be full. Dad had been there.

We were living in O'Fallon when Dad was called as Stake President. That was a humbling, emotional weekend

for Mom and Dad and I was so grateful that I was close by to hear the spiritual experiences that accompanied that weekend. It reminded me of sitting in Grandma and Grandpa's living room, as Grandpa shared his experiences receiving callings and serving in the church. Grandpa was on the other side of the veil, but I knew he was so proud of Dad.

Since living in California, I've called home crying more than a few times. Mom usually gets the brunt of it but Dad has been there, patient, listening, and eager to help. He's encouraged me and supported me during some of the most stressful, challenging times of our parenting and residency journey. I am so grateful to have a Dad that loves and leads quietly and consistently. Dad, your faith and love and support have been an anchor in my life. We love you!

## Christine

Dadio.

Man, I just love you. When I think about the truly magical parts about my childhood, Dad was always behind it. Here are a few of my favorites:

The Saturday Morning wake up song: "Rise and Shout"... I'm told that Grandpa Lewis did the same thing while Dad was growing up, which makes this tradition that much more special. If Saturday morning rolled around, and if Dad was up before the masses, AND if he was in a particularly goofy mood, he'd wake us up singing "Rise and shout, the Cougars are out, they're on the trail to fame and glory...". I remember thinking it was so awesome and so not awesome all at once (because those dang teenagers just want to sleep the day away). But mostly, I just loved having Dad home on Saturdays and this song was a reminder of that.

You'd think growing up with this song would have helped me have a little more BYU school spirit when it came to sports! Go figure.

Dad had limited time but he made that time count. As a kid, that looked like "boaty" and "doing dads hair". As a teenager, that meant Dad/kid trips to the church history sites as well as one-on-one interviews. What was really cool was when his calling duties and his time with us coincided! I LOVED when Dad was Bishop in the O'Fallon Ward. Everyone called him "Bish Lewis" and thought he was the coolest ever. That made me pretty proud. The absolute highlight of that time was taking a trip as a ward to Adam-Ondi-Ahman. I remember Dad asking all of us as youth to go out on our own on that big green hill/open space and have alone time with our Father in Heaven. And then I'll never forget when he gestured to all of us to gather up at the end – the image of all the youth joining together around our Bishop has stuck with me for years.



I remember being out at school and having the impression over and over that I needed to serve a mission. That had not at all been in my life plan and up until then, Mom and Dad had done halvesies for our college experience. I knew without a question that I didn't have the finances to support this "change of plans." I'll never

forget calling Mom and Dad to tell them about my decision (knowing that it was completely conditional on whether or not I'd be able to afford it). Dad, without a hesitation just said: "We'll take care of it." I felt so much relief. I'm so grateful that he has supported my dreams and desires to serve over the years, many times with \$\$\$! What a Dad!

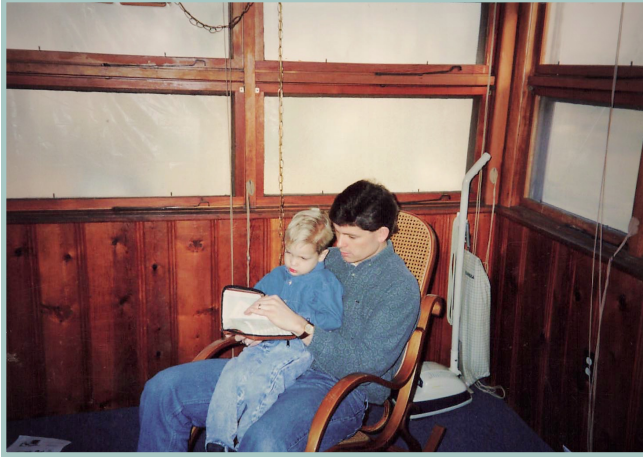
The classic dad quotes/sayings will live on in infamy! Many of these were carried on from Grandpa – I'm sure he'd get a total kick out of knowing that they are still alive and well. The best ones were: "Don't eat yellow snow,"... "Just think what you could have done if you tried,"... "In a week this will all be over and we'll be heading home,"... "Glad I ate when I did because I'm not hungry now!" Man, total classics. Another Dad-ism is his hyper-attentiveness when we're traveling. He was always two steps ahead of us when we made the trek home by car from Utah. He'd tell us what the weather was in the state we were going into as well as the traffic situation. I loved how involved he was.

In recent years, I have found so much joy in seeing Papa with my boys, or any of the grandkids for that matter. He's a natural! He takes a proactive role in loving them, holding them, helping them, and playing with them. That means the world! I have been so grateful as he has opened up his home to me when I've struggled emotionally and needed to live there for a time. I never once felt that I wasn't welcome even though I was an adult and technically supposed to be gone, haha! Another more recent memory is my early morning phone calls with Dad while I'm out walking and he's on his way to work. A couple years ago I got an impression that I needed to be more intentional about strengthening that relationship. It has been one of the singular blessings of my life to get to know him better.

Dad, I love you. Thank you for having all six of us crazies and for loving our mother. You really can't know what an integral part you play in our family.

### *Brad*

My most vivid memories of being with dad were just that – being with him. It didn't need to be anything grand or special, I remember just enjoying tagging along. One of the tag along experiences that I remember with particular fondness was when I would go to the Stake Center with Dad and Craig to spend all Saturday watching him ref young men's basketball. I grew up in that gym in many ways – watching our uncles play heroic battles as the Flo-Town Regulators



against other wards. Seeing the Sorenson boys throw chairs, others run into the stage on fast breaks – so much so that we ended up having to put a mattress there to prevent that from happening. I remember seeing Grampy call "octopus" reach in fouls and "tap dancing with the ball" traveling violations, but none so much as his personal favorite "THREE SECONDS!" Sharing all those memories with Dad,

and of course needing to stop at 7-11 on the way home to get a Slurpee, is ingrained in my memory as a major childhood "happy place."

I also remember Father's and Sons campouts, having those huge bonfires and hanging out around the ward area where everyone was throwing footballs and playing capture the flag. Night hikes with flashlights and the interesting, probably not politically correct in today's day and age, guys from the stake dressing up in headdresses and whooping and hollering as Native Americans, haha.

I also remember playing and watching sports with Dad – Nelson fall football, paintball at Thanksgiving, and the endless Cards and Rams games that we watched. We had some amazing years there of sports teams – including the World Series win(s) where we went out to Steak 'n Shake afterward to just feel what it felt like to be out and about when the air is charged with electricity from a shared local experience like that.

I remember always seeing Dad model quiet dignity and leadership and always looking like a missionary. I think about his example in the way he talked, dressed, and visually looked like a person you could follow. He is a leader, so others follow him. It must not have been easy in some ways to grow up with those leadership expectations on you and then make your home in the place where Grandpa Lewis' legacy loomed large, but he handled it with dignity and ease.

I think about Pepsi, the news, reclining back, and Seinfeld, the nightly routine. I developed my love of Seinfeld when we lived in the Florissant rental house and I slept on the couch in the living room. I would pretend I was asleep but cracked an eye to catch the "soup nazi," "candy lineup" and "marine biologist".



Most of all, as I've matured into a husband and father, I've been humbled by the difficulty of pulling off what Dad did his whole life – extremely rarely, if ever showing contentious behavior with Mom – and selflessly putting stability and family security over personal / professional fulfillment in some cases through years of commuting. You've laid a legacy that we're all now enabled to carry forward because of the sacrifices and example that you gave us.

*Craig*

Dear Dad,

I'm sitting here at school on campus before my night class writing about you trying to hold back tears. Oh, how I love you! I wish I could prepare better for these memory journals because I have so many that I could really sit down and think about and share but only a few come to mind right now.

Some of the best memories I share with you are through sports. I love that about our relationship. Being able to call you and talk to you about the sports I love, enjoy, and follow is so fun for me. I feel like it is a very special bond that we share. We have traveled to distant places to see BYU basketball/football play. Those are not cheap trips! But the memories we gained from them and the relationship that we strengthened is priceless. I remember when we went to Steak 'n Shake after the Cardinals won the World Series. It was like after midnight but that was such a fun memory that I carry on the same tradition with my own family. After the Blues won the Stanley Cup I wanted to take Erin and Claire out so they could share a memory just like I did growing up. I remember Buffalo Wild Wings Playoff Cardinal watching and Saturdays playing basketball at the Stake Center and Slurpees afterward. I love sports but I love the memories with you more!

I spent my entire childhood watching you. Watching you give blessings and administer priesthood service across the ward and stake for years. I learned so much from you. If I can become half the priesthood holder you are then it will be a huge accomplishment! I cherish our fall trips with you and the trips to the Temple and church history sites. The gospel was a first priority for you and you never were ashamed to share that and make it a big part of our trips. I love you for that. I watched you treat Mom like a princess. I try treating Claire the same. I watched you always do the dishes when you got home after dinner, I try and do the same. You always lead out in scripture study and Family Home Evening, I try to do the same. Thank you for the example you set for me!

Sure Love Ya!

*Laura*

Hey Dad,

I feel so lucky to call you my dad! It's hard to even figure out where to start, and what to talk about first, because there are just so many things I admire about you! The things that stand out the most about you:

Church Service: You have always set the example of how to serve in the church. I never remember hearing you complain about your bishop/stake president duties or meetings. You're human, so let's be real, I'm sure it has gotten tiring and overwhelming at times, but I always remember you talking about the PEOPLE and the things you were learning. I love that about you!

Love for your family: I think one of the amazing things about you is how wonderful you have always treated us, even with how busy you were. You always make family a priority, both your own siblings and parents, as well as your wife and kids. The way you treat mom especially has always been something I really admire about you.

Hard Work: I think it could have been really easy for you after a hard week of work and church meetings, to just kick back, watch football, play video games, whatever dads do these days. But instead you could often be found washing the cars, doing yard work, and then watching some sports once all the hard work was done. I love that about you and have fond memories of washing the cars with you or seeing you pick up trash in the creek or other places even when it wasn't "your job".

Fun/sense of humor: I've never really understood how a full, busy day of work can take it out of you until this last year or so. I honestly can't even believe or understand how after a full day of work and church meetings, you still managed to come home and crack jokes or have fun with us. I remember we used to wait till you would come home from your bishop meetings and sing, "I'm so



glad when daddy comes home." I think probably the last thing I would want after a long day is kids jumping all over me but you embraced it and helped us to feel loved. Can't remember if mom made us sing that song or if we started that tradition ourselves—probably a mix of both!

Feeling of safety: I can't quite explain it, but I always felt "safe" when I was with you. I knew we wouldn't get lost or get in trouble, or if we did, I knew everything would be all right. That's something that I feel with Braeden now too. I remember calling you many times on my way home from parties or dances, totally lost, in the middle of nowhere, and you would patiently give me directions and guide me home. Thank goodness for GPS now!

Not many people get the chance to have their dad be their bishop and interview them for baptism. Not many people get the chance to have their dad be their stake president that releases them after their mission. Not many people get the chance to have a dad as awesome as you!!! I love you for everything you have taught me and continue to teach me. Thanks for supporting us in everything that we do. We love you so much!!!

### *Emma*

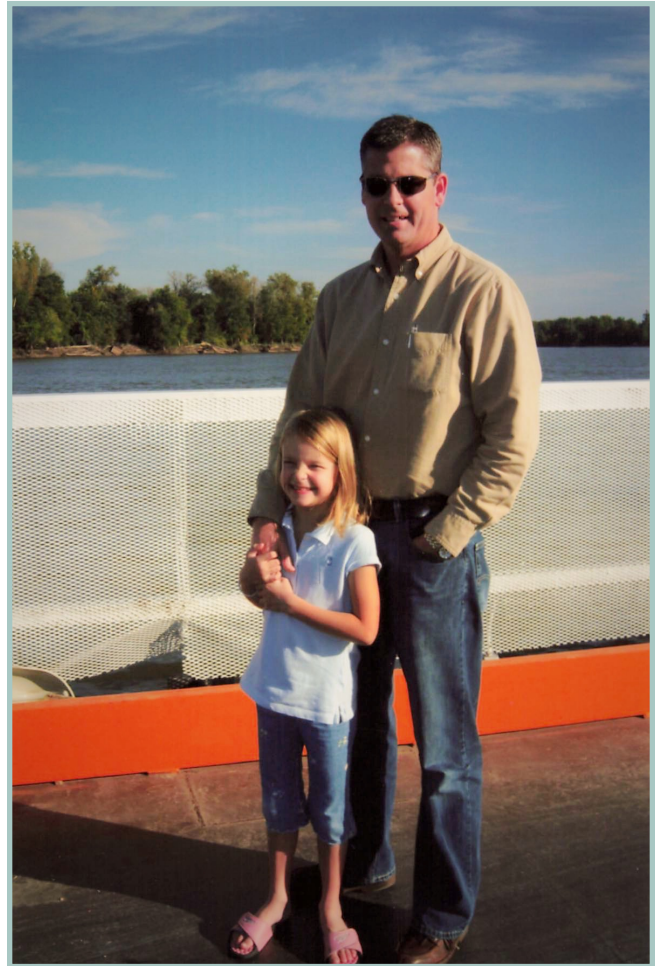
There are countless memories that I have with Dad that I will cherish forever. Here are some of my favorites:

About 3 years ago, some of my friends were going to teepee our house. Dad and I knew about it ahead of time and wanted to catch them. We waited for a while but no one came, so I ended up going to sleep. The next morning Dad told me that he had seen a suspicious car up the street after I had fallen asleep. He realized it was the car of my friends, so he grabbed that creepy skeleton mask (from the never do it home videos), hopped in his car and slowly drove up the street. Dad rolled down the window as he passed my friend's car and held his phone flashlight close to his face so that the mask glowed. He totally freaked my friends out and they were screaming and drove away pretty quickly. I heard about that story from my friends for months after. Everyone thought it was hilarious and so cool that my dad (the stake president) did that.

Dad has always been in a leadership position for as long as I can remember. I used to be sad that he couldn't sit with us at church when I was younger, but now I can only see how his callings have blessed our lives. Our family is so much stronger because of him and his service. I love seeing him talk at stake conferences

and other events. He is awesome at speaking from his heart, sharing personal stories, and helping us understand the changes that we need to make to strengthen our families, wards, and stake as a whole. Dad usually gets a little emotional when he speaks and I love that because it's so obvious how much he cares about the individual people in our stake.

I always looked forward to our Pere Marquette trips in the fall. Dad would pack up the car with all the supplies we needed and mom was in charge of the food. When we arrived in camp he'd set up the whole tent by himself and before we knew it, there was already a fire blazing. He always made sure everything was taken care of.



I've had so much fun with Dad over the years and feel so close to him. He is my best friend and we have a lot of fun together. We have some of the weirdest inside jokes that no one else understands. I'm going to miss him a lot when I leave for college. I will miss the Saturday mornings when he'd come back from working out at the YMCA and have a chocolate long john waiting for me on the counter. I will miss watching random tv shows with him like North Woods Law and Finding Bigfoot. I will miss going to see movies at the theatre—just me and him. I will miss our nightly drives in July when we would look for fireworks and chase the sun.

I love you dad.

Thanks for all the memories.

### *Mom*

Wow... my memories with Brad (Dad) go back so far... He was super cute growing up, but it wasn't just that, that I liked. We had a big group of youth that

we grew up with, and he stood out from most of them in my mind. He was mature for a boy and was serious when it came to living the gospel. That impressed me at an early age. His Dad (Grandpa Lewis) was my bishop and his Mom (Grandmother Lewis) was my Laurel teacher when I was in Young Women's. His sisters, Patrice and Shari kind of scared me. I felt like they didn't think I was good enough for him (but I think that was some of my own thoughts). They did think he was awesome! Because we were in the same ward we had so many that were interested in our relationship. It really bugged me back then but now I see many of those people in the temple and realize they had our best interests at heart. I love that we know many of the same people.

It has been 35 years since we were married in the Jordan River Temple, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1984. I feel so blessed that we are still in love with each other and I look forward to seeing what the future holds for us. Our greatest blessings are The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, our children, grandchildren and our extended family.

I love that Dad has been the FUN parent in our marriage. I love when he makes me laugh. I kind of think more on the serious side of things and how to get everyone to accomplish the things that I think are important. Dad comes home and comes up with fun things for us to do and helps us accomplish those things. Dad has been a great provider for our family and has willingly given of our money to help with college and mission costs. We could have gotten a bigger house and maybe had a little less to share but he has always made those things a priority. I feel like it has greatly blessed our children to further their education and the things that were important to them.

Brad has been a great Father to each of our children. He has always been busy with his work and church responsibilities but we tried to help him to find/make the time to play and get away on his own with the children. He used to play boatie with the little children when I would do the dishes at night so that they had time with him. We would go on vacations every summer so that he could GET AWAY and spend time with the children and usually extended family! I loved when he would take the older children, 12 and older, once a year for a time with just their Dad. He went to some fun places but it usually involved a temple or church historical site.



## Memories with Mom

### *Jessica*

Kind of difficult to know where to start here, am I right? I'm almost 34 years old so Mom has been Momming for a long time now. I feel really grateful to Heavenly Father for allowing me to be Mom's daughter. She's been the Mom that I needed, especially since I have become a Mom.

After I was "banished" to the basement as a teenager, I remember Mom coming down to my room most nights to talk with me before I went to bed. I can still hear Dad's voice calling to her from upstairs after we had been talking for a loooong time. I don't remember what we talked about but it was such a comfort to have a Mom that I could talk to, that was willing to spend those precious evening hours with me, especially during my teenage years as life got more challenging. Mom was just always there for us. She was home, she was available and she was all in. Growing up, I took the stability and structure we had for granted. But with more interactions with others and life experience behind me, I can see what a true blessing it was to have a Mom who cared so much about us that she gave us rules, chores, responsibilities and pushed



us to develop our talents. With Dad in demanding callings, it was often Mom who got us to and from our activities, mutual, and Church. I've done church on



my own enough to realize what a feat that was for Mom to get us all ready and get us to church. Her commitment and steadiness in the Gospel has been one of the greatest blessings of our lives. Reminds me of the scripture in Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." I am so thankful for the training we received from Mom in our home.

I would love to see a printout from Verizon of the amount of minutes Mom spends on the phone. Who has racked up the most minutes on the phone with Mom? I am sure a good chunk of those have been with me over the years. I have appreciated so much how supportive she has been throughout the ups and downs, the joys and challenges of our married life.

We may not be living in her home anymore, but she is still there for us. I have been so grateful for her willingness to listen, to give advice, to share, and to offer her help and support.

Summers with the girls off school have been a particular challenge for us since living in California and Mom has been willing to fly out to California and pick up one of the girls and take her home with her for a couple weeks so I can get some much needed one-on-one time with sister. She has gone above and beyond and her generosity, selflessness and willingness to go out of her way to help has amazed me.

### *Christine*

Mom. I have so many treasured memories with the greatest Mother the world has ever known. I remember Mom telling me that as a baby, I was pretty picky

about how I wanted to be cared for/comforted (can you say, "Foreshadowing"?) Something about her needing to be standing up and walking while simultaneously nursing me?? Yikes. But that has always stuck out to me because I feel like what our growing up years reflect is Mom's desire and ability to meet all of our needs, as diverse and even crazy as they may have been.

Mom was the number one fan. I love to sing and I love to sing to lift others, but if I had been left to my own devices, I never would have developed myself in that area. Mom believed in me. She believed in all of us. She saw what made us unique and special and she pushed us to believe in ourselves! Trying out for the



Muney some 20 years ago probably still haunts our sweet Mother because I was SO SCARED and SO STUBBORN about not doing it. But Mom knew I could and that gave me the courage to try. Thank you for believing in me, Mom!

Mom was the turtle catcher. She would gladly cause a traffic jam and risk her own life crossing and blocking a busy road to snatch up an unsuspecting turtle. At the time, it just sort of seemed like a motherly duty, but over time we realized that not all Moms were THAT devoted to giving their kids a good time (and probably something to kill time, too!) Thank you for all the turtles, Mom!

Mom was the summer expert. Pretty sure that 6 kids, AT HOME, the whole summer, pre-technology era... is my worst nightmare. But Mom knew how

to get it d.o.n.e. She was every teacher's dream because she cared enough about us not to let our brains atrophy and rot for three entire months. Though I know we wailed and whined and gnashed our teeth about this, Mom didn't take the easy way out. Even with all the school workbooks (you guys remember those??!), I still remember summer with such fondness because we spent hours at the Octopus pool

(should I say spent or hogged? after our family there wasn't really room for many citizens). I remember Aldi fudgsicles and buttered, microwave popcorn. Running around in the backyard and practicing gymnastics or playing house with the little kids. It was the perfect balance. Thank you for those memories, Mom.

Mom was the homeschool queen. I was the first to hop on the homeschool bandwagon and looking back I recognize what seemed like the ideal situation for me must have been way more work and worry for Mom. But she could tell I needed that change. And she supported me. Those years at home were crucial because they coincided with the beginning of my difficulties with mental illness. Having quick and easy access to Mom made all the difference. Even amidst those struggles, I have so many positive memories of that time together. Mom would clean my room when it was out of control and we would make banana bread together and eat like the whole loaf before the other kids got home from school. Thank you for those special years, Mom.

Grateful to have a Mom that gave us a dream childhood and set us up for happiness and success!!! She is one in a million. Love you, Mother.

### *Brad*

The thing I would say stands out the most about Mom is her dogged pursuit of helping us develop our talents and abilities. She was so notorious for this that our friends' parents would send their sons to our house so Mom would help them get their Eagle in a way those parents didn't seem capable of achieving.

In my life, that took the form of ensuring I practiced piano even for the many years until I was 13 that I honestly didn't enjoy it. I think about that sometimes as it's now become not only one of my greatest passions and gifts, but also a key tool I employ to help me relieve stress, cope with challenges in a productive way. I now realize how hard it is and in many ways self-sacrificing it is to continually be the disciplined parent in reminding and encouraging daily talent development as it often seems much easier to let kids off the hook which makes them like you more. I'm glad she persisted. Mom's kitchen timer





for the win!

One other anecdote is that Mom seemed keenly in tune with what I might need to pursue my ambitions with music. The day I got my license we drove down to Guitar Center and bought a Yamaha keyboard which was an expensive item. I remember because the entrance ramp to the highway from guitar center was notoriously short and that road was full of semis. As a newly minted driver, I remember worrying that I would drive my mom, myself, and my new piano to an early demise as I attempted to merge. I've taken that piano across 6 different states, performed at many a show and open mic night, been in 2 bands, and now my children have learned to play piano on that same instrument. I believe Mom's Franklin Covey offshore account would frequently be deployed for these types of things. It's neat to see that she found her greatest joy in using that money on us.

Last anecdote on this theme has to do with the Cheez-its, Vanilla Wafers, and Twix bars that got me into BYU. A late bloomer in life in terms of having a self-starting ambition, I tottered on the edge of having or not having the grades in SCCC to get into BYU as a transfer student. One thing I apparently did get motivated by were treats. When I would get home from a math tutor session at SCCC or staying later to study – I always had a treat waiting for me. It was the beginning of my love for school and carried through to my time at BYU. My time at BYU has not just blessed my life, but especially my ability to provide for my family and the comforts we now enjoy.



*Craig*

Mother, oh how I love you! I can't imagine life without you as my mom. So much wise counsel and advice have been given by you over my lifetime.

Mom, you are the epitome of the ideal mother. You were blessed to have the opportunity to be at home with us. Thank you Dad for allowing that to be a possibility! I am realizing the importance of that now that I have a stay-at-home wife who nurtures Erin. You helped us in our schoolwork, you helped us through our hard times and you celebrated with us through our good times!



I am starting to understand why Mom did the things that she did when we were growing up now that I am a parent. A house is so difficult to keep clean!!! You need children to help carry the load. It taught me to be clean and organized and it taught me a hard work ethic. I'm grateful that Mom helped us to always be on time to things, especially church. We walk in 15-20 minutes early to church without fail and are able to sit and feel the Spirit before Sacrament starts. That was something I learned when I was young and Claire too. Music has an important part of my life because we played piano and music in the home. Mom encouraged us to grow our musical talents and now it plays a large role in my own family's home.



You are always serving your children and your children's children. Thank you for drowning yourself in service. It is the best Christlike example you can give to your children. Happy Birthday Mom!

### *Laura*

Dang it, I'm already crying. How on earth could I even fully put into words what Mom means to me? I feel so blessed to be named after her and I hope I can be just like her when I grow up. It's worth having half the world pronounce my name wrong to be named after her.

Mom is one of the 1<sup>st</sup> people I want to talk to when something good or bad happens to me. She's a great listener! She gives amazing advice and I just feel like she gets me. She cares about what's going on in all of our lives. I wish I could be a fly on the wall for her prayers, because I know and can feel that she prays for each of us. She is so selfless.

One of the first memories that comes to my mind is when I was on my mission and I emailed mom and dad to tell them I had been seeing a counselor for depression and they were suggesting I get on medication. Until that point I had kept it pretty much a secret because I didn't want to worry mom and the rest of the fam. It seemed like the second I told mom, letters and packages started to come



in droves. She sent me the encouragement and the love I needed to be able to make a decision about getting on medication. Even though it was still hard after that, I didn't feel quite so alone anymore and mom had a lot to do with that. I felt like I was close to her before that point, but being on my mission just multiplied that closeness, and she has become one of my very best friends.

Mom has always been so supportive of anything I've been interested in, whether it was plays and musicals, making videos, even dating Braeden! Mom has invested both time and money (what I jokingly call her drug money) into all of our talents or interests at one point or another. Instead of spending that well earned money on herself and something she

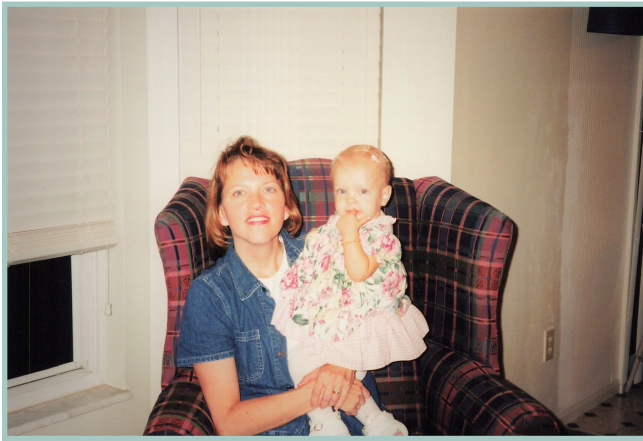
wants, she has chosen and enjoys spending that on others. I hope I can do the same for my children!!! I experienced a lot of anxiety and concerns when I was dating Braeden and mom was really patient and kind, but basically also told me I was never gonna find anyone better than him so I better not break up with him. Haha! I'm so grateful she didn't let me do anything stupid like breaking up with Braeden because he's been one of the biggest blessings of my life!

Thank you, Mom, for everything you have done for us!!! We love you.

### *Emma*

I feel so blessed to have a mom like mine. She is my best friend, my shopping buddy, and my shoulder to cry on. When I look back, I realize she was ALWAYS there for me. I





remember there were times when I was on the bus coming home from elementary and middle school and it was pouring rain. It was always such a relief when our bus approached the bus stop and I saw Mom's car parked there waiting to pick me up. I was so happy knowing I didn't have to get totally soaked. In High school I was only there for 5 hours because of American school. At 12:06 every day,

mom would pick me up. No matter how inconvenient it was for her, she was there. Before I started at SCCCCC (how many C's are there again?) Mom walked around campus with me to help me learn where everything was. She knew how nervous I was and so she did everything she could to make the transition as easy as possible. Mom always puts others before herself. She is becoming more and more like her mom everyday. Dad and I get a kick out of watching her have deep conversations with people she just met 2 minutes before. That's just who she is. She loves getting to know everyone. Some days I'll rant to her about something that someone said or did and she will just say, "Now, why do you think they did that?" Instead of blaming or taking offense by others, she chooses to see the good in everyone.

Mom, thank you for everything you have done for me. I am so grateful to have a wonderful relationship with you and I will miss being with you everyday. It will be so hard to say goodbye to you when I leave for college but you better get ready for tons of phone calls from me! Love you to the moon and back.





## *Dad*

This is pretty much an impossible task to write just a few things about the girl of my dreams. I have loved her since I was much too young. She is the perfect companion for me. As Young Laura has said, "She gets me." Oh does she ever. She knows me better than I know myself. She knows just what to say, what not to say, when to say, and how to express what I need to hear and feel most. Well, here are some memories:

I remember nearly 35 years ago this August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 arriving at the Jordan River Utah temple with my parents on the day Laura and I were to be sealed. It was an early morning, and my parents and I had stopped at Mickey D's for an egg mcmuffin. I guess that made us a bit late or at least barely on time. Mom and her parents were at the temple, and she was in a full-blown panic. She was worried that I wasn't coming! Can you imagine that?! That would have been the mistake of the eternity for me. I remember how relieved she appeared when we walked into the temple. That ended up being the perfect day, long, but perfect. We loved being with family and then leaving that night after the reception to begin our lives together. I couldn't believe I was never going to have to say goodbye to her again at the end of the day. We would always be together.

Laura, or "Mom" as I often call her at home just as the kids do, has brought me such happiness throughout most of my life. I've felt she was pretty special since I was about 13. She is fun, smart, loving, Christ-like, full of faith, prayerful, humble, and kind – so very, very kind. The attributes go on and on, and I really try to be more like her every day. Laura is the world's best "ministering sister."

I love you Laura!







## Ashford Home

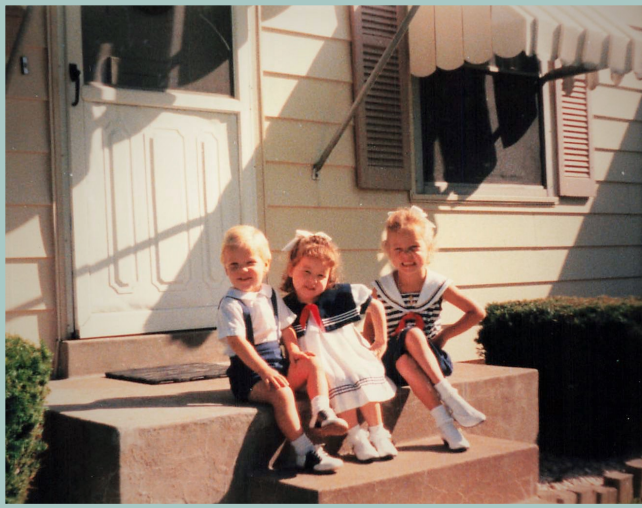
### *Jessica*

1241 Ashford. That address is forever ingrained in my memory. It was my childhood home. In the eyes of a child, that home was perfect. We had a beautiful backyard, a big tree we loved to play in on the corner, and a park across the street. What more does a kid need? I remember our neighbors, the Covingtons on one side of us, Marge on the other side, Bill and Lola across the street, and RJ who lived behind us. We lived at the bottom of a hill. As a child, it felt like an enormous hill. I remember walking up the hill to go to garage sales occasionally. When I was older, I remember riding my bike to the top and over that hill; it felt like I was in a different world, so far away. I have great memories of riding bikes and sledding at the park across the street.

When I close my eyes, I picture an idyllic backyard with our swing set and slide and lots of green grass. We also had that creepy space under the bottom of the house. There were these funny looking rocks under there; I remember thinking they looked a lot like dog noses??

I broke my right arm in the backyard. I was running around one evening and tripped over some landscaped bricks. I broke my elbow real good. I still remember





getting up from that fall and screaming. My eyes were blurry and when I looked at my arm I thought it looked like an S curve. I was screaming in pain, probably in shock. I have some awesome Frankenstein stitches to remember that incident by.

I remember putting on performances for Grandma and Grandpa in the living room there. I remember trying to hog the vent in our room. I remember

singing songs with Christine at night and bugging Bradley. I remember playing in that back room with Dad; that really was a fun playroom. I remember Dad pulling into the driveway with our conversion van. I thought we had arrived. It had a TV in it and theater lights! It was like a house AND a car, haha.

I remember moving from 1241 Ashford over to the Parker Road rental and then into our brand new home in O'Fallon. I'm sure that was a hard transition for all of us, but I remember a lot of excitement and anticipation, as well. When I look back on our 1241 Ashford home, I feel so grateful to have grown up in a loving family, in a loving home.

### *Christine*

I have three favorite parts of the Ashford home: The big window above our couch, the playhouse under the stairs, and the tree at the end of the road.

I have very vivid memories of watching the world outside from that huge window above our blue couch. Sometimes a few of us would be up there at once, just killing time!

The playhouse under the stairs was genius – Thanks, Dad! I remember many sessions of house and doctor in



that basement. I think we birthed a few babies down there too, haha, That perfect little playhouse even had our address on it – 1241 Ashford Road!

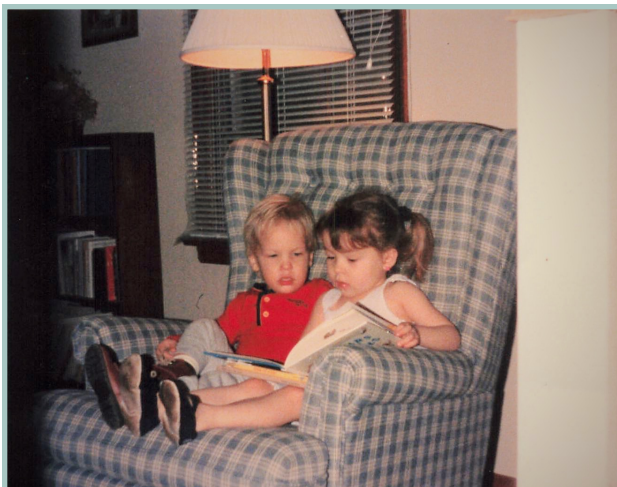
That tree! It was OURS. I remember being upset to see any other kids playing in it. It was our own little tree house and never got old. We still loved it even after Bradley tried to slide down the side and got tons of scratches all over his back! Poor guy.



### *Brad*

The Ashford home is in that cloudy first memory phase for me. I have very distinct memories as those were my very first memories. Playing hide and seek in the basement, riding our bikes down the hill, going to the Sinclair gas station and crossing the street to the park up on the top of the hill. It was a perfect little home. We played in the backroom with the wooded walls and old PC (probably our first family computer). It was really a special place.

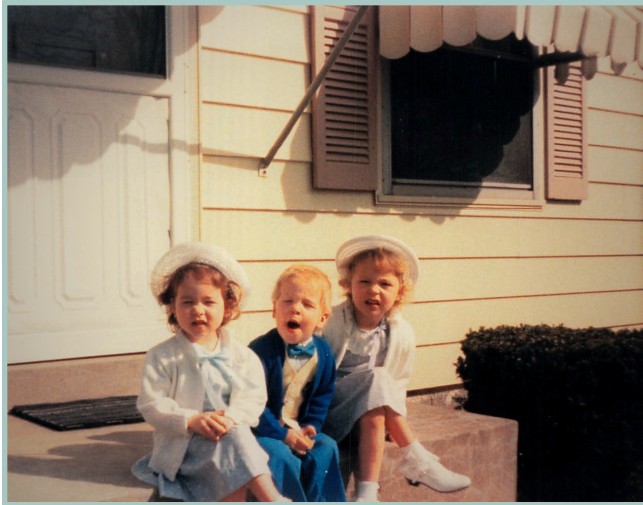
I remember swinging in the backyard, and tossing the football with dad in the fall leaves in the front yard. Playing in the sandbox, sliding down our steel slide. Getting my finger slammed in the door when I was chasing after Christine and Jessica. Stream of conscious memories that don't have the full backstory, but just key moments that are still clear to me.



I remember hiding underneath the stairs when we played hide and seek. I think we had a sort of nook under there. I also remember having a little place that was my own underneath dad's workbench. There were cinder blocks under there and I pretended to be an archaeologist looking for a dinosaur as I was chipping away with a hammer into it.

I also remember swinging in the backyard and swinging right into





Craig's eye, giving him a black eye. I also remember the time I got a scar when we had been walking back from the park. We had gotten in some type of argument and didn't know where Christine was. I was running down the hill to our house and I fell and skinned it up, leaving a scar which is pretty cool looking.

I remember Grandma and Grandpa coming over and us parading around with costumes and toys and goofing

off. I think there was a green carpet mat thing on the front porch. I remember our neighbors with their Pontiac sports car.

It was a great house for us to grow up in. Safe, happy memories, and it's so cool to think about how that was the house we all called home before our moves to Florissant and then O'Fallon.

## *Dad*

That Ashford home was Mom's and my first home! The first place we could call our own. No more paying rent to someone else. Now all the money we put into it was at least helping us to build equity in something. Now, we didn't end up making any money on it when we sold it. It had gone down in value a bit during the time we lived there, but that's okay.

I loved having a garage. I loved washing and waxing our cars on that driveway and trying to keep them looking nice. I can still remember the day we brought the Silver Bullet home and it barely fit in the driveway. It





was so big and wide!

That back room in the Ashford home, with its yellow and brown shag carpet and its wood-paneled walls, is where we spent most of our time as a family. I remember playing with you kids back in that room, having to dress warmly to be there in the winter, and having it be a bit warmer than the rest of the house in the summer, but we loved hanging out in there. As it got cold each fall, I would put that thick

clear plastic up on those back windows by snapping that clear plastic into those brown channels around each window and locking out all that cold air. Family home evenings, you kids singing to CDs and the radio, and dancing around in that room. That was the room Bradley experimented with a screwdriver and an electrical socket to see what it would do. I still have that screwdriver today with its melted mark on the shaft. I doubt Bradley's done anything like that again.

I loved our front yard in that home. I loved how good it would look when we get it all mowed up and trimmed and we trimmed the front green bushes. There wasn't a lot to work with in terms of landscaping, but I took a lot of pride in trying to make our home always look nice. It was fun to have boys who liked to pretend like they were mowing the grass at the same time I was, pushing their toy mowers at a safe distance from me, or even pushing the real mower from the lower cross-bar after it was shut off. Such sweet memories.

I can still see little girls running around in their cute nightgowns, jumping up on our couches in either the front room or the back room looking out the windows like Christine referenced. Now those little girls are amazing women, and Jess and Christine are even mothers themselves.





## Mom

I loved the Ashford home; it was hard to move in some ways, out to O'Fallon because there were so many things I loved about the quiet neighborhood we lived in.

I saved up money by babysitting to help add to our downpayment to get into the Ashford home. We had two small children in our Cross Keys apartment and Dad and I wanted something with more room. By the time we moved into our Ashford home, I was pregnant with Bradley.

The front room walls had a Pepto Bismol pink to it. Dad mentioned the shag carpet in the back room. It was brown and yellow and orange. When we finally got new carpet in the back room I realized how awesome the shag carpet had been, because all the food that dropped from the table wasn't as noticeable. At that time our kitchen table was in that back room where we ate. Later Dad built a different area where our kitchen table was so that we could have a bigger kitchen area.

Our Neighbors next door to our right were Marge and across the street was Bill and Lola, and the neighbors to our left were Jeff, Debbie, Matthew and later Jenna.



I loved going on walks with the children. I would usually have a baby in the stroller and everyone else on the fisher price trikes. Jessica and Christine were usually well behaved as we came to cross streets and would wait for me to catch up. As we had more children sometimes it was my blue double wide stroller with 2 of the smaller children in it and the older



children out on bikes. We had a park within two blocks of our house and we would go there a lot for the children to play. Sometimes we would go with snacks or a lunch on top of the hill. The children loved to play make believe games up on top of the hill and I would sit and read books many times. It was so peaceful and I loved seeing the children enjoy their time together.

Dad built a sandbox in the backyard for the children and they loved that. There was also a swing in the backyard that the children loved to swing on. I have memories of the girls swinging out there in their dress slips and running around. The swing had a coach swing where three or four people could get on. One time I had our playgroup over and one of the ladies from church was over to pick up her children. All of a sudden we hear some screaming from the back yard. I went out to find that Christine had gotten her finger caught in a small jagged piece of metal as she was coming down the slide. She was holding herself up but her finger was caught and bleeding. Fortunately Sister Duncan and I were able to position Christine a certain way to pull her off the slide. That was scary for me. I'm pretty sure Christine had to get some stitches for that. Christine was probably only three at the time.

Jessica started Kindergarten while we were there at the Ashford house. We were excited for this new change for our family of three children. Jessica took a bus every morning. She had Mrs. Eaton at Highland Elementary School. We loved Mrs. Eaton. We were a little concerned about the bus, but it went well most of the time. One time we told Jessica that I might not be home right as she was getting home from school. We asked her to go inside the house and I would get home very soon. I happened to make it home before she got home and when she saw me, she was not happy. She had wanted to get off the bus by herself and go into the





house. Jessica wanted to be independent with some things. One day I caught her throwing some of her finished school work away and asked her why she was doing that. She was very upset with the teacher because she had marked her paper with a red pen and she didn't like that. She was hurt that the teacher would do that. I tried to explain to her that that is what teachers do... she still didn't like it.

## Parker Road Home

*Jessica*

I have really fond memories of our time at the Parker Road home. I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade that year at Parker Road Elementary. My teacher was Mrs. Klaus. She was tall and had a gruff voice, but I really loved her. I think that's the year we studied explorers like Christopher Columbus in Social Studies. I had a really sweet friend that year at school named Kathy. I remember meeting her out on the playground before school and talking and playing. I remember spending time in the music room of the school.

As for the house, I don't remember sleeping arrangements or much about it at all but I remember playing four-square in the unfinished basement. I remember riding my bike around the neighborhood, walking to school, and exploring the nearby creek. I had a lot of freedom and remember roaming around quite a bit on my bike. Those were the days!

I think my favorite thing about living at the Parker Road house was being a member of the Florissant ward. I had so much fun that year with Diane Kipp and Jill Schwartzman. Jill and I especially had a really fun time together. We just clicked and made each other laugh, probably too much. It was great to have some new friends, especially before I entered the youth program and started attending Girls Camp and Youth Conference. The Florissant ward was so great and welcoming. I remember Tammy Voyles; I think she was our Sunday school teacher.



I remember visiting our home that was being built in O'Fallon often and feeling the excitement and anticipation of living in a brand new home, big enough for all of us. It was a time of a lot of transition for me because once we moved to O'Fallon, I was in middle school and entered the Young Women's program. This was a really fun, exciting time for our family with a lot of growth and new experiences.

### *Christine*

I remember moving to the Parker Road house seemed like entering another country. Everyone talked different, acted different, and looked different. Pretty soon, we had adopted some of the slang from the area. Jessica and I thought we were pretty cool.

The Parker Road house was our rental home and because it was temporary, we just made-do! Bradley's "room" was the tv room, which we were all super jealous about! And now that I think of it, I'm not even sure where Craig and Laura slept. It's heart-warming to remember that even though there wasn't enough space, we



were still happy there! Part of the fun of that "temporary" house was knowing that we would eventually move into a house that had the space for ALL of us! What a dream!

I remember the walk to and from school at the Parker Road house. It seemed so incredibly long, but in reality probably wasn't that bad. One day on the way home from school, Bradley and I observed a teenager

"following us." Instead of hurrying home, I felt that it was important we confront him. I asked him if he had a gun because it seemed that way. Bradley was beside himself!

### *Brad*

I remember when we moved into the Parker Road home, mom let us watch TV right after school, even before we did our homework! I get it now, as unpacking



while living in a house takes forever with kids, but this break in the routine (we never watched TV before homework, and when we did it was only 30 mins I believe) made us feel like we'd really made it.

I remember living in Florissant was different in that we went to a different school. That school was a bit more inner city you could say and we started picking up slang while there, especially Jessica and Christine. I remember that school allowed you to have recess before school started, so I always wanted to rush to school (we walked) as fast as possible to get a bonus recess. It was a great time and interestingly enough, several of the kids from my school there ended up doing the exact same thing, moving to O'Fallon and building homes. I actually had some of the same kids in my class in Twin Chimneys the next year as I did in Florissant.

The most active memory in my mind is that of sleeping on the couch in the living room. I felt really cool to get to hang out there late and sneak a peek on all the Seinfeld episodes while Dad was watching them at night.

## *Dad*

The Parker Road house was a pretty lucky deal for us. Steve Rees and Don Wallace, long-time church members in that area and our good family friends, owned the home, and I knew that they had rented it out to other members (the Crapo family) waiting to get into a home before, so I asked if we might be able to rent it for 6 months or so. I think we were fortunate to be able to get it.

I loved living there because it was familiar territory for me, having grown up in Florissant, and Laura's (mom's) family didn't live far away either. In fact, her high school was just around the corner from Parker Road school where the kids attended. The children were at some really fun ages while we were there. I just remember it being a lot of fun to be together.

I remember playing catch with the football in the front yard and watching TV in that backroom late at night while Brad and Craig slept on the bed in that room. I remember a pine tree very close to the end of the driveway near the garage, and always being concerned that we might bump into it with one of the cars if we weren't careful. I recall it being a good experience to be there, to attend the Florissant ward during that time, instead of the Elizabeth Ward we had been a part of for so long. It just felt comfortable, like home, to me.

The home was an orange/red brick ranch home, with a cracked brick wall in front of the house where there were bushes. There were some pretty steep steps to get up into the place from the driveway as well. I recall mowing the backyard in the summer, when it was dry and there wasn't a lot of grass, and the mower stirring up so much dust I could hardly see or breathe. I don't recall spending a lot of time in the back, but I could be wrong. I know there were some big shade trees there, for sure.

I guess we were there for the very end of one summer, into the fall, then winter, and then it would have been June of the following year before we moved out. Good times. Good times.

### *Mom*

The Parker Road house was an adjustment for everyone but I thought it helped us, as we transitioned to the house out in O'Fallon. The three rooms were set up for the best possible night time situation. Dad and I were in a room, Jessica and Christine were in a room, Laura who was one and a half was in another room, and Bradley and Craig were in the side room (also the TV room). That was better than the Ashford house because before we moved Laura was in the small room (since she was the baby), Jessica and Christine on the bunkbeds and the boys on the floor in that same room, and Dad and I had our room.

While I was there at the Parker Road house I went over and worked at Elna's house cleaning during the day. That helped us pay for some furniture for the new house; how many of you remember the flower sofas in the piano room? I also babysat for a little baby boy that was from an inactive family at church. I also had Craig and Laura at home with me.

We made the best of the Rental house and the children enjoyed the Elementary school and neighborhood. One of the children said I made them "walk" to school and that was torture for them.

We attended Florissant ward for about 9 months and that was fun to get to know people in that ward after being in the Elizabeth ward for years.

As I said, that house really helped us transition to our time out in O'Fallon. I was pretty sad about leaving the North County area which was my "home." I soon realized that as long as I could take my family... I would be fine.

## Moondance Home

*Jessica*

I was at the perfect age for a big transition like this to a new home, new ward, new school. I was 11 years old when we moved into 2009 Moondance Drive. I was preparing to move up to Young Women's and start middle school. I loved our Ashford home and our short stint at the Parker Road home and I missed the familiarity and comfort of those places and people, but this was an exciting change and chapter in our lives.

I remember when we got new blue carpet in the basement. I was babysitting the kids and someone spilled some kind of juice or popsicle on the carpet. I remember getting so anxious and upset about this spot on our brand new carpet. I got to work scrubbing the stain, but I don't think it ever came out all the way. These were some early signs of my propensity for cleanliness.

One of my favorite memories at the Moondance home is during my teenage years when I lived in the basement. I was dealing with a break up and all kinds of teenage angst and

I remember so many evenings when Mom would sit on my bed and just listen as I talked. As a Mom now, I realize how much effort and stamina it took for Mom to



spend time with me when she was probably exhausted and ready to decompress. Jared and I later lived in my teenage bedroom the year before he started medical school. We were both working full-time but we cherished the time we had at home playing games and eating ice cream with Mom, Dad, Laura and Emma.

The Moondance home is now a literal second home for MY children. Eva and Nora have taken claim to Laura's old bedroom and Bradley even has a pack in play in Emma's room. Mom and Dad and our Moondance home continue to serve and bless and host many – including their children and their children's children. It's a home where we feel safe, comfortable, loved and accepted. And that is no small thing.

### *Christine*

I have vivid memories of making the drive to O'Fallon from our rental to check on the progress of our home while it was in construction. To us, it was a castle. I was pretty positive we were rich. So many rooms, so many possibilities. Each room

housed so many memories... it makes coming back to visit such a nostalgic and sweet experience.



When we first moved in, the subdivision was brand new. We spent hours outside making houses and playing games on the dirt mounds, getting to know new neighbor friends, and walking to the entrance of the subdivision to tour the model homes.

Why they let a bunch of kids roam those fancy spec homes unsupervised is still a mystery!

Once the subdivision was mostly completed, we enjoyed time at the octopus pool, the creek, and taking walks to the grocery store – we had to settle for Dierbergs (which cleaned us kids out financially!) since Schnucks would have required us to cross the street and Mom wanted us to be safe. I remember getting into a tiff with some teenagers down at the creek when Jessica and I were hanging out. I pushed their buttons and they ended up chasing us almost all the way home. I was pretty sure we were going to die that day. The pool behind our house became "the

octopus pool" (for obvious reasons) and I remember LOVING the lazy river; taking the little siblings around it and helping them feel safe was my favorite.

As we grew up, our home became the hub for teenagers. I never felt embarrassed to bring my friends around. Everyone loved our house! We brought boyfriends and girlfriends back to this home – We probably felt a little too comfortable there because I remember lots of kissing going on between the lot of us! Mom was always smart to come down and "check on the laundry" while we were hanging out in the basement.

When I left home, I sort of thought that would be it. But this wonderful home has come to mean so much more to me over the past 10 years as it has been a safe place for me to come with my children during dark and challenging times. I'm grateful for the saving, the sacrifice, and the LOVE that went into making the Moondance house a home!

### *Brad*

I remember moving into the Moondance home. It felt like our family had won the lottery. In my childhood mind's eye, it seemed like we also bought our Silver Bullet around the same time, and in both those experiences I remember feeling like we were swimming in space. I remember having Craig go to the top of the stairs in the Moondance home and throw a tennis ball down for what seemed like miles to me at the bottom.

The best part was the backyard and basement, which were these free, open spaces for us to make what we wanted of. I remember playing hockey and basketball in the unfinished basement. In some ways, I enjoyed the unfinished basement more because we could make it into anything we wanted. I remember feeling a sense of excitement as we built out the backyard and got a play set. Putting it together and feeling ownership of it made it even more special.

I remember making the "boys" room into whatever we were into in the moment – cars, sports, whatever we wanted. I also remember fun memories of losing Iggy our Iguana in the house for days on end. Overall, we have gotten a lot of miles





(and wallpaper combinations) out of that house, and it was what our family needed to flex and grow as we became the people we are today.

## *Craig*

The Moondance home. Wow. So many memories. I really don't remember much about the Ashford home because I was so young, so the Moondance home is really all that I know. When we first moved in, I shared a room with Bradley. There were many evenings spent playing on Bradley's drum set or shooting on a mini basketball hoop we had. Sometimes we had disagreements but I loved growing up in the same room as my brother Bradley. I looked up to him so much.

We had such great neighbor friends. Many basketball games were played in our cul-de-sac. We played football games and baseball games down at the field by the creek. Mom would yell down to us when it was time to come in or eat or most likely finish our "jobs," haha. It was also super fun to be able to walk down to the octopus pool during those humid summer days.

Anyone remember going down in the basement when the tornado sirens went off? It was kind of a scary thing but I think for most of us we had fun going downstairs together to watch the news. We ultimately knew we were safe in the basement. We had plenty of rice and beans down there to last us until the Millennium if worse came to worse.



I've found it very special being able to bring my children back to my childhood home. They've been able to play on the same swing set I've swung on. They've been able to play games in the backyard and run through the sprinklers just like I did when I was a child. I've been so grateful to dad and

mom for keeping the Moondance home nice, renovating it, and keeping it a sacred and fun place for grandchildren to visit. We took Erin down to the creek fishing the last time we were there last month. How full circle is that? I had done that millions of times when I was a kid and had so many good memories.

## Laura

The Moondance house is the only one I remember, and it still is the #1 place that feels like home to me. It houses so many memories for me! I feel so blessed when I think of the childhood I was blessed with in that wonderfully comfy home. We were so lucky to grow up in a wonderful neighborhood, with kind people of all religions and beliefs. We had a great ward and enjoyed our teachers and friends at school. What an amazing place to grow up! Thanks, mom and dad!

I have memories of being very young and going down to the creek with the whole crew. I think even Jessica was still there. Emma wasn't born yet so I was still the baby of the family and I'm sure I was a real pain. We fished and explored and played and enjoyed time together on those sunny days. I also remember when our basement wasn't finished and we would play basketball and ride bikes down there. It was so fun! I think we were all a little bummed when mom and dad decided to put carpet down there.



I remember our Never Do It videos. I think that was when I first started to love movies. Christine would direct us and tell us what to do and we listened. I also love all the music videos we did in that house over the years. My favorite was definitely the one we did right before Craig left on his mission. I loved editing that one and I remember people from all over watched it and loved it.

As a kid, I remember running around outside barefoot playing basketball, baseball, football, kick the can, kickball, and a bunch of other games. We had so many fun neighbor kids in our cul-de-sac and then others would join from around the neighborhood. I learned to play basketball amongst a bunch of boys, from both my brothers and the neighbors. I was always proud to win at knockout. I was usually the only girl but I represented well. One of my favorite memories was on Friday nights, when the neighbor kids would gather to play Kick the Can. After playing a few rounds and with it starting to get dark, we would all beg Brett to ask his mom to buy us pizza. And every single time, she did. We'd sit on his porch eating pizza and breadsticks and then go back to playing Kick the Can. I also loved riding my bike around the neighborhood and I loved speeding down

our hill with the wind in my face. I also remember beating up a few boys and killing it in tackle football.

I have such fond memories of sitting down to play the piano in that front room... oh wait. Craig and I had a system of starting the timer a few minutes before mom was about to head out to run errands, and then we'd wait a few minutes after she left and could manage about 10/45 minutes playing the piano. We stood up for



each other when mom questioned us. I remember explaining this trick to Emma when she got a little older and she was very confused. "So you guys like never practice the piano?" "Yep!" Haha, probably not the best examples, but one of those fun sibling bonding experiences. Sorry, Mom!

Craig used to set up a camera on the top of the fridge and tape down the little water thing next to the sink so that when I turned on the water to do the dishes after dinner, it would spray all over me. I was probably mad but also remember thinking he was super clever. I got him back a few times! I remember people putting food in the fridge with signs saying, "Don't touch" or "Don't eat" and the joke with that was that Christine I think would ignore those signs and still help herself.

I believe one time Bradley tricked her

by having a soda cup in there from McDonalds or something but filling it with salt and water.

I also remember it as a full house that slowly became less full. I remember saying goodbye to Jessica, Christine, Brad, and eventually Craig and then suddenly it was just me and Emma in the house with mom and dad. Luckily we added a hamster (RIP Chester), a few guinea pigs (RIP Maybelle and Brady), Maya for a month (sad but for the best), and finally Mason, the best dog in the whole wide world. He became a real member of the family and was an especially good bud of mine

in my last few years at home. I had a different schedule with going to SCC and working at the YMCA, so it was often just Mason and I at home. We would go on car rides and get ice cream cones from Lions Choice. I taught him how to break all the rules mom had set for him, like not coming upstairs, laying on our beds, etc. Sorry, Mom!

I probably have millions more memories here but I'll leave it at that for now. When I think of the childhood I want to give my children, I think of my own and want it to be just the same. A safe neighborhood with lots of kids, kind people, and lots to do.

### *Emma*

I've spent my entire life living in the Moondance Home and I can't imagine living anywhere else. I'm so glad I've been able to grow up in this wonderful neighborhood and this house that has everything we've needed.

When I was younger, I would play Kick the Can with Laura and Craig and their friends on Friday nights. I think we would play it in our backyard with quite a few of our neighbors. I would get such an adrenaline rush as we'd try to hide in the shadows without being seen. At the end of almost every Friday night, Brett our neighbor would convince his mom to order us pizza and cinnamon sticks. We'd sit down on Brett's porch in the dark and scarf down whatever we could. Brett's mom was the best!!!



I have vague memories of fishing down at the creek. Laura, Craig, and I would bring the tackle box, fishing rods, corn, and a bucket (the one that dad would use to wash the car with). I don't remember catching much but it didn't really matter. I just loved to follow Craig and Laura wherever they went.

The Octopus pool was a regular place that we went to during the summer. We'd sometimes pack lunch or snacks so that we could stay there for a few hours. I remember there was a slit in the Octopus slide and when I peeked into it, I almost always found a toad inside. Sometimes I'd catch it and then walk around the pool to the creek and let it go.

I love the play set that we have in our backyard. It's been there since I was a little girl! And now all the nieces and nephews have enjoyed playing on it too. I remember a long time ago there was a terrible storm that knocked the play set over!!! I think Dad and Bradley and a few other guys had to somehow pull it back up.

Even though our house looks a lot different than it did 10 years ago, I can still remember what it used to look like. I can see the plaid red/purple couch in the computer room, the green carpet, and the checkered kitchen floor.

I will always remember Craig playing imaginary baseball in the piano room with his yellow bat. I will remember letting my guinea pig Brady wander around the piano room leaving little poops behind for me to find years later.

On fall/winter days, Dad would bring in wood from outside and light a fire in our fireplace. We would all sit in the living room while drinking hot cocoa. When it snowed a lot, we would go sledding behind Dierbergs on the humongous hill.

## *Dad*

The Moondance house... I joked that I don't need to provide any memories of this house because I'm still living here! Seriously, though, we've loved being here. It's interesting how our perspectives are different about some aspects of the home, however. Honestly, since Mom and I had never even walked through a model home for this house, we really had no idea how big it would be. I was extremely disappointed that it was nowhere near as big as I had hoped or as it appeared in the promotional materials from Whitaker Homes. I also thought the garage would be much bigger inside, but once you got the two cars in, forget it – not a lot of room to move around. Now, sometimes, I dream of a 3-car garage, where I can pull the Infiniti into the garage without having to have mom or Emma get out first.

Regardless, once I got over how small the house seemed to me with such a large young family, I grew to love it more. It has been such a great place to raise our children! We've always felt safe here, with caring, kind neighbors – people that watched out for each other – people that cared about our kids as they grew up. I'll never forget police neighbor Dave Goewert commenting, "Jessica looks pretty nervous when she drives," and "Christine seems pretty distracted when she's behind the wheel!" Hilarious comments as he observed you girls not just driving up and down the street, but around town as he'd see you in his role as an O'Fallon



police officer. I think he always tried to keep an eye on you guys, because he cared.

Anyway, back to the house. It's been a wonderful place to live. It's been heaven for us. This next month, June 2020, will be 23 years since we moved in. At first it seemed like a lot of money each month, but I quickly realized we could have afforded more. But why? We had everything we really needed – maybe not all the space we would have loved, but I always felt like we had the things that were most important. Whenever mom and I felt like we might want to move into something with a bit more living space, we always chickened out and felt more like we should stay put. I think that was more inspiration than fear. It's just felt so right to stay right where we are. We've had it paid off for more than a year-and-a-half, so that's been a fun blessing. It's allowed us to save that money we would have been paying on a loan and invest it, or use it to help out if there was a need. We've haven't felt the least bit stressed about money for many, many years. Having said all that, I hope you will each pursue as much home as you can reasonably and comfortably afford, because they really are good investments.



We loved watching you kids grow into teenagers in this home. It was always so fun to have you bring friends over to hang out. I tried to be cool so that you'd always feel comfortable bringing your friends here. I feel like it worked pretty well – despite not really being all that cool. The basement was fun (sounds like a little too much fun for Christine and her gang, but I'll find out more about that later) and even when we were wall-to-wall teenagers with your friends over, it felt so, so good to have you here with us.

For me, coming home to the 2009 Moondance home has always felt so good. As I think about the hundreds (maybe thousands) of nights I've driven down our street to come home after a long Sunday or late evening at the Church over the last 23 years, it's always felt so good to come to that home. Home to those I love more than life itself. Home to where I hope the Spirit has been comfortable residing – most of the time. Home to where I am loved by my family. Home to where the

gospel has been taught and, hopefully, lived. Home where there has been laughter and tears, fun conversations, and unending support for one another.

I think when any of us think of "home" in the years ahead, this is likely to be the one that comes to mind first – where we spent the vast majority of our time together. It makes mom and me feel so good to have you children want to come "home" to 2009 Moondance Drive to visit and share your lives and your own children with us! We are LOVING every minute of life now, in this home, and we hope each of you will always know the door to 2009 Moondance will ALWAYS be open for you or any one of your children to come be with us.

### *Mom*

This June 2020, we will be in the Moondance House for 23 years. I really can't believe it's been that long. I kind of struggled mentally when we moved out to O'Fallon even though we were so excited to have a bigger home and space for everyone. I grew up in Florissant (North County area) and I really felt like the adjustment of moving out to St. Charles County would be hard. Once we moved in, we all transitioned pretty well.

We loved being in a bigger house with our five children at the time. The children loved the neighborhood and the space where they could run and play and ride bikes. I think the children loved our backyard, with the big swing set that Dad built that first or second summer we moved in. It is still used today by our grandchildren. The creek and trails were also a lot of fun for the children. They loved to go down there with lunch or just to hang out and try to "fish". They spent hours down there some days. I felt pretty good that a few of them would go down to the creek together so I didn't have to worry about them. The pool in our neighborhood was another wonderful highlight for the children and for me. Many afternoons we would head down to the pool and when anyone wanted to go home, they could just walk home. I usually stayed down at the pool with the younger children for a little longer. Dad would come down and enjoy the pool, too, and the children loved playing with him (since I didn't get into the pool too often).

Laura was two when we moved into the Moondance house. Jessica was in her first year of middle school at South middle school. Christine was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Twin chimney and went to fifth grade camp that year. Bradley was in third grade. Craig was preschool age. Everyone adjusted well to their new schools. The

children had just gone to one year at Parker Road Elementary when we were in the rental home until we moved into our Moondance house.

We have had great neighbors while living here in the Moondance house. We have Jeff and Lisa Gainer ( and their three children), Dawn and Dave (and their three children), The grandparents house, Chris and Wendy (and their two children), Keith and Laura Fletcher (and their two daughters) who moved, now Jeff and Sandy (and their four children), Daryl and Kim (and their two boys) who moved, now Eileen Canty. We also have Jay and Sue Byington and Lou and Sue Ballard who we have been friends with. It has been a safe neighborhood, except for the times when people opened up our "kids" cars and took things inside (that's because the kids left the car doors open).

I am so grateful that we moved out to O'Fallon, Missouri. It has been a great place to live and raise our children.

The children have had great schools to go to and have had wonderful ward and Stake friends to enjoy time with. We feel very blessed.



Dad was Bishop of the O'Fallon Ward called around the year 2000. He served for almost 5 years and was called into the Stake Presidency with Terry Slezak as the Stake President of the St. Louis Missouri North Stake, Brad First Counselor and Brian MacKay as Second Counselor. They served for 9 years and then Brad was called as the Stake President of the St. Louis Missouri North Stake. Within a couple of years the Stake was split and Brad is now the Lake St. Louis Stake President. The other half is now called the Hazelwood Stake. Dad's callings have blessed our family and have been an opportunity for all of us to serve and sacrifice.

We have loved our home but have been blessed to spend time with family throughout the years. We have taken most of our vacation time to spend with family. We have spent a lot of time in Utah, Texas, California, Illinois and Wisconsin.

We took the children to Nauvoo (only two and a half hours away) a lot as they grew up and that city became a great blessing to us all. Grandma and Grandpa Lewis were up in Nauvoo as the Mission President and we visited them often. We

were very spoiled those years that they were up there. Bradley and Craig both met their wives up there! Most importantly we grew to love the Prophet Joseph Smith and the role that he played in the Restoration of the Gospel.

We have had so much transpire in the years that we have lived here. All the children have left home for college. Many have left for missions and returned. The oldest five have gotten married and we now have ten grandchildren with two more (twins) on the way. So many blessings and some challenges that we have faced. We have been so grateful to be able to rely on the Savior and the gospel of Jesus Christ to guide and direct us in our lives. We have tried to make a priority of many simple gospel practices in our home to help strengthen us individually and as a family.

## Thanksgiving

*Jessica*

Nelson Thanksgivings!!! Is there any other kind?!? I don't have tons of childhood memories, but I remember Nelson Thanksgivings at the Holidome. Cousins and uncles would play walkie talkie tag running the hallways and elevators. What a workout. There were all kinds of scary, high-stake places we loved to hide, above the workout room, behind the big tall ferns by the water fountain, backstage in the conference area, and some years in abandoned rooms on the top floor under construction. I have no idea how we got away with it, but we ran and played all day. My feet would ache after running around barefoot and playing volleyball games on the sports floor that killed. We loved swimming and the hot tub, the arcade, playing games and eating pizza and buying snacks from the vending machine. The Nelsons knew how to party. We ran free and wild – it was kid heaven.

I remember Thanksgiving lunches at the North County Stake Center, mass-produced turkey, potatoes and pies, dance parties to "It's a brick... house" and "We are family." When I am with the Nelsons, I feel loved, embraced and accepted just as I am. It is a crazy bunch but there is a really special sense of belonging being a part of the Nelson clan. The infamous eternal Nelson gratitude train is always a neat glimpse into everyone's lives, their testimonies and what matters most to them. I always feel a lot of love and unity, that Heavenly Father is smiling down on this imperfect family doing their best to come together, love each other and show gratitude.



I feel pretty blessed that Jared and our kids have gotten to be a part of many Nelson Thanksgivings. I gripe and groan about all the guy time – football and paintball, but Jared looks forward to paintball every year. This last Thanksgiving, Uncle Gary and Uncle Eric doted and loved on all of our kids. I know they felt special, loved, accepted and a part of the gang. Before Eva said what she was thankful for, she asked, "What # am I?" (Because the Nelson 13 all share their #s.) Eva said, "I am #1." I'll never know how to bake any gourmet Thanksgiving dishes but that's okay – the Nelson Thanksgiving isn't about the food, it's about belonging and being together.



### *Christine*

Thanksgiving was an absolute blast. I remember LIVING for that time with my cousins. As an adult, I feel extra concerned with what food I'm going to get to eat at Thanksgiving, but as a kid, it's all about the FUN. And boy did we have plenty of that!

The Holidome was our sanctuary. We felt like we owned that place, and we sure did act like it! How we ran those halls (almost wiping out innocent hotel guests and wreaking all sorts of havoc) without getting into too much trouble is beyond me. I remember idolizing the older cousins and uncles, particularly the boys (like Uncle Matt!) because they sort of ran the whole game of hide-n-seek/tag. We just did whatever they said because they were in charge and we knew it. One year, the Holiday Inn was doing construction on one of the floors and we somehow got up there and used those rooms as ideal hiding spots. We kept that a secret from the others. Then, on our breaks, we'd go ask Elna/Emilee to ask their dad, Uncle Dennis, for money for the vending machines and he'd give them a \$20 like it was no big deal. \$20 goes a long way in a vending machine. Then, of course, there was the pool/hot tub area. Our group of 20+ cousins would waltz in there and the place would sort of clear out (which we loved!) because we were probably pretty obnoxious. The parents would pull tables together, order food, and just talk. I always thought, "that must be so boring" – whereas now I realize they were

probably in heaven with their kids all occupied and having fun, and being able to spend time as a family.

Speaking of coming in and "owning the place," the Nelsons would use the Stake Center for our festivities Thanksgiving Day and us kids just loved roaming the halls, using the stage to put on shows, and relaxing on all the couches that the parents would pull in for all of us to use. I remember one or more of us kids whining and crying about having to play the piano or do something for the talent show. Poor Mom! Grandy would get up there and sway her hips to "Little Brown Gal" and as a kid, all I could remember about the song was the part where it said: "Poo, poo, poo...". Hahaaa! I do remember that when it



came time to go around to say what we were grateful for we knew that we wouldn't actually be eating for another hour or two. All the Nelsons would cry and all the kids would say: "I'm grateful for my family". Those memories are etched in my mind. And always will be! But what I loved most about Thanksgiving is that no matter our differences as family, and no matter the stress or fights during football, or other nonsense going on – we were going to stick together and that was that.

### *Brad*

I remember Thanksgiving so fondly. The Nelson World's Fair pretty much. Our whole season of football games with the Nelsons culminating in the big game. Having our cousins come into town.

My favorite thing was the tradition and routine of it all. I get it now that those routines really are important to families and kids. We always started it off with Wednesday night at Tumble Drum. Not sure if we got out of school early for that or what, but if we didn't we were chomping at the bit to get there and greet our cousins who we'd see there for the first time. It was so amazing to play tag and hide and seek through all the tubes and slides. The most depressing thing ever was getting too old and big to be able to enjoy it.

Then I remember the Holidome. Partying it up at the Holidome, playing volleyball and swimming, playing card games and of course, tag! Playing tag throughout that humongous place was probably one of my best childhood memories. That's where legends were made. Matt our uncle, Michael our cousin. As a younger kid, they seemed larger than life as time after time, they eluded us younger kids. I remember finding all the nooks and crannies in that place. When I was older, hiding in open hotel rooms (not our family's), maintenance closets, and one time, even climbing up the ladder in the top floor maintenance closet to the roof. So many of these things we could have / should have gotten in trouble for but didn't.

Football was always high stakes. Swear words flying, Achilles shattering, missionaries second guessing their testimonies based on what they saw and heard



on that field (just kidding). It was intense and amazing. I loved trotting it out early in the morning to play in the cold. I think some years it might have even snowed.

Then the day of Thanksgiving – just having the most massive feast you've ever seen. It was as if it was the size of an entire ward party just with our family. What I loved was feeling like the Nelsons – We – owned the place.

Bringing in all the couches and chairs and TVs. Playing basketball and setting up and dancing as we took things down. Doing the sharing time with Grandy doing Pearly Shells and the Hawaiian songs.

It all summed up what it meant to be a Nelson. But last but not least, the battles fought and warriors minted on the paintball field. Never before nor since have I seen such intensity and outright rule bending – but boy it was fun. Al Nothum bringing military grade smoke bombs, the Colts springing for the highest end snipers, only to be snuck up on from the side and pelted with paint. It was must see TV. The best part was glorying in and reliving the action after the round was over. "Was that you that I hit over in the gulley?" I remember seeing our cousin John's bald head sticking up over a bunker and settling in for a barrage lobbing the balls right over the bunker and having him have to surrender. It was the cheapest form of therapy to resolve any family tension – I guess you could say.

The best part about Thanksgiving was that everyone made the effort to make it what it was. Such great memories that make me proud to be a Nelson.

### *Craig*

Thanksgiving week with the Nelson's. It was even more of a week of festivities. I remember it started with most of the family driving in on Saturday or Sunday. Sleepovers would take place, with lots of video games and basketball being played that weekend. Monday/Tuesday was always hard days to go to school. I know a couple times Mom and Dad let us play hooky and skip to spend more time with the cousins. Wednesday was Tumble Drum day. That was one of my favorite activities of the week. So many games of tag played inside that place. It was a blast. Bare-footed and exhausted by the end of the day for sure. Luckily, it didn't end there. Wednesday night was setup night at the stake center. We always wanted to rush to get it done so we could play some more basketball on the other end of the court. I loved playing ball with my cousins and uncles. Not only was it fun, but it was competitive too. Those games made me a better basketball player and a better person.

Thursday morning was football on the big bright lights of a local high school football field. All fall was leading up to that football game. Every Saturday we played football leading up to that game. I always relished trying to score

touchdowns against my uncles or intercept Eric Radichel or Terry Slezak.

Those games were so much fun! So many fond memories. Matt Nelson and John Boyd were always the fastest on the field and so hard to catch.

Showers and war stories preceded the stake center Thanksgiving lunch and family circle of Thankimonies. That went on for a while but it was a great tradition. It's good to think of what we were grateful for before starting our

Thanksgiving Feast. Talent show and relaxation followed the yummy meal of the day. I'm grateful for Mom encouraging us to share our talents with the Nelson clan. I wouldn't have been so used to being up in front of people if it wasn't for smaller opportunities like that.





Friday and Saturday was paintball, bowling and temple day. Activities on opposite ends of the spectrum but that's what this week was about. It was about fun and games, but also quality family time and spiritual uplifting. The temple day usually capped off the week. It was good to save the best for last.

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays because of these traditions growing up. I know the Nelson gatherings aren't as big as they used to be, but I am so very grateful for all the efforts many years ago to make it a tradition. It allowed me to see what family is all about and to get to know my cousins up close.

### *Laura*

Nelson Thanksgivings are a huge part of what I remember from my childhood! I loved the whole week of playing at the Holidome, Tumble Drum, bowling, eating good food, and playing with my cousins! I remember telling people as a kid that we had our Thanksgivings in a gym at our church because we had so much family on my mom's side and thinking that was pretty cool and we were super special.

I would say my two favorites had to be the Holidome and Tumble Drum! I especially loved the old days when the big kids would play tag with us, (people like Matt, John, and others). We felt like we owned that hotel and were such rebels for playing tag in it back when there were still people going in and out of their rooms and elevators. I don't remember people ever telling us to stop but I'm sure they did. I especially remember the year where the old part of the Holidome was closed but someone jumped over and let us all in and we played in the abandoned part of the hotel. Totally a health hazard but our parents let us do it and it actually made the game of tag even more fun!

The fun at Tumble Drum was also playing with cousins! I liked to see if I could convince Mom to get us pizza but if she didn't I would mooch off of someone else's. This is where my mooching skills truly began. I loved playing the games and getting tickets to then get the tiniest lamest little prizes that I was





somehow thrilled with. Once Tumble Drum closed and was no more, I felt a piece of myself die. Seriously.

I always dreaded the long testimony speeches of gratitude that happened before the Thanksgiving day meal but now I can see that it's pretty cool that it took so long for everyone to say what they were grateful for; we had a lot of reasons to be grateful (though I still say, hurry up and let us eat!).

I remember Mom forcing us to share our talent of singing or playing the piano every year. I remember a lot of tears involved there (love you, Mom!). Overall though, grateful for that as I learned to get up in front of people at a young age and not be too scared.

One sad Thanksgiving I remember that our hamster of like 6 or 7 days named Chester died of constipation and that same day Dad broke his arm playing football with the Nelson's. I thought we were cursed that day, haha!

## Emma

Oh my goodness. You can't get much better than Nelson Thanksgivings! I mean seriously, that was a kid's dream. Getting to run around the Holidome playing tag and hide and seek, playing at Tumble Drum, then running around the Hazelwood church building (oops) while making stops in between to eat Grandy bread and pie.



Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays because of all the fun memories we created during my childhood. I loved getting to be with all my cousins, the ones from St. Louis and Utah. I loved playing card games with the fam and getting a little too

competitive. I still remember the adults sitting around a circle table at the Holidome playing Pit. What a fun game.

Throughout the years, Thanksgiving has changed quite a bit. We used to go to the Hazelwood building, then transitioned to Mary D's house and church building, and then now back to the Hazelwood building since Mary D's house has been

sold. Even with all the changes, Thanksgiving has been something I look forward to each year because the Nelson family just makes it so dang memorable. I remember getting super depressed when all the festivities were over because realizing I had to go back to normal life again was just too much to bear.

## *Dad*

Thanksgiving... the Nelson Family's BIG Holiday. This was THE party of the year, and I always felt such gratitude to be married into such a loving family and feel like I was accepted. I don't think I've ever missed a Nelson Family Thanksgiving. Mom and I pretty much worked out a deal early in our marriage that we'd do the Nelson-thing for Thanksgiving and the Lewis-thing for Christmas. That worked out great for both of us, and we LOVED our time with both families over the decades!

My fondest memories of Thanksgiving include Nelsons coming into town from all over the country, Tumble Drum on Wednesday evening where I'd often come after work on Wednesday, then tackle football on Thursday morning, followed by a quick shower and then heading to the Nelson home or the Hazelwood building for the noon feast. Before we could say the prayer and eat, we had to give each person in the group of 50-75 people each share ONE thing for which they were thankful (which often became 2 or 3 things that many would share). This typically took 30-45 minutes easy to get through the entire group, but it was worth it. There was always a very tender Spirit that accompanied the expressions of sincere gratitude and love. And there was always plenty of laughs at what people shared as well.

Then the feast. The food was always so wonderful, and it all tasted so good together. Then, there was the pie, oh the pies! The favorite has become Eric Kipps chocolate pecan pie that he makes by hand. Out of this world good. Mom's mashed potatoes, enough to feed an army in multiple tin pans, made a few days before, were always perfect!



After overeating, we'd spend time talking, laughing, shooting some hoops, and throwing footballs around the big gym. Often there would be a pinata

that I would help hang and manage for Grandy Nelson. Then, the sharing time that Laura would often organize where our children would sing or play the piano, or both. I was always so very proud of the talents our children were blessed to have and develop, and that they were willing to share them with their cousins and others.

Thanksgiving memories also have to include temple baptisms one day and paintball the next. I will never forget how sore I was from football, basketball, and paintball – all within 2-3 days. It would take me days to get over the physical pain from that crazy weekend each year.

Final memory: Breaking my arm in one of the football games when trying to block Eric Radichel, the dad. I knew something wasn't right, but continued to play a few more downs before I had Wayne check it out. He would slowly twist my wrist and he could feel the bone in my arm click as it rotated. I drove myself over to the emergency room, and then even had to remove my own BYU college ring

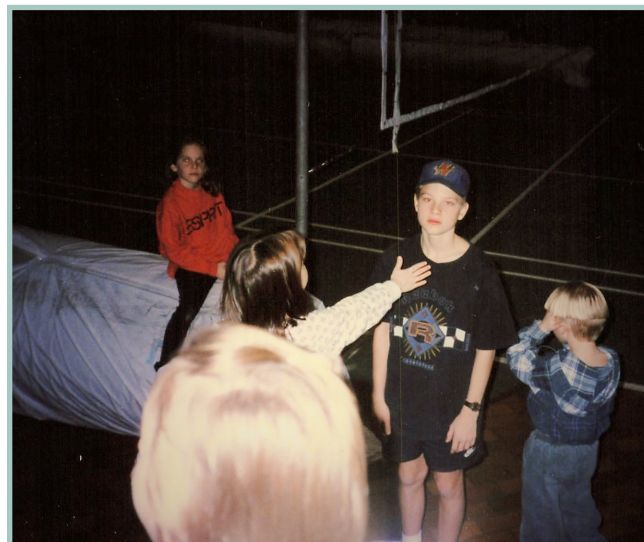


from the hand on the broken arm so that it wouldn't swell up and possibly risk losing my finger as a result. It hurt so much doing that it brought tears to my eyes. They gave me a pain killer at the ER so that when I eventually got over to the church I was pretty woozy the rest of the day. I don't think I remembered much about that particular Thanksgiving meal and afternoon for several years.

## *Mom*

Thanksgiving!!! My favorite holiday for sure. Lots of family time and NO presents! For years the out of town Nelson siblings would come into town for almost a full week. That took a lot of dedication and traveling for sure. Sometimes some of the families would stay at the Holidome and we would go over there and have a blast. The Holidome was a hotel with a swimming pool and hot tub. It also had a volleyball net and other games. The children LOVED running around the Holidome and many times staying there in the rooms. Wednesday was usually Tumble Drum. I loved seeing all you children have so much fun with your cousins. We would order Pizza at Tumble Drum and stay for hours. Thursday was

football early in the morning. The boys loved going with Dad for so many years. One year Dad called and said he had broken his arm. He had teased me for so long that I didn't really believe him (it was true and he drove himself to the hospital). Thanksgiving lunch was at 12 noon with everyone saying what they were grateful for. It took 30 minutes to get through everyone saying what they were grateful for. Then the yummy food, desserts and lots of talking with family and friends. After lunch we would hang out watching old Nelson family movies sitting on couches from the foyer and talking with each other. Many of the children and teens played games in the gym and ran around the hallways.



They were in heaven. We began to have sharing times where the children or adults could share something. Many times our children played the piano or sang. It was a fun time to sing, Pearly Shells and Hawaiian Girl. Friday or Saturday was paintball which was a big hit with many of the guys but also some brave girls. Eventually we started going to the temple on Fridays and Paintball was on Saturdays. It was a crazy week of non-stop action and fun. I loved seeing our children with their cousins and Aunts and Uncles. I loved the time I would get to interact with everyone and socialize. For a number of years we had Elna and her family stay with us during Thanksgiving and we loved that opportunity to have them stay with us.

I think about Mashed Potatoes; that's been my responsibility for years. One year Mary thought she wanted to give it a try... But she didn't realize how time consuming they were. Sometimes I boiled up 6, 10 pound bags of potatoes and then tried to find a way to store them. Each of us had different responsibilities to make the week go well. Grandy was non-stop busy during the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving. Grandy is now 83 and slowing down just a little bit. I honor and praise her for making so many fond memories for our Thanksgiving week! It was truly a highlight of the year for me.



## Christmas

### *Jessica*

Some of my most poignant childhood Christmas memories are at our grandparents' homes. I remember being at Grandy and Grandpy's home, dozens of Nelsons piled into their green room in the back (or down in the basement some years). The young cousins would perform the Nativity story while we sang songs and read scriptures. I loved being surrounded by cousins, aunts, uncles, and music. Each family took turns opening up our gifts from Grandy and Grandpy—we always knew what it was going to be! I remember the dark drive back home through the tunnel of trees. We'd listen to Christmas music and come home to hang up our stockings and light a fire and sleepily get ready for Christmas morning.

Another favorite memory of mine is Christmas morning at Grandma and Grandpa's yellow home on Mignon. I remember being surrounded by wrapping paper and saving bows for Grandma. We enjoyed receiving and opening gifts but I also remember the joy and anticipation of watching others open their gifts. I remember a few years where everyone had opened up all the presents and it seemed as if the excitement was finally over. Grandpa would stand





up to go get another gift, a last, secret gift, for Grandma. We knew they loved each other and that Grandpa prized Grandma and loved to spoil her and cherish her.

I remember quite a few years of ding-dong ditching a family in our ward. Mom and Dad would select a family in need and we'd prepare gifts for the children. On



the night of the gifting, we'd all pile out of the back of the van and stealthily creep to the front door, ring the doorbell and run to a hiding spot. If we got a good spot, we could watch as the family opened the door to see the gifts on the porch. It was always such a thrill – a feeling of pure love and joy. We knew we were blessed as a family and Mom and Dad taught us the importance of serving those who were less fortunate.

And how about all those missionary Christmas calls? Was it just me or were there always several failed attempts before we finally made a connection? There was the suspense and anticipation leading up to the call and the relief once we finally heard each other's voices (and eventually saw each other's faces). We'd take

turns sharing updates and listening to

the experiences and testimony of our missionary. This unique Christmas tradition helped us stay focused on Christ; with 1 of us often wearing His name over our hearts for a Christmas or two.

Mom and Dad did an excellent job of keeping our Christmases centered on the things that mattered most: faith, family, service, and love. Now as Jared and I raise our family, these are the principles that we hope to instill in our children.

## *Christine*

Christmas was so magical growing up! Things that stand out in my mind are the rides home from Florissant after we had visited Grandy and Grampy on Christmas Eve. Dad would play Christmas music on the radio, and every once in a while we'd get that song that goes: "Sir, I wanna buy these shoes... for my mamma, please..." and Dad would cry.

I remember having such a hard time falling asleep on Christmas Eve! Waiting for Santa to arrive was almost too much for me to handle. Many years we'd sleep in the same room as siblings, and I'd watch (and listen!) as one by one they would fall asleep before me. I had a theory that they were already "living Christmas" without me, so I'd try and focus all my energy on joining them in "tomorrow."

The magic would continue on Christmas morning when all of us kids would gather at the top of the stairs. Dad would go down first (always taking so long... though I think he did that on purpose!) and turn on the lights and get things ready. Once he gave us the go-ahead, we'd race down the steps to find our spot on the couch or the floor, or wherever we had taped up our name – for me, the couch was always a prime location. In early years, Mom would just come as she was. But pretty soon, she realized that Dad or someone else would be taking pictures, so she was all dolled up and ready to go when the kids came in on Christmas morning.



Why is it that these holiday traditions, along with so many other family traditions, give children such a strong sense of security? I think that even while we were young, we recognized that so much of life would continue to change, and yet we could always count on certain things to stay exactly the same. Our dear parents offered that to us year after year after year: What a gift!

## *Brad*

My memories of Christmas are full of family, both immediate and extended. I remember reenacting the Nativity with the Nelsons and singing Christmas carols.



I remember Christmas cookie decorating at Grandma Lewis'. I remember waiting for Dad to give us the green light to come downstairs to look at the presents we got from Santa. Some of my memories as a teenager include special ops doorbell ditching where we left presents for families in need. It's only now that I realize how important, yet how difficult it can be to create these family traditions and that's one of the hallmarks of Mom

and Dad's strengths as parents: consistency. Those traditions were so important in bonding our family together and set a good example for the future parents we were all to become.

### *Craig*

Christmas at the Lewis home was always such a special time. I remember delivering Mom's famous cinnamon rolls to families in the neighborhood. I would bring them to the Ballard's or the Byington's and they loved it every year. They tasted really good and they got to catch up with me and how our family was doing. It was always such a good missionary opportunity. I also remember our Christmas stories that Dad would read out of a book. I don't remember what the name of the book was but I remember it had Christmas stories that we would read from every day in December. Mom and Dad took time out of each day to remind us what Christmas is really all about.

Nothing is more memorable than dropping presents off at the Pathik's house. Man, how many times have I jumped off their steps trying to avoid a broken leg because the steps were icy!!! Those were such good memories. That's what it is all about. Touching the lives of others as the Savior would. Not only







was it a meaningful thing that we did but Mom and Dad made it fun. We all dressed up in black and enjoyed it! This is something that I continue to carry out in my own family today. I don't remember Lewis Christmas' being about the presents. It was about the things we did around Christmas time to try and emulate the Savior to the best of our abilities. I will forever be grateful for that.

### *Laura*

Reading Christine and Jessica's memories brought back so many of my own. I also remember Christmas celebrations with the Nelsons. As we walked in, Grandy had a big old basket full of Santa hats that we could wear. She always came to the door, excited to see us and giving us hugs. The smell of Grandy bread filled the air. Putting on the Nativity with the Nelsons is a fond memory of mine. The newest baby usually took the role of Jesus, or just a baby doll if no new babies had been born. That always cracked me up.

I also remember Christmas with Grandma and Grandpa at their place in O'Fallon. Christmas cookie decorating was (and still is) a highlight of the Christmas season. I remember that Grandpa would make a huge ordeal of giving out the awards and giving us our present. He would wear his cute Christmas hat, give us a hug, and make us feel so special just for decorating cookies. I loved the collection of dancing Santas that they had too. I remember always pressing the button over and over to



see them dance and sing. I have memories of opening presents while sitting on the banana chairs in the basement, with wrapping paper and presents everywhere. I felt so lucky to grow up with both the Nelsons and Lewises being around on Christmastime.

I remember our Christmases in Nauvoo. I think there were two in a row that I was sick for, but that first year we made the mistake of going to see a movie at Keokuk Mall, sharing a soda, and paying for it the rest of the trip. Haha! I was down and out pretty fast, and everyone who went to that Christmas dinner slowly came home, one by one, sick as well. It was rough then, but funny now to look back at and laugh. Grandma told me this year that I was the one who was sick in the first place and shouldn't have shared the soda. Didn't remember that part.

I was just telling Braeden today about how we would deliver presents to families in our ward who probably couldn't afford them. I have so many memories of that. It was especially fun when there were so many of us but still remained special when it was just Craig, me, and Emma left at home. I remember one year when we waited behind to watch their faces, someone yelled out into the night, "Thank

you!" That has stuck with me. I remember feeling so happy at church when I saw those people who we had left presents for. It helped me to think about others and feel the Christmas spirit. I hope to continue that tradition with my own kids someday!

One of my very favorite parts about Christmas was that all of us kids would sleep in the same room together on Christmas Eve. I loved that! It made it so magical. We would stay up

talking about the next day and it was always hard to fall asleep. Eventually we would though and we'd wake mom and dad up and anxiously wait at the top of the stairs. Dad would go down to check that Santa was gone and then have the





video camera film us as we ran down the stairs. I remember coming around the corner to see everything in the living room was so exciting. I loved seeing my own gifts but I also loved walking around to see what everybody else got. Christmas was the best.

### *Emma*



Christmas was the most magical time of the year for me in my younger years. I remember gathering at Grandy and Grandpy's house on Christmas Eve and acting out the nativity with cousins. We would drive home afterwards listening to Christmas music, excited for what would come the next morning. I remember the older siblings would have me write a letter to Santa and we would put it in the fireplace. Then, Laura or Christine would have me go downstairs. When I came back up, the letter had magically disappeared and I was told that Santa had come to pick it up. I was so excited that Santa had come to MY house and was reading MY letter. On Christmas morning, we would all congregate in the hallway upstairs while Dad went down to turn on the Christmas music, start a fire, and make those last, final touches. When he said "Okay," I would rush down the stairs and head to my designated

couch spot where my presents were. I can't remember most of the presents I received, but I will always remember the feeling of excitement and magic of the Christmas season during my childhood. It's all because of the fun traditions that Mom, Dad, and the siblings started.



I have many memories of us visiting Grandpa and Grandma in Nauvoo during the holidays. Nauvoo was like

a winter wonderland! It was covered with snow, peaceful, and still. I remember taking presents down to Laura in the basement on Christmas morning because she was sick and throwing up. I think that happened a couple years in a row actually.

One of my all time favorite memories/traditions was decorating the house and Christmas tree together with Laura, Craig, Dad, and Mom. By then, I think the older sibs were at college. We would turn on Mariah Carey, Josh Groban, and other classics on that gray radio/cd player. It was always so exciting to pick up the older siblings from the airport who were returning from college and getting to experience Christmas with them just like the old days. We'd watch The Grinch, eat Mom's delicious cinnamon rolls, and just enjoy being together.

### *Dad*

Christmas, my favorite holiday by far! And it's all about children. They are what made it so fun for me. My memories around Christmas involve putting lights on the house on Moondance and a few at Ashford, decorating our always-fake Christmas trees, and putting the traditional decorations all around the house. I remember the kids loving to use an extra string of lights to put in their rooms as their own decorations.

I will always have fond memories of time off work when I could just be with the family for days on end. I usually took at least enough vacation days to have an

entire week off, which when I combined it with 2 weekends would give me 9-10 days off. I loved that.

I remember us all hoping we'd have a white Christmas and it only actually happening every 3-4 years, at the most. But it was okay not having snow, because we just loved being together.

As the kids became college-aged, I was like a little child – I was so excited for them to "come home" for Christmas. I

would track their flights, their snowy drives across the country, and even had to find a last second hotel room for Christine and Brad one year when I-80 was shut



down due to snow, and then to find them open highways to try to take home to get around those that were closed! It was stressful, but exciting to get them closer and closer and then eventually home.

We tried to always keep the true meaning of Christmas at the forefront of the celebration by making a small sacrifice to purchase a ham for a poor family in the city or Kohl's gift cards for Sister Pathik, and then delivering them anonymously. The kids really got into the ding-dong-ditch approach – except they wouldn't run right to the car. They had to hide behind a bush or a car to observe the person coming out of their home to find the package we'd left, then they'd book it to the car.

I always felt so blessed just to have my wife and children around me at Christmas, and to have so many other blessings – not the least of which was our firm belief in the birth and life of our Savior Jesus Christ. I hope our children will always have these memories of giving and less about the "getting" at Christmas. That's where the real joy comes.

### *Mom*

Christmas. It's so good to hear the memories of the children and what was special to them. I would often get overwhelmed by the gift giving at Christmas time because I wanted the children to think of the real reason and spirit of Christmas. It seems as if they "got it."

Many years we were able to get a family picture out for the Christmas season and send it out to family and friends. This seemed to be a special way of connecting with so many and also being able to share what was going on with our family.



I made a lot of cinnamon rolls during the Christmas Holidays. I loved being able to try and "connect" for a moment with the neighbors and let them know we were thinking of them. I would also do cinnamon rolls for ministering families that we worked with. I was usually exhausted by the time I was done...

I am so grateful for the times we were able to reach out to others and have the children be involved in secretly giving as well. We truly had so much and it was important the children understood this. What I love is, they really felt the spirit of giving and looked forward to this time as a family.



## Pere Marquette Campouts

### *Jessica*

Pere Marquette – I love this place! It's so fun because this is a family memory I get to relive as an adult and share with my own kids. Last year, Jared and I and our kiddos stayed in the cabins with Mom and Dad. (That's MY kind of camping!) Doing the familiar look-out hike with Eva, Nora and Bradley made me realize what a physical feat that was for the original 6 kids to do that growing up. Kudos to Mom and Dad for pushing through the whining and meltdowns that surely took place along the way. My family of 5 even took a picture near that decrepit shack that us kids would pose on top of the roof, at the beginning of the hike. It was a pretty neat experience for me to complete that hike with my children. Jared and I took turns carrying and encouraging our kids and I was grateful for Mom and Dad's help along the way. That hike reminded me of our earthly experiences and the challenges we face and hills we climb together. I am so grateful that we get to do it together as a family. Do you remember the final leg of the hike? I think that's my favorite part. After all the hiking and climbing we would just take off running down that hill and through the tunnel of trees.

Growing up, I remember driving





around the campsite in our jam-packed van looking for the best camping spot. This was a place where a kid could be a kid. I remember exploring, playing tennis, gathering firewood, getting dirty and hanging out at the lodge. Our family videos captured some hilarious moments of performing and singing on stage. "I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free!" And the brains! Those green, gnarly brains! I remember kicking those down the hill or throwing them and watching them explode. I remember the trip where Mom left in the middle of the night with a toothache. And looking back I'm not sure how we managed, but didn't we go when Emma was a brand new baby? I think I remember taking pictures of all 6 of us kids on the log, right in a row. 15 years old down to newborn.

With kids, it feels like you have to pack up your whole house to camp. I am so grateful Mom and Dad invested time and energy in this family tradition. There were fewer distractions and less noise when we were growing up. We need "Pere Marquettes" now more than ever, don't you think? A place to disconnect from the world and focus on the simple joys of life.

### *Christine*

Marquette is so hard to spell! Haha, that's my first memory! For those that remember, up until I left for college I was playing make-believe. And I remember going camping was such a dream for me, because as un-outdoorsy as I was, I loved feeling like I was acting out a movie or something, living in the wild, and eating off the land (or out of the contents of our car, really!). What fun!

You couldn't pay me to sleep on the ground these days but as a kid, camping was a total blast! We loved setting up our spots in the tent and collecting firewood. I



know it was probably such an undertaking on Mom and Dad's part to pack everything up and prepare for that outing, but they did it to see the joy in our eyes. Nothing better! Mom was a woman after my own heart because I remember her being more comfortable sleeping in the car than the tent a year or two!

My memories of the hike consist of me

FREAKING OUT the whole time about everyone getting too close to the edge of the path. Heights are still not my favorite. Somehow everyone put up with me. But boy were the views worth it! And being out in nature with all those changing colors was so good for our family. No wonder it's a tradition that has lasted so long. I love that Mom and Dad still go just the two of them!

### *Brad*

I loved the Pere Marquette campouts. They were always so beautiful as we timed it just right with the leaves changing colors. Being in nature as a child is pure magic, and for me, camping was so amazing. Nowadays, I still enjoy it, but somehow I don't bounce back as well after sleeping on the ground, but for a kid – it's better than anything.

I remember dancing on that outdoor stage and goofing off. I remember picking up those brain looking grapefruit-ish things that fell from the trees. I remember going into the Lodge and feeling so cool to warm up in there. My favorite was the ferry ride across to the other side and seeing those cool restaurants and antique-ish shops. Hiking as well to the dugout looking thing that we would climb on. Also climbing up to top of the hill to see out over all the hills and trees – simply breathtaking.



I remember the eagle watching and seeing the cliff paintings of the mystical Native American creature legend – the Piasa bird.

I'm so glad that we made that a recurring family event and it's part of what made me love camping.

### *Craig*

I have a love for camping and it came from Pere Marquette (and Father's & Son's campouts). I enjoyed helping Mom pack up the Silver Bullet or the Golden Nugget on Fridays so we could be ready to go. I can't remember if we met Dad somewhere and then we all drove up or if he just came home early from work on

those days. Either way, I loved crossing the rivers on the ferry. It was so fun to get out of the car while we were on the water. Many good pictures were taken of our family on that ferry! I also remember stopping at the antique shop and buying those lemon candies that we would suck on.

Getting there early on Friday evenings and setting up the tent with Dad was fun. We would also bring a wiffle ball, bat and gloves and we would play some ball with siblings and/or with Dad. Dancing on the stage, throwing the brains, hunting



for wood/sticks for the fire. Awesome memories. Mom was always freezing at night so I think we would have a space heater in the tent, wouldn't we? I think we burned a few tiny holes sometimes in the tent. Walking to the lodge and playing gigantic chess was fun. We would also go into the little souvenir shop and buy little treats there too. The hike in the morning was my favorite part of the trip. We would

get to that lookout point and take pictures. It was fun getting all the way to the top and enjoying the beautiful view with family.

Thanks to Mom and Dad I have grown to love camping. I enjoy taking my own family now on campouts. The same things I enjoyed then I love doing now with my own children. I love that about life and how it sometimes comes full-circle. Thanks for the memories Pere Marquette!!!

### *Laura*

Pere Marquette, it's one of those places you take other people because you have so many memories and they just don't get it because they weren't there. I've tried so hard to explain to Braeden how epic that place was. We even took him there last time we were in town and I think he thought it was cool, but didn't understand why I'd raved about it.

I loveeeeeedddd camping! I loved sleeping in a tent, wearing warm and comfy clothes, having a fire, roasting marshmallows, being dirty, and just playing outside. It was the best! I loved going on the hikes there and seeing the beautiful fall trees and colors. Going to the lodge was always a blast; we always tried to get

mom and dad to buy us a treat and usually the answer was no, haha. No wonder with 6 kids, huh? I still don't know how to play chess but we had some fun playing with that giant chess board at the lodge too.

In later years Emma and I once found a stray cat. I think we gave it food and then it sort of followed us around? Honestly it's kind of fuzzy so maybe Emma can fill in the gaps. I just know we were randomly obsessed with this kitten and every year after that we always looked for it and talked about the year we found that stray kitten.

So many good memories here, and it helped me have a love for camping. Braeden and I have done our fair share of camping since being married and he's always surprised at how much I love it and sleeping in a tent. I owe that to mom and dad! I'm so grateful for the memories we made as a family there.



### *Emma*

I will always think of Pere Marquette as one of the highlights of my childhood. The fact that we only went once a year made it extra special. I loved the excitement leading up to leaving. We'd pack everything up in the van, meet Dad at a random parking lot during the middle of the day, and then head to the ferry. Of course we'd take the traditional picture out on the ferry before the ferry reached the other side of the river.

The drive to the campgrounds was absolutely breathtaking during that time of year. The fall colors, wide open spaces, and crisp air was just the best. Let's be honest, I'm pretty sure Dad set up the tent by himself while we gathered wood. I remember Craig and I walking down towards the tennis court and underneath the bridge to grab loose sticks. As it got darker we would go visit the lodge and play with the giant chess set (I had no clue how to play). And then we'd sit outside behind the lodge as the sun set.

I don't think I got tons of sleep when camping but something about snuggling up in a sleeping bag in the cool air with the sounds of nature right beside you was pretty special. Waking up in the tent was seriously my favorite thing ever



because I knew we'd make something yummy and maybe have hot chocolate or something.

We went on our annual hike and boy was that hard for me. Walking up those hills on the first half were pretty tough but I always remember Mom and Dad encouraging me to keep going, plus I had a walking stick to help me out. I loved



when we reached the top, it felt like I won a race! It usually took me a minute or two to catch my breath but then we'd just stand and look out at the river and Dad would always mention the duck hunters without fail. The second half of the hike was easy peasy because it was all downhill from there. We'd sit for a while to rest and then make our way back to camp.

That part was always sad because it meant our trip was coming to a close. We'd play a little longer at the campsite, pack things up, and head back to the ferries. Those trips never seemed to last long enough. I looked forward to going to Pere Marquette every year and I'm so grateful for the fun traditions Mom and Dad created because I always felt more connected to our family afterwards. Such, such good memories. Thanks Mom and Dad!!!

## *Dad*

Pere Marquette memories are so great and so important to me as a dad. I wanted my kids to love camping as I did, so we'd do the work necessary to make sure our children had a camping experience at least once a year. I know it was a lot of work for Laura to load the kids, food, and so many other things in the car, and it was a fair amount of work for me to put all the camping gear away once we returned home the next day, but it was worth it.

I loved to give the kids the chore of finding firewood while I put up the tent, and seeing them explore and experience the great outdoors. I was okay with doing a lot of the work in the campsite so they could do that. It made me so happy that they seemed to just love being there.



I remember tin foil dinners in our fire, walks over the Pere Marquette Lodge from the campground, walking through their small gift shop and playing on the big chess game in the lodge. I recall s'mores around the fire, and then eventually walks over to the bathroom/shower facility in order to brush teeth and clean up a bit at the end of the day.

The next day always included a great breakfast burrito and then walks through the hills. The trees were always so beautiful as we would typically camp in October or very early November. These trails seemed really challenging for the kids when they were young, and I loved helping them see that they could do hard things and make the entire 2+ mile hike. The kids would love to walk across logs that acted as bridges over small creeks. Brad and Craig would love to go off-trail and slide down the steep, leaf-covered slopes back to the trail we were on.



We were usually pretty tired as we packed up camp, loaded up the van, and then made our way back across the Brussels ferry to Calhoun County, drove the beautiful hills there, and then ultimately winding our way down to the Golden Eagle Ferry to cross the Mississippi River into St. Charles County.

These memories come flooding back each year when mom and I spent 1-2 nights at the cabins near the lodge the last weekend before Halloween. I look forward to it all year long – as it's my favorite time of year!

### *Mom*

I'm not sure how many years we've been going to Pere Marquette for our fall campout. Okay, we've stayed the last four years in the cabins but before that we camped almost every year from the time we first started.

Dad had someone at work suggest Pere Marquette Lodge to him as a getaway place he could take me one year, 4 years into our marriage. We went and stayed in the Lodge and had a great time. After that I think we felt like we could come with the children and camp. The first year we camped we were enjoying ourselves with the children. In the middle of the night Bradley started coughing

and it wasn't letting up. It was one of those croupy coughs. As we listened to him we were concerned for him but also for others around us that it might be hard for them to sleep as well. We decided to get up and go home in the middle of the night! Dad did all the hard work of getting the tent taken down quickly.

We kept coming even after that. The reason we did it was because the children LOVED it. They would be in heaven looking for firewood and taking our hikes. We went hiking almost every fall even though some years we struggled to find a date where we were all available. We got into a routine each year. We usually met Dad at the Mid Rivers exit as he was coming home from work so we could have as much time as possible while it was still light out when we arrived at the campsite. Part of the enjoyment was going across two ferries; the Golden Eagle



Ferry and the Brussels Ferry at Grafton. That was a highlight for me getting out of the car and looking out over the water and looking at the beautiful colors on the trees.

We would find a campsite and Dad and some of the children would start putting up the tent. I was usually taking care of some of the little children. The children would start

looking for firewood on the side of the woods and even down in the creek bed area. They loved coming back with wood for the fire. We played football and some other games after we put up the tent. The children just loved wandering around and exploring.

At night we loved having s'mores and sitting by the campfire. It was interesting; as the children got older they got tired pretty early because they were attending seminary. They would go to bed before we did. Many years Brad and I stayed out later and sat by the fire and talked.

In the morning we had scrambled eggs, sausage, orange juice and hot chocolate. It was fun making the food in the morning with the help of the children. From there we would get ready for our hike. We pretty much always took the same trail. It was a pretty steep trail but the children got used to hiking with some breaks along the way. We also took a lot of pictures; some of them became our yearly Christmas photo. After our hike we would clean up camp and prepare to go home. Our tradition has lasted about 28 years, only missing one or two years!

## Summers in O'Fallon

### *Jessica*

When I think about summers in O'Fallon, I think of the octopus pool, the frog pool, the creek, summer chores, practicing piano and school work. When we moved to O'Fallon, I was 11 years old so most of my summer memories are of girls camps, youth conferences, EFYs, and family vacations. This was such a great move for our family because for most of us kids, our ward provided a youth group and our stake provided other connections that made up the bulk of our friend group in our teen years. Our free time during the summer was spent with our family and church friends. I know this helped us stay on the straight and narrow.

I am amazed at how much structure our family maintained over summer breaks. There was plenty of time for fun, but only after we had done our morning work – which consisted of a chore, piano practice, and school work. As a parent now, I can see the positive effects that stability, consistency and structure had on our lives.

### *Christine*

My first summer in O'Fallon was the year we moved in. That subdivision was completely different than it is today. We were one of the only houses on the block and our backyard was dirt mounds for dayzzzzzz. After finishing all of our summer school-work, we would escape out the back door and be gone for hours. I remember setting up pretend houses on dirt mounds and even INSIDE homes that were in construction. No idea how we didn't get in trouble for the latter. Maybe

we did? We felt so free as kids because there was a ton of wide open space. And then once we discovered the creek, all bets were off! We were down there ALL. THE. TIME, catching crawdads and making little houses out of sticks and brush.

There weren't any pools at first, not even the Octopus Pool, so when that was built, we were ecstatic! I remember taking the younger kids down and watching them in the Lazy River – where they couldn't touch yet. Mom would try to read in the shade, but I also know she spent a lot of time putting out fights or making sure the little ones weren't drowning somewhere. Remember those coconuts that would just randomly spill over?! I actually was not a huge fan of those #anxiety.



It's interesting to come home and see the Octopus Pool and how it's aged and how small it actually is! It seemed like a water park to us as kids.

A year or two into us living in O'Fallon, we got permission from Mom to walk down to Dierbergs (not Schnucks, because that would have required us to cross the street) to buy some snacks with our money. I

remember blowing quite a bit of my

babysitting money on Reese's and Skittles and then feeling super sick afterward. Having that independence was so empowering for us as kids!

Other memories include riding our old red wagon down Moondance Drive, almost wiping out every single time, babysitting neighbors each summer and feeling so good about my little tween income, and being watched out for by the good people in our cul-de-sac. We lucked out big time in ending up in O'Fallon!!!

## *Brad*

I remember when we moved into our house. The first summer it was so hot and I guess we didn't have blinds or curtains yet – so the sun would beat into our house. I remember our family was on a big country kick (maybe cause we were moving out of the city into what was then more the country). We would be sweeping up or cleaning the house while listening to Country Road by John Denver, or Jo Dee Messina, Shania Twain, etc. In a first-world type of way, we sort of had to "tame the wilderness" a bit as our subdivision was totally new and was transitioning

from predominantly farmland to suburbia. We literally caught snakes in our front yard with Dad, throwing them into a bucket. There were so many frogs in our neighborhood as they were pushed out from the creek or farmland, I guess, that they were always all over the road.

It was fun to be a part of our new house, getting our backyard set up, figuring out what our neighborhood had to offer – the creek, the neighborhood friends, etc. I remember it being so hot and humid, that I would get ice out of the fridge, and put it into the sink in the guest bathroom and fill the water up in the sink with the ice and then plunge my head into the icy water to cool myself down.

Popsicles were king and I remember the simple but powerful motivator in the summer from mom that if we did our jobs and summer school work in the morning, we could get popsicles and then go down to the pool. It was a good lesson in "work hard / play hard," and play hard we did. I remember being so tan because we spent so much



time outside and at the octopus or frog pool. My hair would turn blonder, not least of which because it was the '90s and frosted tips were cool, so I would put lemon juice on the tips of my hair to get the natural frosted tips look.

And then I remember summer trips as a family to reunions or Utah, or EFY, or youth conferences. Great memories of being a kid when you get the freedom of having months off at a time.

### *Craig*

Summers in O'Fallon, MO were quite the fun time. Especially before I had a job and had to work all summer, ha! I remember playing football down at the field by the creek or baseball in the front yard. I remember countless hours being spent outside playing basketball, just by myself or with the neighborhood kids. I would often go out early in the morning or late at night to play basketball to avoid the humidity!

I remember we always had to do our "jobs" first and our piano before going out to play!!! Our piano time got extended I think to having to practice more, but so did



our computer game playing time during the summer! It was a big deal! Summertime meant multiplication and division charts to practice our math. Even though we didn't have homework during the summertime you knew Mom wasn't going to let us off easy. We also did lots of swimming at the octopus pool, or the other pools in our group of subdivisions. Summers meant going up to Grandy's house with Mom when she goes to clean. Summers mean hot days mowing the lawn in the brutal humidity. Overall, I loved St. Louis and the summers had a big part in that. It also meant Cardinal baseball and parking at Dad's work. Life was good during summers in the Lou.

### *Laura*

I remember living for the summers as a kid, and especially as a teenager. As a kid, we spent a lot of time at the pool or playing outside with friends. I remember feeling so free when we could play kick the can a little bit later or stay out longer since it wasn't a school night! I hated the math books and other things mom gave me but pretty sure that's why we always did so well in school. I think I did a lot of reading during the summer as well!

Trips to Utah and Nauvoo were a huge highlight. The trip to Utah felt endless (which it was) but when we finally arrived it felt so good. My wonderful talent of not sleeping in cars began at a young age, and I remember often being awake



as we drove through tunnels or as mom and dad switched driving in the middle of the night. It was fun to visit our siblings out there at school as the years went by.

As a teenager, youth conference, girls camp, EFY, and church dances were MY WHOLE LIFE. I looked forward to the time spent with friends, the spiritual experiences, and the new opportunities. Eventually, work became a huge part of summer as well.

I worked at the YMCA a lot those last couple years, trying to make money for college. I still visited the octopus pool to work on my tan and take a swim as well.

## *Emma*

Summers in O'Fallon make me think of the Octopus pool. I'd spend hours going around the lazy river, holding onto the sides of the pool trying to resist the water pressure that was trying to pull me. I was always bummed out when storm clouds started to form and the thunder rumbled, because then the lifeguard would signal us to get out of the pool.

I can still hear the ice cream truck's music in the neighborhood. I remember running to dad to get money for my favorite SpongeBob ice cream.

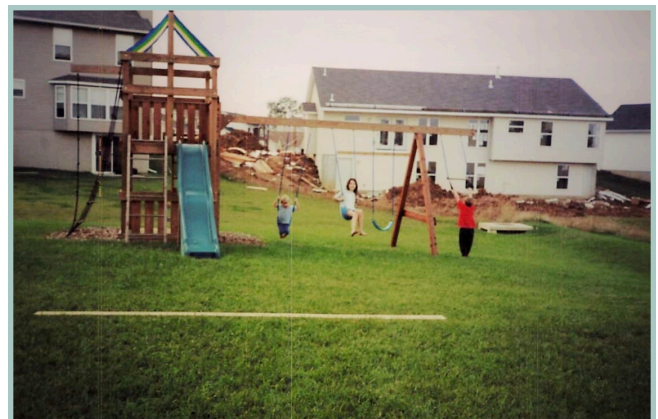
I love summer nights in Missouri. By 8:00, the humidity has usually lessened and it's more bearable to walk outside. The sunsets are absolutely beautiful!!! It's like a painting. The fireflies come out and the cicadas and crickets chirp incessantly.

Oh, and how can I forget the daily school work mom would have us do each morning. It had to be done before doing anything else. I remember being so annoyed by that haha!!! Those were the good old days. I'm glad that we still had responsibilities and things to keep us busy and that we weren't just playing video games or chilling all day long.

## *Dad*

As a dad who was working most of the time, I didn't see summers the same way as all our children did. I loved having the kids around more, and planning some kind of fun trip to Utah, Kansas, Texas, or Nauvoo. I can remember mom being concerned about having all the children at home for the summer, and sometimes she would ask for a priesthood blessing at the start of the summer season. I understand better now than I did then as to why she sought such a blessing. She worried about the children having more time, potential injury, possibilities of increased contention in the home, and the like. I think our summers in O'Fallon normally worked out just fine, and I'm sure Mom was most responsible for that.

Our home in O'Fallon was ideal in the summer with our neighborhood pool just out the backyard and across the common ground field. The creek and



hiking trail wasn't much further than that, being just a bit further down the sidewalk into the woods to the bridge.

I loved the longer days with more sunlight later in the evening, which gave me the opportunity to play with the kids and also do yard work in the evening after work and dinner. It was also a time to wash cars, which I particularly enjoyed once I had that shiny, clean car to look at. I know I got that from my dad.

Fourth of July celebrations are another memory of summers in O'Fallon . . . from our own driveway fireworks display of \$30-35 of fireworks to the huge show at Lake St., Louis each year, that was always a fun summer activity.

Summers in O'Fallon were also busy with scout camp, Young Women camp, and Youth Conference during all the teenage years. Our ward was a great ward for our children to grow up in. They had such good friends and these activities gave them the opportunity to bond even more and meet other great youth from across the stake and area.

### *Mom*

We moved to O'Fallon in June of 1997. We were so excited to be in a home that was big enough for all of us. We were in heaven with all the space. We loved being at the end of the cul-de-sac. Most of the homes still had not been built. There was a lot of mud and a lot of frogs. The children loved playing with the many frogs.

I would get a little anxious each summer thinking about the children all being home at the same time. That would usually last for about two weeks until we got a regular schedule down. While the children were in elementary school, I had summer school books for them to do. This kept them working on math and reading skills. They didn't complain too much. They just knew the work had to be done and they did it. Once the children were in first grade they were usually playing the piano and that gave them responsibilities they needed to do during the morning hours. We had a piano and a keyboard so that everyone could get their practicing done by a decent time.

Once the pool was built in our subdivision we would go down there almost every day. I would head down there with most of the children and then if the older ones wanted to go back early, they could just walk back home. We had two other pools we could go to, but we had to drive there and there wasn't the flexibility of

the older children being able to go home if they wanted. The pool was always a fun thing to do for us as a family. Dad occasionally came down to the pool and enjoyed time with the children.

We loved going to Grant's farm, the St. Louis Zoo, the Science Center and the library during the summer. It kept us busy and happy as a family with fun things to do.

The children loved to go down to the creek to play, fish and hang out. They went for hours at a time. I loved it because it kept them busy. I would help them make lunch so that they could stay and enjoy the time down there. They secluded themselves so that other people couldn't see them. Eventually Emma was old enough to go down there with them to enjoy hours of fun.

As the children grew up the older children got busy with jobs and activities. I still kept a similar schedule with the younger children and sometimes needed to help get the older children to their jobs. Jessica worked at Steak 'n Shake. Christine worked a few places but ended up working at the YMCA (Leslie Ott helped her get the job there). Bradley had jobs staining fences and decks and also a carpet cleaning job at one point. Craig worked at Taco Bell and Delmar Gardens. Laura and Emma worked at the YMCA.



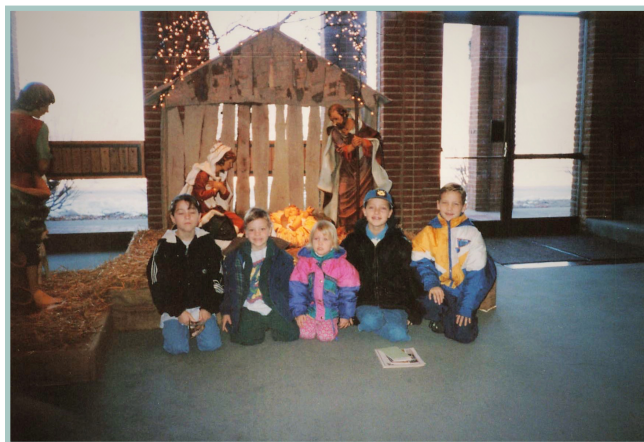


## Trips to Nauvoo

### *Jessica*

I didn't realize how integral Nauvoo was to my testimony until recently, but looking back, Nauvoo is where I got to learn and feel and experience the power of the Restoration for myself. I have so many special, spiritual experiences in Nauvoo attending youth conference, watching the Restoration movies, visiting Carthage, and seeing the pageants and performances over the years. My first Youth Conference was in Nauvoo – how lucky was I? Dad was in the Stake Young Men's so he was there, as well. We stayed in the old Joseph Smith building – no air conditioning. It was burning hot, but I remember feeling so excited to be there. It was an EFY-like experience for me being there with my ward friends and having spiritual experiences together.

I remember attending the groundbreaking of the Nauvoo Temple with Grandpy and Uncle Matt. It amazes me that even as a teenager, I wanted to be there, I was excited and anticipating the building of this Temple. I remember our cold, quiet December visits to Nauvoo as a family. And of course the years where Bradley and Craig served as YPMs, we were regulars at Nauvoo. Total groupies. To think Nauvoo has been the place that



brought Brad and Mindy and Craig and Claire together is really special for our family, as well. Jared and I even got to be a part of Craig's proposal to Claire in Nauvoo. Nauvoo is also the place where we found out about Grandpa Lewis passing to the other side of the veil. When we stay in the Nauvoo condos, I can still remember the call from Pam, the family prayer, and Dad leaving early to get on a flight to be with his family. How fitting was it that we were in Nauvoo as a family to receive that somber news.

While Jared was in medical school, the Nauvoo Temple was our Temple. It felt like a huge sacrifice to travel with 2 small kids 2 hours away and take turns attending the Temple. We've been blessed to live close to Nauvoo and take our children there to enjoy the special spirit of Nauvoo. This last year, we went to Nauvoo three times as a family. The young performing missionaries remembered us and Eva and Nora had favorite missionaries they liked to say hi to. I think my favorite part has become the vignettes where the YPMs sing primary songs and hymns. I felt the Spirit so strong as they sang the simple truths of primary songs. Nauvoo combines the beauty of music and the spirit of the early saints which together create a very powerful, memorable experience for me.

### *Christine*

It hasn't been until we've spent years out west that I've realized what a privilege it was to live so close to the heart of the early church. And whenever I try to trace my testimony back to a time and place, Nauvoo is always the first thing that comes to mind. I don't really remember ever truly struggling with believing in the Restoration of the Gospel or even some of the messier parts of the early church, because I walked those same streets and felt a Spirit that was undeniable.

Our trips to Nauvoo were amazing for so many reasons. We were close! Compared to Utah trips, this was



nothing! And we always got so much attention when we went – especially during Christmas! Each of us had like three missionaries each doting over us because that was for sure the "dead season." Going into the Visitors Center just started to feel like home. We knew our way around. We waltzed in and out of there like we owned the place. And THOSE movies! So powerful! Especially the time that we saw one of the first ever showings of Joseph: Prophet of the Restoration.

The sites were so fun. Because I loved "playing house," I remember LOVING imagining what it would have been like to live in the "olden days" as we went in and out of those beautiful old homes. The jury is still out on whether or not those Bakery cookies were even cookies... Hmmmm. Those poor pioneers! But we ate them just the same because: "When you're in Nauvoo..." I think back on all those faithful senior missionaries who left home and family to serve in Old Nauvoo and I wish I could thank each one of them. THEY were what made each of our experiences so special.

The fact that so many of our family members have since served there themselves: Grandma and Grandpa Lewis, Bradley, Mindy, Craig, Claire... just makes this place that much more of a sacred and special place to the Lewis family. THANK YOU Mom and Dad for making the continual effort to take us to Nauvoo. That's where my budding testimony took root!



### *Brad*

I love what Laura says about Nauvoo being like our Disneyland. It really was and I don't think there was any place on Earth that I've been to more frequently that wasn't somewhere we lived, than Nauvoo. It was always a second home, but especially when Grandpa and Grandma served there, being able to







go stay with them for longer periods of time was so special. The fairy dust of Nauvoo really seeps in when you stay for more than two days and we had the chance to observe and get behind the scenes of what made Nauvoo tick. It felt like we were insiders, like we owned the place.

The impact was that we felt the sacredness of that special place and it seeped deeply into who we are. With so much ado about Church history these days and people becoming disillusioned with things they learn about some random fact here or there. But nothing could be a better fireproof against that typical tactic of Satan than to go to and return to Nauvoo and Carthage time and time again.

I remember seeing the Family living Center open up for the first time. I remember being there over Christmas and going to special firesides and "sociables" about Nauvoo. I loved the Pageant and being able to feel of the sacrifice that the Saints made there. It helped me to just expect that living the gospel wasn't always going to be easy.

I won't even start about how Nauvoo has blessed my current lifestyle – my wife, my family – everything I owe to my having been so close to Nauvoo that I went out on a limb to apply to be a YPM there.

Nauvoo was a special place because of our family, and it was really special to share it with so many others in our extended family for Nelson Reunions in the grandmother's house and Lewis for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

### *Craig*

Nauvoo memories. Wow. Nauvoo has such a special place in my heart. Our family has so many ties there. I remember going up and staying in the Nauvoo hotel and swimming in the pool and the jacuzzi. We would get



fudge at the fudge shop. We would eat sandwiches at the park and run around. I loved that we made church trips a fun part of our lives and the central focal point of our vacations. We also walked around the temple a lot, and when we could,



made going inside a part of our trip. We always watched the Pageant when we were there during July. Sometimes we would even drive home after one of the nights.

We visited all the homes. We stopped by the bakery, played in the family living center, etc. We saw the movies at the visitors center and watched all the shows with senior missionaries or young performing missionaries. The culmination of all of these trips and events allowed me to gain a strong testimony of the city of Nauvoo, the saints and the pioneers, and of Joseph Smith. It eventually led me to feeling prompted to go back and serve. Now I'm happily married with two wonderful kids and I live a good life with a strong foundation in the gospel,

Jesus Christ, and his restored gospel. A lot of this I can tie back to Nauvoo. I get emotional anytime anyone ever talks about Nauvoo in church talks or videos. I am forever tied to that town. Thanks to Mom and Dad for prioritizing that as a family. It became a fun place for our family to visit. I am so glad they chose to spend their money at a church site where our testimonies could grow and be strengthened.

### *Laura*

Oh Nauvoo... the Mormon Disneyland of the Midwest. I think our family has frequented Nauvoo more than anyone else I know but I could be wrong...







though I highly doubt it.

All my memories include going to see the sites, getting bread, bricks, ropes, and gingerbread cookies, watching the performing missionaries old and young in the different shows, going on wagon rides, eating at the fudge shop, and spending time with family. When I was young I didn't quite understand the spirit that was there, but I remember when the "new" Joseph

Smith movie came out and I just bawled. It was (and is) so powerful.

Nauvoo helped me to gain a personal testimony of Joseph Smith, the Restoration, and enduring trials. My testimony and love for music was greatly influenced by Nauvoo. I was so proud to have both Brad and Craig as performing missionaries in Nauvoo. Many spiritual experiences were had in Nauvoo, as a family and as a youth. We went there for Girls Camp and Youth Conference and I didn't realize how lucky we were to have it so close until moving to Utah, where most people had never been to Nauvoo.

I also obviously have the memory of learning of Grandpa Lewis' death there. I remember kneeling in prayer with dad before he drove back to St. Louis to grab a flight to Utah. I remember the spirit that was there. I remember thinking about how much Grandpa loved Nauvoo. It was a sacred place to learn of his passing and an experience I will never forget.



### *Emma*

Nauvoo will always have a special place in my heart. My first memories of Nauvoo were driving up in the winter to visit Grandpa and Grandma Lewis for Christmas. Dad would let me sit in his lap and "drive" with him on the quiet roads of Nauvoo. My memories are very vague, but I can still remember the open feel of

Grandma and Grandpa's ranch house and listening to Grandma play on the piano. Don't get me wrong, Nauvoo in the summer is amazing and exciting, but there is something about being there during the Christmas season. It is so peaceful. The missionaries are extra happy to see you there and the gingerbread cookies seem to taste better, too. I can also picture the other house that Grandma and Grandpa had with the swinging bench on the front porch and the sunroom in the back. I lost a watch in that house and have never forgotten about it.

And you can't forget about that temple. The Nauvoo temple is so dang beautiful. I remember that we would always stop by the temple first before doing anything else. I think the most powerful experience of Nauvoo is seeing the temple light up at the end of the Pageant, hearing Gordon B.

Hinkley's voice talking on the loudspeaker about the temple and the beacon of light it would be.

I have such a passion for the shows, especially the Promise (originally known as High Hopes and River Boats). I can quote it, I can sing it, I can even maybe dance it. Okay maybe not quite, but that show is my LIFE. It was so cool watching that show growing up, and then having both of my big brothers performing in it was a dream come true. Fan girl moment.

I've been to Nauvoo soooo many times, too many to count! However, each time I come back having gained an even stronger testimony. The shows, the pageants, the stories, the people of Nauvoo, all have this amazing spirit about them. Listening to what the Saints had to go through, the faith they demonstrated, and love for the Gospel gives me hope that I can get through anything with Heavenly Father by my side. Thanks Mom and Dad for giving that gift to me! It's because of you guys taking us there each year that it played a part in me developing my testimony.



## Dad

Having been born and raised in St. Louis and spending nearly my entire adult life here, I can easily say that I have probably visited Nauvoo 60-70 times. My



experiences there and in Carthage have been foundational to my testimony of the restored gospel. My memories include hiking the Martyrdom Trail as a young man with my dad and others on two different occasions. It is a 24-mile hike from Nauvoo to Carthage – the same route that Joseph and Hyrum Smith would have taken when they made that fateful trip to Carthage in June 1844.

I have memories of being in the City of Joseph pageant for four straight summers in the late 70's, and even being cast to play the part of the 14-year-old Joseph Smith in my first year there. Portraying the boy prophet as he received his first vision was a powerful experience for me, and I knew that what he said he saw was true.

I'll never forget taking the youth of the Lake St., Louis Ward to Nauvoo in school buses while I served as bishop and Jessica, Christine, and Bradley were youth in the ward. It was a magical trip with 35-40 youth, some of whom had never been there before! We definitely had multiple opportunities to feel the Spirit there together during that trip.

My memories in later years have involved my parents serving there for 3 years, first with Dad serving as the President of NRI (Nauvoo Restoration, Inc.) and then while there being called to serve as the President of the Illinois Nauvoo Mission! We loved to go stay with them there at the Mission Home next to the Church building. We'd go up each Christmas and various times throughout the year. We had a Neal & Kay Lewis Family Reunion there





one summer and surprised my parents with a 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Celebration, inviting family and friends from across the country to join us for a special reception there. It was incredible how many people made the trip there to recognize Dad and Mom. Laura and I and our children were the closest family to Nauvoo, so we were blessed with the opportunity to see them a lot, even being there for their farewell open house and celebration at the conclusion of their mission.

Then, shortly after that, I have such fond memories seeing our sons Brad and then Craig serve as Young Performing Missionaries there shortly after completing their own full-time missions. I was so proud of their desire to keep serving and sacrificing after just doing so for two years in Utah and California, respectively.



We loved to run up to Nauvoo to see them perform. It was special that they also met their eternal companions while serving there – clearly the primary purpose for being called to sing and dance there for four months.

I love to just run up to Nauvoo to get away from the world and the hustle and bustle of the Christmas Holiday Season during mid-December. It's amazing how you feel yourself literally

slow down and be calmed while spending time there and in Carthage. It will always be one of my favorite places to visit. It will always be extremely special to our family and my extended family for all that we've felt and experienced while there.

### *Mom*

Nauvoo; such fond memories. We used to take you children up to Nauvoo when you were little. The area where the Nauvoo temple stands today was a recessed hole in the ground. I'm not sure what kept us going up there to Nauvoo in the beginning, because there wasn't much to do. As the years went by different places were added that made it more family friendly. President Gordon B. Hinckley announced in 1999 that the Nauvoo temple would be rebuilt! Dad and I got to be hosts before the temple was open and took people through during the Open House.

When Emma was one, we celebrated with other members of the church as the temple was finished and dedicated. When the children were young we enjoyed the City of Joseph many times during the summer. The City of Joseph was a pageant that Dad and I were in as youth. During the later years the pageant changed to the Nauvoo pageant and also the British pageant.

Most of you have had an amazing Youth Conference experience or two up there that added to our love and attachment to Nauvoo. The years that Grandpa and Grandmother Lewis served up there as Mission President were wonderful for our family. We were able to go up and spend the night and enjoy more time up in

Nauvoo and cherish some of the opportunities that Grandpa and Grandmother were having.



Nauvoo continued to be an important place to visit, when Bradley served a performing mission up in Nauvoo. What a wonderful surprise that was for the family. We went up there over six times that summer to see Bradley perform as Chance in the Promise. Nauvoo was also the place Bradley met Mindy Lukens. Sister Lukens was serving as a sister missionary in the Nauvoo mission and they became acquainted with each other. More than a year after their mission in Nauvoo, they reconnected and then were married in the Nauvoo temple.

Craig also had the opportunity to be a Young Performing missionary after his mission. He met his wife Claire Davis

there that summer. She was also a Young Performing missionary. They have many close friends from that summer.

We love Nauvoo because of the Spirit that we feel in Nauvoo. We strengthened our testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the sacrifices he made to bring about the Restoration of the Gospel. The early saints sacrificed so much to follow



the Prophet knowing he was called by God and was doing the Saviors' work here on the earth. We are a part of the continuing restoration today.



## Trips to Utah

### *Jessica*

I never have and probably never will drive through the night to Utah or anywhere else for that matter with my children. The fact that Mom and Dad attempted and succeeded at this time and time again with up to six kids is mind blowing. If Nauvoo was our nearby Disneyland, Utah was our Disneyland of the West. These regular trips ignited my love and affinity for Brigham Young University – which is where I met Jared, so for that I am very grateful.

I remember Dad's paper, fold-out maps. When you were the kid up front, you got to hold the map and follow along. It was a big deal. I have little journals from some of our trips to Utah where I would write critical information about what time it was, where we were,

how far we had to go and how I was feeling about it all. Haha. Anything to pass the time, I guess. I was the van tidier, whether you liked it or not. I would straighten shoes and throw away trash and try to keep things in order. It didn't work, but I certainly tried, much to everyone's annoyance.

You wanted a good position for sleeping and you didn't always get one. I remember bouts of claustrophobia when I was the one stuck under the back row



on the ground. We had a full-on mattress sprawled out over the back seat – apparently this was completely acceptable back in the day to be driving without seatbelts? I can't even imagine trying to attempt this in 2022. Major kudos to



Mom and Dad for only needing some caffeine free Pepsi to endure this expedition – I'd need something much stronger.

Probably my favorite part of the trip was once we started to get close to Spanish Fork – we cranked up the Michael McLean CD (or was it a tape?!?) and belted it out the rest of the way. "Will He ever come, will He ever appear?" We were so excited and ready to be there. We had a favorite

rest stop there towards the end with the creek we walked through barefoot and the chipmunks – or maybe that was 2 different stops?

We loved staying at Craig and Janet's home. I remember sleeping out on the trampoline with Brooke, staying down in their exercise room and getting a kick out of their drinking fountain. We hiked Mount Timpanogos and visited with family. What stands out to me the most is our visits to BYU – walking around campus and eating at the Cougar Eat. Those regular visits to Utah and BYU instilled in me a desire to work hard and get good grades so I could go there one day.

### *Christine*

Drives out to Utah meant:

- gas station lights in the middle of the night
- scoping out (and fighting over) your "spot" in the car for the long drive
- Dad putting ice on his neck to stay awake!



- laundry baskets full of food and games
- bringing that tiny tv and watching movies; we felt like kings!
- doing our schoolwork on the drive!
- taking turns sitting up front with Dad
- putting the back seat in the Silver Bullet ALL the way down; that was the coveted spot!
- using our money to buy snacks at rest stops
- stopping at that same spot with the creek just outside of Spanish Fork; we were so excited to almost be there!



We were a bunch of sardines packed into one car, but we LIVED for those trips. When our friends talked about going to Disney World for the summer, we talked about how we went to UTAH! Wouldn't have had it any other way! Grateful for parents who made that enormously challenging effort. Thanks to Dad for never falling asleep at the wheel, and Mom for putting up with our shenanigans for 24 hours straight! Such fun memories.

## *Brad*

So many trips to Utah – it was probably our longest standing tradition as a family. Making the drive was made much easier by our acquisition of the lean



mean family moving machine, the Silver Bullet. We'd fight over who got to sit in the back cause it laid down into a bed. I remember that we seemed to all get along pretty well on those long drives which seems like a miracle. Listening to music that became inextricably tied to the memories made on that year's trip to Utah – Mae Embers and Envelopes being the





reunion where we went to leave Jessica at school. Listening to books on tape – like *Tennis Shoes Among the Nephites*.

I remember stopping off at the same rest stop as we got closer and how exciting it was to go there every time as it cued how close we were. The epic drive there just made the trips that much more meaningful as the anticipation built and built.

I remember loving being around so much family in Utah and in particular loving Craig and Janet's house. Jumping on the trampoline, running around the backyard, hiking the Y Mountain, going to BYU. It was larger than life. I remember being so confused that if we had so much family out there – why didn't we just move there? We would plead Mom and Dad to let us move there.

I also remember having so much fun that when we had to leave, we would cry and cry on the way home and listen to the song from Michael McLean – "We can be together forever again" that starts with a line about "well it's hard to say goodbye."

The trips were so fun and foundational to what made our family our family. It's what has made taking long trips with my kiddos fun and it's cool to always have those memories to look back on.

## Craig

Trips to Utah. I remember being woken up by Dad or Mom at 2 or 3 am to leave. It was pretty fun to just sleep for 5 or 6 hours and then to wake up while we were at a gas station or something. When we had the Silver Bullet it was a race to who wanted the back seats first because they laid down into a bed. Mom would bring those Cinnamon danishes for breakfast. So yummy! We would watch several movies while on the road on the TV we had in the Bullet or the DVD players we brought



for the Nugget. We always had a basket of food that we ate and snacked out of. We rarely actually stopped to get food. I think maybe once or twice each trip to Utah we would stop. I admire Mom and Dad for working so hard to still be frugal while on those trips. We had so many kids to buy food for so I imagine it wasn't cheap!



Stopping at the rest stop when we were coming down into Utah was a tradition that I remember really well. Getting out and stretching our legs by the river was nice. During that last hour or so before we got to Spanish Fork or wherever we were staying, we would listen to Michael McLean music. I know that album like the back of my hands because of all that time spent listening while driving to Utah. Dad was such a dedicated driver on those trips. I hardly remember anybody else driving on those trips. I remember driving once when I was like 18 and it was in the middle of nowhere in Wyoming. Dad's eyes were always bloodshot when we got to Utah and it usually took him a day to recover.

I love long drives and road trips now, even with my own kids. I love getting the same snacks my dad and mom would buy, like corn nuts, Twizzlers, pretzel rods, and sunflower seeds. Road trips are fun because we're together, whether you like it or not. Some of the best chats I've had with my wife and family is while on road trips. You're kind of forced to keep the driver awake with chit-chat. I enjoy it. Thanks Mom and Dad for choosing to spend your money each year on trips out to Utah. It wasn't cheap and I'm sure it wasn't fun all the time with up to six kids in

the car at once. I loved our drives to Utah!



### *Laura*

I have a pretty long range of memories for trips out to Utah. Things changed a lot from the beginning when it was all six of us kids, to when it was just 2-3 of us. In the beginning I remember being the lucky child who got to sleep in

between the two middle seats or just under the mattress that hung over the back seats. I got stepped on a lot. We had the little TV to watch movies on which was fun and our "limo lights" in the Silver bullet that made it feel so cool. I loved jamming to music (Rascal Flatts, etc) as we drove through the mountains and got closer to Utah.



Once we lost a few kids to college, I upgraded to an actual seat in the car, which was quite the luxury. I never slept well on those trips, so I remember a lot of times being awake as we stopped at gas stations in the middle of the night. I'd ask where we were or how much longer,

questions that I'm sure Mom and Dad loved hearing in the wee hours of the morning. We upgraded to a dvd player which was a nice change.

My favorite part about those drives was getting to watch lots of movies and our stops for fast food or the packs of Aldi's cinnamon rolls that mom would get for us. Probably the only time we had cinnamon rolls besides Christmas.

I always loved staying at Craig and Janet's, playing in their backyard on the playground and trampoline, and playing in their basement and little playhouse with the other kiddos.

### *Emma*

When we'd drive to Utah I remember having to wake up super early in the morning to leave. We would have everything packed the night before, so all we'd do was get ourselves out of bed and get into the car. We'd say a prayer and then





start our long drive to Utah. It was always really hard to sleep in the car, I feel like I did a lot of tossing and turning trying to make myself comfortable. I was always so excited for the sun to rise because then mom would give us cinnamon rolls and orange juice to eat for breakfast! I don't know why, but that was the highlight of those trips for me haha!

We'd watch a ton of movies. A lot of those movies Mom would get from the library and they were always really good, surprisingly. As we got closer to Utah we'd jam out to music. My ears popped and were so sore.

I was always so pumped to finally make it to Utah because it meant I would get to see my older siblings and other family.

I loved going to Grandpa and Grandmas house. It was so relaxing there and they always had the best meals. I made friends with the neighbor cats, which I am still friends with to this day.

Craig and Janet's was such a blast too. We'd watch fun movies in their basement and play in that cool house that they have down there as well. Me, Brady, and other cousins would go explore around the back of their house to find little reptiles/amphibians.

## *Dad*

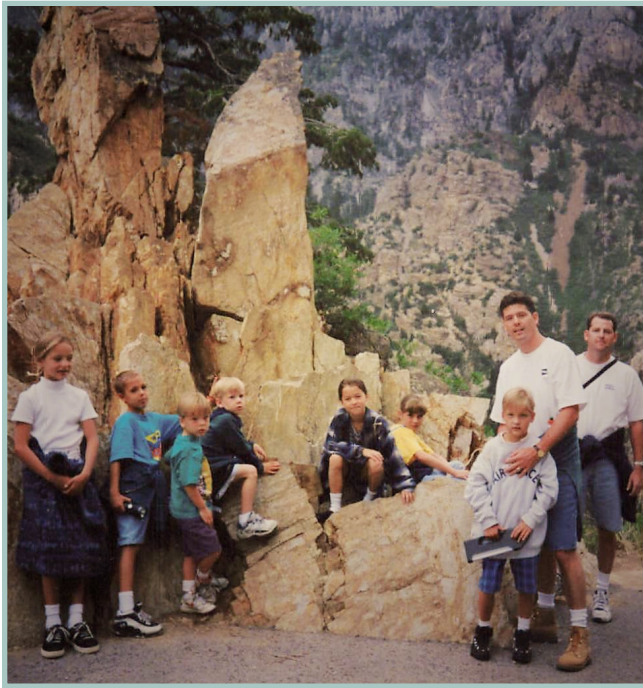
Our family trips to Utah will always be some of my fondest memories. In preparation for these long trips, we would load our minivan to the brim and jam all our luggage into a luggage carrier on top of the van and prepare ourselves to head out. We'd typically leave super early in the morning or in the early evening right after a day of work. We always drove straight through, typically arriving in Spanish Fork, UT at Craig and Janet's home 20-21 hours later. I was always completely wiped when we got there after doing most of the driving and going through the night. For some reason, Laura and I never felt comfortable having our children drive on these trips with the entire family in the car. We felt



that was a bit too much responsibility to place on them at a young age. Right or wrong, that was our thinking.

Anyway, once we arrived, we always had so much fun staying with Craig and Janet's family, visiting with other family in Utah, enjoying the mountains, and often taking part in a Lewis Family Reunion together while there. We would

typically be gone from home for two weeks!



Laura and I always felt so blessed on those trips – particularly after driving so many hundreds of miles without incident. There was only a time or two when our car experienced car trouble, but we were able to easily get it taken care of. Other than that, the vans always performed flawlessly and we were protected from harm and accident! Such a huge blessing that we'll never forget.

The kids were always really well behaved on these road trips and while staying with family. I'm sure there

were tense moments, but by and large I only remember the kids being good and having a blast together. I always especially loved spending time with my brother Craig. It was always a bit sad to leave him as we seem to get along better and better with each passing year. I hope my kids were able to see the love that I felt for my brother, and all my siblings and parents on those Utah trips over the years.

## *Mom*

I loved our trips out to Utah even though there was a lot of work involved. When we went out to Utah we usually drove straight through which involved night driving. Lots of prayers were involved in our trips. The reason we took so many trips out to Utah was to stay in contact with our family, both Lewis and Nelson sides of the family. We overstayed our welcome at Craig and Janet's homes. They were so good to let us come and stay!



Getting food and activities ready for a long trip and being away from home for that long was a big job. Dad would try to get home a little early and we would make some last minute preparations. It was always crazy driving away hoping we had everything. We had fun in the big silver bullet with all the room. The children would love to read, play games and watch movies. We loved to listen to different CD's on our trip. Dad had lots of favorites. When we drove out Highway 70 to Utah we would always be coming through the steep mountain pass in Colorado early in the morning and I would always get pretty nervous (just ask Dad). We would stop in Spanish Fork Canyon there at the park and the rest area. It was a beautiful spot and all the children loved it. We were exhausted by the time we made it but able to stay up until it was time to go to bed.

We enjoyed getting together with the Lewis family for some fun family reunions while we were out in Utah. We went up to Bear Lake twice and loved our time with Grandpa and Grandma Lewis, Aunts and Uncles and cousins. We loved the planned activities for crafts and children's games. We loved sitting and talking together and sharing our lives and past memories. I'm so grateful that we had planned reunions so that we could see each other often.



Uncle Craig had a boat that we used a number of times when we were out in Utah. The children had some opportunities to get on ski's or on the big blow up inflatables. It was fun to have that experience a few times.

Some trips out to Utah were to be with the Nelson family. We went to Moon Lake in about 2002 and loved it. Moon Lake had cabins that were kind of rustic for us but the beauty of the area made it so wonderful. We loved our evening walks where we saw so many deer; the children loved that. There was a lake where we rented some jet skis and had fun on those. The children loved playing in the sand and on the beach area. Some of the family took hikes and enjoyed the surrounding area. Many of us also went on a horse ride and that was so much fun. The evenings were wonderful because we would sit around a great big campfire and talk and sing some of the songs we loved to sing. That was a special time with the Nelson family.

There was a couple of trips I made out to Utah without Dad. When Bennett was born, Grandy, Laura, Emma and I headed out early in the morning for Provo, Utah. We had a great trip together, Grandy and I taking turns driving. Grandy had lots of good fresh fruit and veggies. One memory as we drove was seeing a possum walking across the road. It looked up at our headlights... And then we ran over it. Yuc. We didn't mean to do it!!! We had a wonderful week with Matt,



Christine and newborn Bennett. Laura and Emma had a wonderful opportunity to help, too. Grandy spent the week up with the Sandy Nelson family. I was proud that we were able to make the trip and it went so well.

Another trip out to Utah was when Brad's Dad had gotten really sick. Brad flew out to be with his family because it was so serious and we wanted him to be with his family during that time.

We had planned a Lewis Reunion at that time so most of the family still came out to Utah. The girls (Laura and Emma) were at girls camp and we planned to leave on a Friday night. They were exhausted when they got home and only got a few hours of sleep. I was concerned about driving without Brad. We left about three in the morning. I hadn't gotten much sleep and only drove for a few hours when I had to pull over and rest/sleep for a while. The girls slept for hours, and I kept driving. It was close to noon before they were really awake. Finally, Laura was able to relieve me and I was able to rest. The one fun thing I remembered about that trip was that we ordered pizza in a town and then waited for it to be cooked. We ate it in the car and were very happy with our meal! I did have fun listening to Laura and Emma tell me about girls camp and the fun they had. There were a lot of prayers on this trip because we needed so much help without Brad/Dad. We were staying the first few days with Darin and Aimee. By the time we got there we were exhausted. Laura drove the last hour because I was so tired. We felt very blessed that we arrived safely.

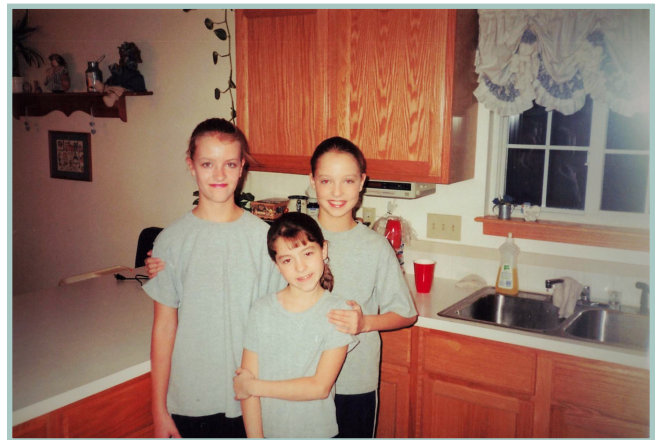
## Trips to Kansas

### *Jessica*

It is pretty interesting to look back on traditions like this one and think about how they impacted my later life. Having a big family and knowing and spending time with our cousins gave me instant friends and a sense of belonging. Ashley and I went to EFY together twice and eventually roomed together at BYU. We kept in touch in between with emails and AOLs. It was a huge blessing and brought a sense of security to have a cousin to take these big leaps of faith with.

I remember listening to quite a bit of country music with the Barbers – Rascal Flatts and Dixie Chicks. Do you remember the year it poured rain for Halloween? We just decided to trick or treat anyway, had a total blast and collected a huge stash of candy. Another fun memory is "the scavenger hunt" for Ashley's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. We drove all over Wichita; I remember an especially silly drive-through visit at Burger King.

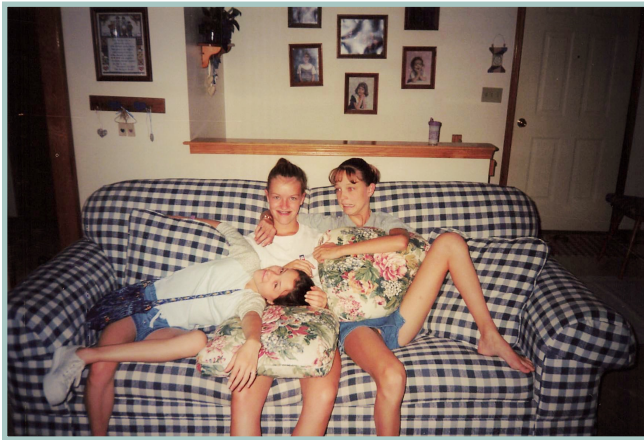
Just like we did at Grandma and Grandpa's home on Mignon, us cousins liked to make plays and videos and entertain the adults. We were loud and crazy and wild – I'm grateful the Barbers accepted us into their home!



## Christine

Kansas trips were seriously always so epic. I remember always being surprised with how quickly the drive went, because we were used to almost 3 times as long of a drive for Utah. We would get there and immediately ditch the parents to hang with the cousins.

It's amazing to think about how we all managed to fit in the Barber's house. We were both HUGE families and yet, I never remember feeling squished or uncomfortable. We just made it work! Shari and Dave would give up their room for Mom and Dad, which now looking back must have been a huge sacrifice. All the cousins would sleep lined up in the basement and I was usually the one keeping everyone up telling jokes or being silly/weird in some way. I remember



the parents having to come down SEVERAL times to tell us to be quiet.

I remember being there for different holidays and being so excited to share those memories with one another. One was Easter! I remember being at the age where I was really suspicious about whether or not the Easter Bunny was real or not, so I wrote him a note at the Barber's telling him he better leave me some of his fur otherwise I

would know the whole thing was made-up. The next morning: white fur was left in place of the note!

For Ashley's birthday one year, my dad and Uncle Dave made us older girls a little scavenger hunt. It now has become a home video family classic called: The Hunt. Ashley drove us around town and videotaped the whole thing. Such good memories! And who can forget Peaches the cat. She was so dang huge! And Jessica always wanted to pick the fleas out of her fur. I think it was there that we realized I had a cat allergy.

Mom and Dad made these trips a priority and I am so grateful they did. Jess and I went on to be roommates with Ashley at college (easiest roommate EVER!) and to have a closeness with the Barber family that we don't have with anyone else on the Lewis side.



## *Brad*

I remember the different KS trips with fondness. Rolling into "Dillons," setting off fireworks with Jordan, and taking care of Sarah who was the baby of the cousins at the time. It was really great to have another place where we felt totally home and with family closer than Utah.

I remember sharing the things we were getting into with our cousins – playing computer games with Brandon and Jordan, listening to Brittany Spears first album and singing all the lyrics with our cousins. Cousins are such an identity affirmer, as you have carbon copies of yourself that are similarly striving to live the gospel – in the case of the Barbers – also outside of Utah. It was great to have that automatic acceptance and support of cousins.



I remember us being rowdy and playing all kinds of games – boy cousins vs. girl cousins. I'm sure our parents were having a good time because we seemed to self-entertain pretty well, making funny videos together.

Great memories overall of being with the Barbers in Wichita – where you can watch your dog run away for days, according to Uncle Dave.

## *Craig*

I don't remember a ton about trips to Kansas. I think it's because we didn't do them a whole lot so they aren't as ingrained in my memory. I remember trips to the Wichita candy store. I vaguely remember trips to the Zoo that Wichita has there. Was that one free like St. Louis? I'm so glad we made efforts to make trips there. I'm close to Kayla and Chelsea now because of those trips. We did a Halloween or two there I believe too. It was raining big time if I remember correctly.

We would make music videos a ton. We also made funny home videos. Christine being the Crocodile Hunter is a classic. Me singing Rascal Flatts. Those videos are cherished memories we have with the Barbers. I also remember celebrating



birthdays with the Barbers or holidays like Easter too. Thanks Mom and Dad for taking us on these trips!

The drives for me are nostalgic. I love traveling by car because that is part of the fun for me. I loved being able to sleep, watch movies, all while Dad and Mom drove. It was easy for us kids, not the parents! I love the Barber family and so glad they live close to Mom and Dad now so they don't have to drive as far.

### *Laura*

I lived for these trips! All of us seemed to have a Barber our age and that we connected with. Kayla is the earliest best friend I can remember and I always loved getting to see her especially, but I really loved (and still love) all my Barber cousins and Dave and Shari.

I remember Christine would always gather us kids to make a TGN News video or some other production. They were fun to put on for the adults but they are even more fun to look back and watch on home videos today, especially the Crocodile Hunter edition. It's fun that even now, we are so tight with the Barbers because we literally grew up with them. I feel like besides the fact that dad and Shari



grew up together, they raised their families in a very similar way: with the gospel first, family being a priority, and being smart financially.

I remember when it was just me, Craig, and Emma still at home we visited the Barbers and had a grand old time. When it was time to leave, it was a hard goodbye as usual. On our drive home however, we didn't get very far before we had car issues that

ended up with us returning for one more night to Wichita while our car got fixed. Kayla, Sarah, and I were thrilled! I remember we stayed up late that night watching High School Musical. I watched all the Disney movies at the Barbers because we weren't fancy enough to have cable yet.

## Emma

Awww... it makes me so happy to think about our Kansas trips. I don't have super clear memories because I was so young but I remember being obsessed with their cat Peaches because we didn't have a pet at the time...yet. I enjoyed playing dollhouse and stuffed animals with Sarah and being pulled into the little productions of TGN news (dadadada). Shari would make jello for us, we'd play on the swing set in their backyard, visit the Nifty Nuthouse, and watch Disney movies.

I too remember the night when we packed up to leave, sad as can be, and only made it a few miles before our car broke down. Hallelujah!!! We got to spend ANOTHER night at the Barbers and we took advantage of it for sure. I'll always remember us driving away from the Barbers and their kids running alongside our car waving goodbye. What good memories.

## Dad

Wichita trips were the best. It was only a 7-hour drive from O'Fallon – all interstate – and about the time we were ready to get out of the car, we were there! I remember one year, we drove the 7 hours without incident, then as we were coming into town, just a mile or so away from Barbers, we were pulled over by one of Wichita's finest... the local police... for speeding. We pulled into a strip mall parking lot not too far from the Dillons grocery store in order for him to write us up. I was disappointed, but wasn't going to let it spoil our trip.

The kids got along so well with their Barber cousins. There was literally no "warm-up" period required between these cousins. They picked up right where they left off. It seems like we would visit them there about once a year for a handful of years, which was so fun for us and our children. Laura and I and our children have always felt such a kinship with the Barbers. Our families are so much alike, with the gospel of Jesus Christ at the very core of those similarities. We just see things similarly, and that always made for very peaceful, meaningful visits together.



I recall one year, church was canceled due to extreme flooding in the area resulting from heavy rains overnight. That was crazy. We drove around to witness some of the flooding firsthand. The kids couldn't believe how high the water was in some areas. We were blessed to not be impacted by it ourselves while we were there.

Trips to Wichita always included a "night out" for the adults. We'd go out and enjoy a nice steak dinner at a local restaurant and then grab some ice cream before heading home. I remember loving the time with Dave and Shari, and knowing that our kids were responsible and doing just fine back at home.

It must have been a madhouse at times to have all 12 children in the same home together, but we made it work. Dave and Shari were chill about it, and we were chill about it, and our kids really were well-behaved so it wasn't that big a deal. We just had to get them to calm down a little bit once in a while.

### *Mom*

We loved our visits to see the Barbers. Traveling to Wichita was not too bad of a trip; about seven hours. The children loved being together with the Barber cousins and Brad and I loved visiting with Dave and Shari and their children. Shari always planned fun activities while we were there and the children also came up



with their own ideas when they were together. I remember the children getting in their swimsuits and having water games in the Barbers backyard. They had a blast running around in circles. One time we were there for 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Jordan and Bradley were blowing up old Barbie dolls and having a blast. The fireworks were amazing. The children also got together and did skits and dance

routines while we were there. Christine did the famous Crocodile hunter skit. Laura, Kayla and Sarah did a crazy dance routine. Jessica, Ashley and Christine did a birthday scavenger hunt (they were very silly). We also loved seeing their cat, Peaches, and the children loved playing with her since we were mildly allergic of cats, but could enjoy Peaches for a few days.

Another crazy experience we had was being there for Halloween. We planned to take the children out and it was POURING rain. We decided to go out and take them in our van. They went out and got tons of candy because not many children were out that year because of the rain. The next day church was called off. We decided to have everyone, Barber's and Lewis's pile into our Silver Bullet. We saw how many areas were flooded around their town. It was quite a sight for us to see and we realized how much damage that much rain had caused.

The hard part was leaving because the children always begged to stay longer... They would hug and talk about when we would see each other again. We have so many fond memories of those days and still love to be with the Barber family!





## Teenager trips with Dad

### *Jessica*

Looking back on these special trips with Dad, here's what I know: Mom and Dad spent time and money on faith-building, family-fortifying experiences that helped us establish traditions that many of us hold on to tightly in our own families.

It was fun looking through some old pictures to jog my memory of these trips. I think I got to go on two before I left for college: Far West and General Conference.

Getting on a plane and going to Utah was a big deal for us! This would have been my first experience going to General Conference in the Conference Center. I will always remember the powerful manifestation of the Spirit that I felt each time I was in the same building as prophets and apostles.



### *Christine*

Dad worked hard and played hard! He was busy, busy, busy, but then when it came time to be with his kids he was very attentive. As we grew up, I think Mom thought up the idea of the teenagers having getaways with Dad. I was



100% on board! I remember going to church history sites and then staying at a hotel. I remember all of us going to the hotel pool and sitting in the jacuzzi together. We all just felt so special to get that one on one time. One of my favorite trips and highlights of being with Dad was being able to attend Conference out in Utah together. Being able to combine spiritual experiences with time spent

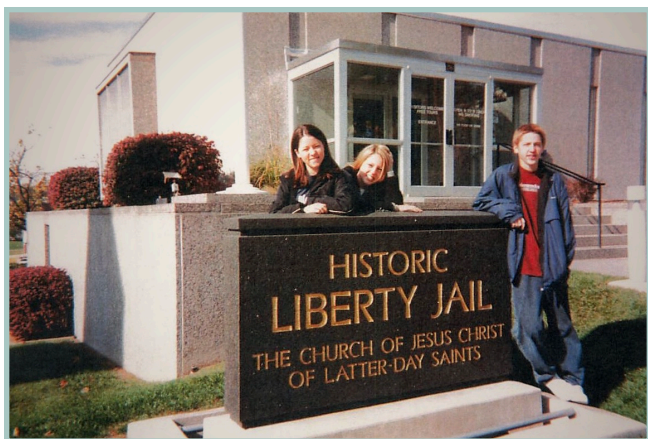
with Dad was really special. On a much more silly note: I remember flying home from that trip and being seated on the plane in a spot that had previously been urinated on!!! The flight attendant brought me two moist towelettes and I thought I was going to die. I smelled so bad and by the end of the flight, someone else's pee had dried on my pants. What an end to that trip! I will never not be traumatized by that experience. But it makes a great story!

### *Brad*

I'm not sure what the first teenage trip was, but the first I remember going on was going to General Conference in Utah. It was really where making General Conference a really special experience began for me. Going out there to Utah, seeing Craig and Janet and jumping on their trampoline. Driving a rental car – which for some reason seemed so cool – and listening to Jericho Road – having dad tell us for the 20<sup>th</sup> time that the Lehi Roller Mills was where Footloose was filmed, haha – all part of the experience of heading to General Conference. I remember being in awe at the echo / reverb effect after the Tabernacle Choir stopped singing. I remember seeing everyone stand up for the Prophet – such a cool experience and laid the foundation for me wanting to and thinking to invite Mindy to General Conference because I really did love it.

Later, I recall a trip to Chicago where





we got to tour the Willis Tower, eat pizza at Gino's East, go to the Museum of Science and Industry and see the Chicago temple I believe. It lodged Chicago in my mind as a place of interest, and I later walked those same museums with my children.

Overall, I think the most important thing was that getting away with Dad provided an opportunity for him and us to detach from the day to day

and make memories together. I can tell how important that is even now with young kids who I can imagine I'll want to do Dad trips with.

### *Craig*

How lucky were we as teenagers to be able to go on these fall trips with Dad! I wish I could remember more of the details, but what I do remember is how much I looked forward to these trips! I was so grateful that Dad took time off and spent hard-earned money on his oldest kids to spend time with them. I believe I went on at least three fall trips with Dad. My first was Winter Quarters Nebraska. I loved mixing church history sites with fun travel and hotel stays with my dad and siblings. I looked up to my older siblings a lot when I was a teenager so I felt so lucky to be able to go on a trip with them. I can remember the pictures we took on these trips. This helps me to remember these trips as I wasn't as good about keeping a journal.

Chicago trip might have been the most fun. This was my first trip here. Staying at a hotel, standing on the glass at the Sears Tower, and eating deep-dish pizza. So tasty! I remember having so much left over and it made our car smell like Gino's pizza the rest of the trip. Great memories that honestly I want to pass on to Claire and my kids because none of them have been there. Chicago is a fun city!



I like being able to walk the streets downtown. We went to the multi-leveled Nike store. That was cool!

Going out to Conference with Dad as one of my fall trips might have been my first time honestly at Conference. I have now spent so many sessions in that Conference Center. Not a single time goes by without thinking of being there with my Dad and missing him. I always send him pictures of my seats at Priesthood session because I want to try and continue to share special spiritual memories with him like we first began to do on these fall trips. I can't remember where we stayed when we went there, probably just Grandma's or Craig's house. Again, sometimes the best part of these trips is the travel to and from. Traveling often forces us to have long, good conversations, watch fun movies together, or play awesome car games. And who can't beat getting to stop at fast food places on the trips? That never happened when we were at home with all eight of us!



Thanks Dad for these fall trips. Without a doubt, once my kids reach a certain age, I will take them on these trips as well. Too many countless memories to pass up with my own kids. The relationships that were strengthened on these trips can't be measured. I love my family and these trips are just one of the reasons why. These trips helped me to grow closer to my siblings, who I continue to grow closer to each day even though I'm older with kids! Thank you DAD!!! And thanks, Mom, for giving him the idea.

### *Laura*

Loved these trips so much! My very first teenager trip was to Chicago with Dad, Bradley, and Craig. It was my first time in Chicago and my first time eating Chicago style pizza. So yummy! I remember dad took us shopping and let us each buy something. I bought white adidas sports shorts that I later realized were see-through and mom wouldn't let me wear. Waste of a purchase, but still such a fun trip! We watched a Cardinals game from the hotel where Molina hit a hugely important home run.



Even more than that though, I remember that most times when Dad took us on these trips, he took us to see church sites. He took Brad, Craig, and I to Winter Quarters one year. I remember that dad would always go out of his way to bear his testimony. We could have gone a lot of places for those trips but I think



making church sites the priority showed us where his priorities were. I loved this time away from home with just Dad and the other siblings where we could enjoy being together and get to know each other better.

I really loved any trips or outings I had with Dad. I remember always begging to go when Craig and Brad were old enough but I was told I'd

have to wait. I can't remember what age we started doing those? 12? 14? Either way, I knew they were really special and couldn't wait to be a part of them.

### *Emma*

I never really had an official "teenager trip" with Dad but that doesn't bother me at all because we went to many places together (Utah, California, Nauvoo, Kirkland, even Italy) and of course every weekend Dad and I had our "trips" to McDonalds.

Dad's a fun guy to travel with. He's very determined to get to the airport early enough to make our flight. When we get past security he has me take the lead and look for what gate we need to be at because he wants to make sure I know what I'm doing. Sometimes Mom will give him a grade based on how calm he stays throughout our trip. Recently he's been getting pretty good scores!

When we're driving instead of flying, I can always count on him to let me play some good tunes and I'll occasionally let him play his CDs too. We'll jam out to music for quite a while until Mom tells us that we need to stop the music so we can read





scriptures. What a party pooper amiright?!?! I love the fun memories of traveling with dad and I hope to make more in the future!!!

## *Dad*

Teenager trips with Dad (me)... something I'll ALWAYS remember. These were Mom's idea originally, and I was all for them – a chance to go to fun places with my kids, spend money, eat out, stay in hotels, have spiritual experiences, and just enjoy being together. The first one we ever took was with Jessica, Christine, and Bradley to Independence MO. I remember getting a pretty good deal on a "Courtyard By Marriott" hotel there close to Independence and going to the Visitor's Center there, the Reorganized Church's temple, Liberty Jail, etc., and feeling the Spirit in our buildings and then contrasting that with feeling no real Spirit in the Reorganized temple. It was very apparent to the kids that one was Christ's true church.

Other trips included going to General Conference – I still remember renting a nice Hyundai sedan and having a trunk full of luggage, and stopping somewhere after the morning

Conference session on Sunday in order to change into clothes we could travel in as we flew back to STL. I loved having the kids with me as we went to a few different conference sessions. The experience of being in the conference center when the Prophet enters is unmatched. So glad my children felt that with me. It bound us together in special ways to have felt such powerful stirrings of the Spirit – all at the same moment.

Another trip that sticks out in my mind is a trip to Winter Quarters. That was a bit longer of a drive, but we got a good hotel next to a Casino, went to the Visitor's Center, Pioneer graveyard and Winter Quarters and then across the river into Council Bluffs Iowa to see the Kanesville tabernacle. I'd never been to these sites before, so this was a new, interesting experience for me as well as the kids. We enjoyed hanging out in the Visitor's Center at Winter Quarters for quite some time as I recall. I remember afterwards going to see a movie near our hotel.





Finally, there was a trip to Chicago with Brad, Craig and Laura – staying in a hotel outside the city, but driving into the city on a couple of occasions to see the sites (Willis Tower – formerly "Sears" Tower), Gino's East restaurant for some deep dish pizza – Chicago style, the Nike store that Laura referenced. I remember watching Cardinal playoff games in our hotel room. And I'm pretty sure we were able to do the Chicago Temple on a

Saturday morning. That would have been a priority.

The best parts about these trips were just the opportunity to be with my children, have fun with them, and feel something special with them as we always tried to incorporate some kind of Church History site or sacred place – like the temple – as a part of our excursions each fall.

As Emma indicated, she and I have taken several trips together where we've flown together to Utah or elsewhere, or where she, Mom, and I have driven somewhere like Nashville, Nauvoo, Independence, or Pere Marquette. We've had some really great opportunities to spend time together. Emma has also had the chance to meet apostles and other general authorities, some of whom have even stayed in our home with us, and heard them tell her directly that this Church is true! In fact, Elder Joaquin Costa's words, "It's all true Emma. It's all true!" will always stay with me, and I hope they'll always stay with her.

### *Mom*

I felt strongly that we should make it a priority for the older children to have special time, away from the house, at least once a year with Dad. Dad and I



thought it would be good to have the children twelve years and older go on these trips. We also felt like, if we were going to spend the time and money to do these trips, we wanted to come up with trips where there could be a spiritual aspect to them. Many of the trips Dad took the children to were Church History sites or where there was an opportunity to get to the temple in a certain area. Nauvoo, Winter Quarters, General Conference in the Conference Center, Chicago temple, and Independence were some of the trips that Dad took with the children... I was at home with the younger children but I felt like it was worth the effort. The older children seemed to really appreciate the opportunity to have alone time with Dad, away from home and his church responsibilities.

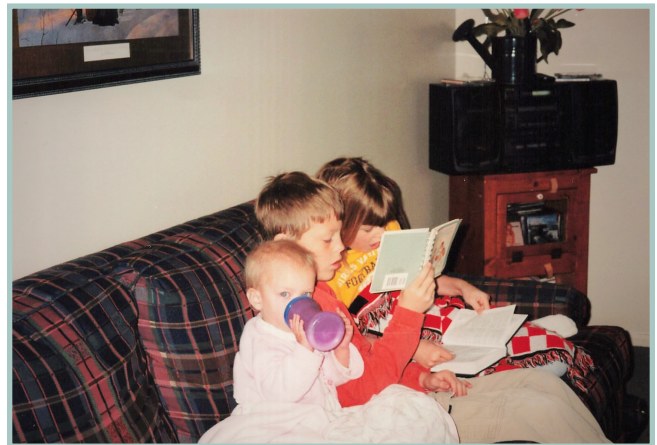
Brad was often busy in the evenings and weekends with church responsibilities. I didn't want our children to resent the time he was away from them. We came up with this yearly trip idea so that they would come to understand his love and appreciation for them when he needed to be away. It was kind of relaxing for me with just the little ones. I enjoyed being able to hear of the wonderful experiences the older children had with their Dad when they came home.

## Memories of the Younger Three

### *Craig*

Memories of the Younger Three. I definitely remember us being a bit more spoiled since the older kids had left the house and were on their own now. I vaguely remember the trips to Jack in the Box and McDonald's slightly increased once they left home. I was in my pure teenage years so on the weekends I was out with Cameron and Spencer. Laura and I overlapped a bit in Rising Generation so that is something we did together. It was weird being the oldest in the house but I remember work and hanging out with friends keeping me pretty busy.

Laura and I went to a couple Cardinal games together for getting good grades. It was fun to skip school and go to a game. Laura and I also went to some stake dances together. Those were all the rave growing up. We looked forward to each monthly dance. Emma and I enjoyed playing together and breaking her arm every once in a while! Ha. Emma and I were far apart enough that we didn't hang much then, but I'm glad we hang a ton now. It's funny how you grow up in different stages of life than your siblings, but once you are all grown adults, you talk more and have more in common. I love keeping up with my siblings now. I loved my growing-up years







and look back with fondness over those times.

### *Laura*

Emma and I remember on Friday nights playing kick the can or kickball with all the neighbor kids. Right around dinner time, we would ask our friend Brett if he wanted to get pizza.

He would always say yes and go ask

his mom, who would buy us all pizza. We thought she was the coolest because she seriously said yes every time. This happened like almost every Friday night. We'd eat and then go back to playing till dark or after. I love all the memories of playing in our neighborhood. We always felt so safe and I never felt like mom was worried about where we were. I loved going on bike rides around the neighborhood and Emma and I used to walk to Dierbergs or Pizza Hut. We really had the best neighbors and neighborhood to grow up in!

I also remember when we went to go get Mason from Sievers Retrievers. Jessica and Jared were living here at the time and Jessica came with us. We thought these black curly haired puppies out front were really cute and mom got mad at us because she said if we were paying that much, we were going to get a purebred lab. Racist. We went to play with some older yellow lab puppies but they were really nippy and we decided after being attacked for a while that we weren't interested. We went in the backyard field area and there were a bunch of labs, mostly black but some brown. We ran with them in the field and I don't remember exactly how but somehow we decided that Mason was the one. It was so fun bringing him home and he was the perfect dog right from the start.

Craig and I went to a lot of activities together (Young Womens and Young Mens, Rising Gen, church dances, etc) and so I had a lot of time with him in the car. He would always play new songs and talk about how much he loved them and I remember it would really bother him because I would





listen for a few seconds and then start singing and acting like I knew the song. It really bothered him and it was hilarious. I also remember that in high school if we got good grades we got free tickets to a Cardinals game. Craig and I would skip school (with mom's permission of course) and go to a Cardinals game together. I think we did that two years in a row. It was really fun!

### *Emma*

I can remember going on lots of adventures with Laura and Craig when I was a youngin'. Exploring around the creek, making forts in the woods, fishing with the big buckets and corn, and playing games at dark with the neighbors. I also loved going to the Hazelwood building early on Saturday mornings to watch Laura and Craig in church basketball. It was fun to have my siblings be pretty much the best on their teams. Sometimes we'd go to McDonalds after to get a treat.

On my Spotify playlist, I have an album dedicated to all the songs that Craig and Laura listened to growing up. I loved listening to whatever they listened to. I felt lucky to have my brother and sister with me still since all the other siblings were away at college or on missions. They looked out for me and I found myself hanging a lot with them and their friends. I was involved in all their silly music videos. I'm so glad they included me. I was sooooo sad when they left for college and missions, because I felt so alone! But I'm so happy I have all the memories from my childhood and I'm grateful of the examples they set for me. I couldn't do life without them.





## Silver Bullet Eulogy

We are gathered together today, not just to mourn the death of the Silver Bullet, but also to celebrate the wonderful life that it lived. Some of my fondest memories of the Silver Bullet are still clear in my mind. I would like to share a few.

My mind instantly remembers the day I first saw the beautiful machine we later called the Silver Bullet. I was around the age of six or seven. My mom and dad had been looking for a van for quite some time. We looked at black Chevy's and maroon GMC's, but they hadn't been exactly what we had in mind. Then one night my mom and dad came home with a silver Ford conversion van. I sat in the back and looked up towards the front and it seemed humongous. At that moment I had a distinct feeling that we would have many great voyages together.

Another memory comes to mind. This memory is of the 2003 High Adventure. This was the first time that the Bullet had been to Wisconsin. On the trip up there the Silver Bullet was highly sought after. The boys all wanted to experience the pure exhilaration that comes when you ride in that beastly machine. One of the experiences that affirmed the invincibility of the Silver Bullet was on our way to the camp. Some hillbilly's in their car thought that it would be funny to throw a rock at our vehicle. The rock seemed to be repelled by some unseen force deep within the heart of that Champion. On the way home we stopped at a Subway. Previously to this we had had a few problems but nothing too unusual for a car of its age. Well, it just stopped and died on us. We were halfway home and we were tired. We needed this car to start. I'm sure many of us said silent prayers. The Silver Bullet miraculously started and we went home with no trouble at all. And then I said to myself, "The church is true!"

Many things about the Silver Bullet will not be easy to forget: the purple seats, the matted carpets, the once luxurious interior that now only holds the faded memory of what it was like in its prime, but most of all I remember the welcoming sleekness of the exterior design. Some say that it's only a van. But to those who knew it best, it was more. It was an abstract representation of all that we could ever hope to be. I'll list a few of the many surprising statistics. The Bullet (in its 10



year life) has made 5 Utah trips, each about 2500 miles. It's been 1600 miles to Texas, and on many trips to Kansas and Nauvoo. In all the Silver Bullet has 185,000 miles on it. It has been around the earth an astounding 7.4 times.

It's not the statistics that impressed me the most. It was the dedication, the quickness, the many peaceful rides that left the greatest impression on us.

Sometimes I can still hear the roar of the engine, the laughter that was so common, and I can almost see the "twinkle lights" that illuminated the interior. And so even though the Silver Bullet has died, its spirit will live on inside us. We will NEVER forget the Silver Bullet!

Brad Lewis

## Baby Blue

### *Dad*

Mom was the driving force behind getting that car! We both knew it was time to have a kid car and thought it would be helpful for Jessica and Christine in Provo. I remember we bought it on a General Conference weekend. It was a bit stressful getting it done that weekend, but it all worked out. Then, I drove it out to Provo Utah with Craig. I can still remember that day. I was so excited to bring it to the college girls! What a great car it was!

### *Craig*

I remember when Dad and I drove you out to Jessica and Christine. We seriously made such great time. With no kids in the car, we drove all the way through the night and made it in 17 or 18 hours. Like crazy fast!

### *Christine*

Jessica was the first Lewis child to break in Baby Blue. She lived off campus and needed the wheels. I will never forget seeing her drive down the street outside of her duplex at The Colony, windows rolled down, holding her just-opened mission call in her hand while waving it about! She had taken a little spin up to Y-Mountain to open her call on her own. Minutes later, she was speeding home in Baby Blue and we found out she was Latvia bound!





With Jessica gone on her mission, Baby Blue was then passed on to me and Bradley. That vehicle showed us a good time during the 2007-2008 scholastic year. I lived off campus and kept Baby Blue parked at my place. Bradley and I would share it with each other based on our college kid needs. It took us to and from Conference sessions, to and from Grandma and Grandpa's home, and to

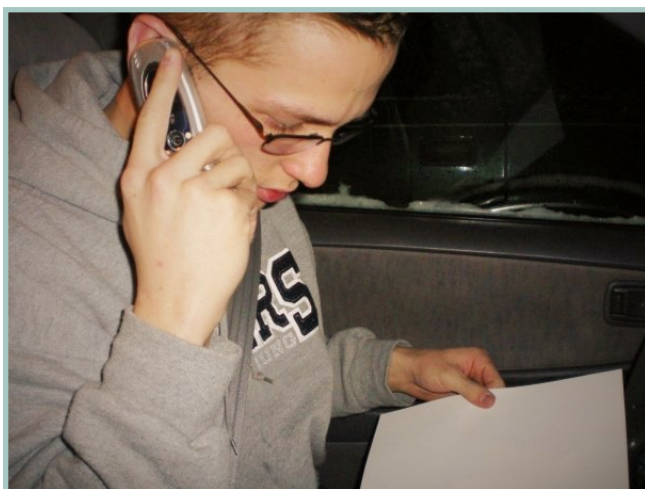
and from Walmart. You know, the necessities.

Baby Blue saw another mission call opening in early 2008. Bradley drove from his dorm in Herriman Halls to the Provo temple to open his call on his own. He then came and picked me up and we drove and parked somewhere so that he could read it to me. I screamed, I bawled, I flipped out. Baby Blue was there for it all.

On the evening that Bradley opened up his call in Baby Blue, I was driving it home to my apartment while chatting with Dad and Mom on the phone. I was



so excited about Bradley's call that I got a little distracted and ended up running a red light and getting into a pretty bad car accident. Mom and Dad heard the whole thing! The crazy part of the story is that Baby Blue was apparently "totaled" and yet, we used the money the insurance gave us to fix the front bumper and just kept driving it!





### *Craig*

Baby Blue, oh how we miss you! Oh, how grateful we are for you for being our childhood car. Your journey took so many twists and turns and had so many different owners. First it was Bradley's/Christine's, I can't totally remember. Then when those kids went off on missions, I had the privilege of getting behind your wheel. We spent many hours together, driving to

seminary, to St. Charles Community College, to Rising Generation, and even stake dances. The weekends were when we spent the most time together. Every weekend I was off to some adventure with Cameron and Spencer. You got me there. You saw to my safety. You saw that I had fun! You were front seat to my dating life and all the different young women I got the chance to know during my youth years. In between those fun adventures, there were many stops at Jack in the Box or Culver's. These fast food joints may be the culprit for one or two stains on your beautiful upholstery. I was 16 or 17 and had my own car. I kept you clean and washed. I thought you were such a sweet ride. You weren't much, but for me, owning my own car made me feel cool. It didn't matter what type of car you were. I thought I was so cool with my Maroon 5 turned up loud, my windows rolled down, and my sunglasses on. We were so lucky that Mom and Dad made the investment in you to allow us to live a good, fun teenage life. Ultimately, we had so many memories growing up as teenager because we had you to get us from Point A to Point B! Thank you Baby Blue for always being there and taking us there.

### *Laura*

Baby Blue was definitely a step up from driving around mom's gold minivan, so I was pretty pumped when the keys fell to me. I drove baby blue around O'Fallon once Craig left on his mission and I have fond memories doing crazy shenanigans in that car like teepeeing, dropping off snowmen, etc with Jordan, Courtney, Emma, and others.

### *Christine*

When I got back from my mission, I was sooo relieved to have a familiar set of wheels. Jessica, Jared, an ex-fiancé and me (ha!) drove it back out to Provo together after Christmas break. That ended up being the vehicle that took MY Matt and me through our short and sweet courtship. I was so enthralled with Matt and busy with my studies that after knocking the side mirror off, I left it there dangling for months before finally getting it fixed!

### *Laura*

Post-mission, Baby Blue was mine again! Baby Blue was the perfect car, because she wasn't so crappy that no one wanted to ride in her, but she wasn't so nice that you felt bad if you spilled something or got a little dent in her. The perfect combination. One rainy day leaving work at Rivet I was going downhill and hydroplaned right into the back of a truck with a trailer hitch on the back. Baby Blue left that day with a trailer hitch square shape cut right out of the front, but other than that she was fine. The nice truck driver said not to worry and didn't even take my insurance. His truck was mostly fine and Baby Blue was the only injured participant. A more recent memory of Baby Blue's resilience was when I was pulling out of Dennis' tiny law office parking lot and a huge suburban high off the ground totally didn't even see me and rolled his wheel right into the side of baby blue. She was already on her last legs, so I just made sure I could still open and shut the door and moved on. When Craig brought up to me the story of his neighbor who needed a car, I knew it was Baby Blue's destiny. I think by then we had both Braeden's gray Corolla and either already had or were about to buy my white Corolla. It's nice to know she's out there somewhere, still chugging along with all her dents and bruises and keeping someone else safe.

### *Craig*

Baby Blue, Laura still had you as a car, even after she was married. She was ready to retire you to a junkyard but asked if she thought I knew of anyone who could use you. Luckily, we were in a ward in Millcreek where a family needed a car for their teenage son. It was the Yun family. I ministered to them. The teenage son was diagnosed with cancer and wasn't going to head off to college like originally planned. He was going to stay and work at home and continue to live with his parents but needed a car to get around. They were so grateful to have

this car and to not have to pay for it. It was so tender to watch this car that we loved so much as a family to go to this family, who was very much in need! A great end to a wonderful life as a family car in the Lewis family.

### *Mom*

We had so many years of children getting their drivers permit, one year after another for a while. Baby blue was a great kids car. It was a used car but we really needed/wanted it to last for as many years as possible. We felt fortunate to be able to provide for our children and thanked Heavenly Father for that blessing. I felt like I could pray about the need for the children to be safe in the car (each of them received a priesthood blessing after getting their drivers license). I also prayed that the vehicle could last for an extended period of time. It did. Our first five children, Jessica through Laura all drove the blue Altima.







## Memories with Mason

### *Emma*

Mason is truly the best dog I could've ever asked for. I love that dog so MUCH.

We got him when he was 8 weeks old. He was tiny! I remember on the drive home he slept the whole time and I was a little concerned thinking, "Is this how he's going to be? Just a couch potato?" But within a couple of hours, his goofy rambunctious personality came out!

I was dedicated to training him to be the best dog ever and I think it worked because he is such a wonderful family dog. He loves kids! He loves them so much to the point where he cries when he sees the neighbor kids outside because he wants to play with them.

One of my favorite things to do with Mason to this day is to walk through the field down to the creek. Years ago, I would take his leash off in the field and he'd go flying! Next thing you knew, he was submerged in the water. He loves to swim.

We've been down to the creek with him hundreds of times; it's like his second home. When he was young I remember him disappearing from the yard and we would drive straight to the creek knowing that he had gone to the creek.

Mason is my boy. He's been my buddy since 5th grade so it's sad to see him get older and a little more gray around the mouth. His silly friendly personality makes him easy to love. But I think the reason I love him the most is because he was always there for me. He saw me during the worst times and during the

happy times. When I look back to my childhood and growing up years, I'll always remember my Mase face!

### *Mom*

Emma was 11 when we got Mason as a puppy. We purchased Mason from Sievers Retriever in Meppen, Illinois. Mason has brought such joy and happiness to Emma and the rest of the family.

I think Mason came at such a good time in our life. Emma, Laura, Dad and I started to get outside with Mason enjoying the outdoors. I have fond memories of going on Saturday walks on the trail by our house and then walking through the creek. Mason was in heaven exploring and swimming in the creek.

Emma and I went to the dog parks around our area to socialize Mason with other dogs and he learned to be friendly with dogs and people. Emma and I loved being able to see lots of other breeds of dogs.

Emma read up on the proper training of dogs around children. From the beginning we tugged on his ears and also took away his food sometimes while he was eating. This helps dogs to not be territorial with their food. Emma was always finding ways to teach and train Mason. Mason has been so good with the grandchildren. They always wanted to see Mason when we FaceTime. He is gentle and when the children were little they could sit on his back. The grandchildren learned to love dogs because of Mason.

## Christmas Letters

1995

Now that we have a home computer, we can send out cute, festive Christmas letters to our family and friends. Aren't you lucky? I OK, so how do these letters go? I write about how well all of the children are doing in school and who is talking, walking, etc., I also describe how busy Laura and I are with PTA, my job, and our Church callings. Well, here it goes:

Our newest addition came in March of this year. Laura Abbie has been a wonderful baby! She is a joy to have around, and has a very pleasant personality... at least she used to – till those four honking teeth started coming in and she broke out into that bad rash! Were not kidding here.

Craig has figured out how to get up on the counter and steal ding dongs out of the cupboard when Mom's not watching. It's hard to get mad at such a cute 2½ year old that says, Sorry as soon as you confront him. He'll be 3 on December 23<sup>rd</sup>. Everyone in the Ward seems to know Craig. He has a way of catching your eye as he rips in and out of the chapel with Mom scurrying after him.

Bradley, who is now 6, is enjoying 1<sup>st</sup> grade. He loves football, baseball, basketball, soccer, and hockey. In fact, he loves just about anything having to do with sports. Wonder where he got that from? He's doing very well on the piano. Grandma Lewis is his teacher! He continues to love his Legos, anything have to do with dinosaurs, and has recently began to draw a lot.

Christine was baptized this year – the same day baby Laura was blessed. It was a pretty special occasion. Christine has done extremely well in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and is on the student council. She is Craig's buddy, and tries to convince him to continue playing house when he would rather start something else. She is our singer.

Jessica just turned 10 this past week. She was elected student council secretary/treasurer on the platform, "I'll keep the notes and guard the dough!" She continues to do well in the school's Reach program. She's been earning quite a bit of money cleaning her aunts' homes. She's turning into a young woman much too fast!

Laura is the miracle worker. She keeps this household running like a fine-tuned machine. I'm amazed at what she manages to accomplish despite everything else she has to do. There isn't a week that goes by that she isn't taking a meal to someone, making bread for the bus driver, or watching someone else's kids. She still works 2-3 days a month for Franklin Quest (the daily planner people) as a hostess for their local seminars. Oh, and she does awesome Homemaking activities. Brad, well, he has been with EDS for over 8 years now and continues to find new challenges. He still manages the 800# Unigraphics software support team in St. Louis. He is into his second year as a Stake High Councilor and the Stake Young Men President, and he's enjoying both callings a bunch! He's started getting a few gray hairs, but at least they're not falling out.

We have been very blessed this past year! We hope this letter finds you all happy and healthy. May the Lord bless you with peace and happiness during this season and the coming year!

## 1996

Dear Family & Friends:

It has been an eventful year for the Brad & Laura Lewis Family. We thought we'd send out a Holiday Letter and bring you all up-to-date.

The biggest event of the year for us was the sale of our first home on Ashford. We really weren't expecting to sell at the end of the summer like we did, but we were thrilled. We hated to leave the home where we had lived for the past 8 years, but it just didn't fit our growing family anymore. We were blessed to find a rental home owned by some members of our Ward that we could rent month-to-month while we prepared to have a home built in O'Fallon. We moved the end of September. Knowing that the children would be living in another school district,

we started them in their new grade school at the start of the month, so it was an easier transition for them. They have adjusted VERY well and just love their new school. They will finish the school year there, and then we hope to move into our new home in early June.

Jessica Elaine, who turns 11 tomorrow, has had a year of babysitting, cleaning for her aunts Elna and Elaine, experiencing braces, growing several inches, and having boys begin to call her. It's a good thing dad has never been the one that answered one of those calls. Maybe that explains all the phone calls with silence, a click, and then the unexplained dial tone. Jessica is an excellent student and an incredible help around the house.

Christine Luella, age 9, continues to be our singer. She is always humming a happy tune or making up a cute little song. She too has been doing a lot of cleaning for her aunts this year. Christine saw her closest friend Mandy move to O'Fallon earlier this year, but was excited to hear that's where we would be moving as well. Our new home will only be a few miles from Mandy's. She's excited about that. Christine is great with little Laura and is also a fine student.

Bradley William, who will be 8 in March, looks forward to his baptism. Bradley is our sensitive, soft-spoken child. He's also our resident Lego-maniac who can regularly be found creating some kind of Lego space ship or weapons system. He is very creative and has an incredible sense of symmetry. Bradley began playing a lot of football with his dad this Fall, catching imaginary touchdown passes in the corner of the front yard. He loves the playing and watching the sport as much as his dad.

Craig Neal, our soon-to-be 4 year old, had a year of incredible growth in his speech abilities. After at least two sets of ear tubes and weeks of speech therapy, he is talking up a storm now. It's exciting to see how he has progressed! Craig loves anything that looks like a sword, gun, or spear. He fights against invisible villains throughout the house. It's a wonder he hasn't put someone's eye out. He's always a big challenge to settle down at night.

Laura Abbie has taken over our home. She's 21 months, but running this place with more authority than both her parents combined! She knows how to effectively use the words, "No", "Yesh", and "Paci" (short for pacifier). She's pretty much off the bottle now, milk that is. She loves to carry dolls around the house and play with big brother Craig. They're very cute together, most of the time.



Mom Laura has had a very busy year – getting us all ready to move, working as a full-time mother and wife, while also doing part-time Hostess work for Franklin Quest seminars 2-3 days a month. She was recently called to be the 2<sup>nd</sup> counselor in the Young Women Presidency, serving with her mother who is the President. One highlight of her year has been the opportunity to work on the construction cleanup crew for the St. Louis Temple. She's been doing some dirty work, but has enjoyed the chance to be inside the temple as it has progressed.

Brad just finished his 5<sup>th</sup> year with EDS and his 9<sup>th</sup> year with the Unigraphics Division. He continues to manage the Customer Support operation in St. Louis. In November he had an opportunity to return to Brigham Young University and do some on-campus recruiting for EDS. It was a great experience! He loves his calling as the Stake Young Men President and High Councilor. He will miss seeing his dad in Stake meetings this next year. Neal was just released as the President of the St. Louis Missouri North Stake after almost 10 years.

We feel greatly blessed to have such wonderful family and friends. We've also been blessed with so many other wonderful things in 1996. We're especially grateful dad Lewis lived through his cardiac arrest last May and has had a full recovery!

Our hope and prayer is that this letter finds you and yours happy and healthy this Holiday Season! May the Lord bless you at this time and throughout the coming year as we all try a little harder to live a little better, to reach out to help others more, and treat those dear to us with more love and respect.

Love,  
Brad, Laura, Jessica, Christine, Bradley, Craig, & Laura  
The Lewis Family

## **1997**

Dear Family & Friends,

1997 has been the year of change for the Brad & Laura Lewis Family. Our change has included a new job for Brad, our new home in O'Fallon, a new neighborhood, a new Ward (church congregation), and new schools for the children. And now, something else – Laura was just called to serve as the Primary President (responsible for instruction of all children age 18 months to 12 years at church) in our newly divided Lake St. Louis Ward. Overall, I think we've taken all the

change pretty well in stride – we don't tend to get too stressed about stuff like this. It's a good thing, because we probably sweat the smaller stuff more than we should. Anyway, it's been a GREAT year filled with many rich blessings! Let's review how each member of the family is doing:

Laura Abbie (2½) – has turned into quite a character this past year! Sometimes Laura (the wife) and I just look at each other in disbelief with the things she says, does, and tries to do. She's had to become a pretty tough kid to put up with everything going on around her. She has been talking up a storm, and she knows just how to get her brothers and sisters to "come after her." She is well protected by big brother Craig.

Craig Neal (almost 5) has enjoyed another year of great progress in his speech ability. He's a sweet boy that loves to play with both his sister Laura and his big brother Bradley. He and Bradley will spend hours up in their room playing with Legos or "their men" (action figures). That room becomes somewhat of a danger zone at times with all the stuff they can get out. He has loved to explore the vacant lots and play in the dirt around our house since we moved. His muddy galoshes can often be found on the front step or in the yard – indicating he had a blast!

Bradley William (8½) is our sportsman. He can tell you about the stats of players from years ago and today, and he's become the St. Louis Cardinals' Mark McGwire's greatest FAN! His favorite sport is actually football. He comes by that honestly. Everyday when his dad comes home, Bradley has to tell him about his interceptions and touchdown receptions that day at recess. We'll probably try to get him on a peewee football team next fall. He didn't get to play on any baseball team this year – since that was right in the middle of our move from North County to O'Fallon. The latest craze for him is playing nerf football in the basement with dad and Craig. Oh, and we can't forget his plastic frog collection. The guy is really into spiders, frogs, and snakes. We just don't have any real ones yet.

Christine Luella (10½) continues to be our family music box, always humming or singing a happy tune. She loves to organize the playtime for little Laura and Craig as they play school, house, and a myriad of other things outside or in the basement. She's becoming a good babysitter too. Christine enjoyed a one-week 5<sup>th</sup> grade camp in October at a nearby State park. She came home with all kinds of stories of the fun they had. It was a very good experience for her. Her teacher lives just one street over from us. Christine continues to do well on the piano, being

assisted by Laura who has now taken on the challenge of being the children's piano teacher – since we moved a little too far away from Mom Lewis.

Jessica Elaine (12) just turned 12 a few days ago! We can hardly believe we have a daughter going into the Young Women's program (church program for girls age 12-18). Whoa! She is excited to be graduating from Primary, and she's more than ready to begin Young Women's. Jessica is doing more and more babysitting now – for us and for others. She even cleans our neighbor's home once each week, so she's got a nice little income going. We go to her often for loans. The interest on that debt is killing us! She loves the middle school she attends and started playing the violin this year – making wonderful progress too.

Laura is the miracle worker managing the children and trying to keep me on the straight and narrow. She got us moved into our new home, then enjoyed the summer with the kids down at our new neighborhood pool. They had a blast together. She's already making a name for herself in our church in O'Fallon after serving in the Primary Presidency for several months. She's becoming known in the Ward and the neighborhood as the lady that makes the wonderful French bread. We don't know what we'd do without her. As many of you know, Laura has been the master of wallpaper in our new house – making our new house seem so much more like a home.

Brad has settled into his new job as the Systems Engineer Manager at the St. Louis branch of CompuCom Systems. Let's just say it's been a learning experience, but he's still glad he made the change. He continues to enjoy his church service working with the young men age 12-18 and their leaders. He has enjoyed working to get his new yard in and completing various other little projects around the new house.

Well, that's the year-end rundown. We are so grateful for this time of year when we celebrate the Lord's birth. We hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year!

Brad & Laura Lewis Family

**1999**

Dear Family & Friends,

Happy Holidays to all of you from our family to yours! We hope and pray that this letter finds you enjoying the season and feeling excited to begin a new

millennium! 1999 was such a great year for our family. We accomplished a lot, grew a little older, and were blessed with so much. We'll try to fill you in on some of the highlights:

Brad (dad) spent a very busy first year at Ralston Purina Company. He worked some long days and tried to adjust to the commute home each evening. He has had a more normal schedule in November and December, so it has been more manageable. Brad was released from his church calling as Stake High Councilor and Young Men President in March and now serves as a Stake Missionary. The change was an adjustment for him, but he is enjoying having all his Saturdays back and not having to attend so many meetings.

Laura (mom) is still our miracle worker. She spends hours with the children each day reading, working together, and teaching life's great lessons, all the while managing to run a 7-person household. We feel so blessed that she can be at home with our children each day. She is an awesome Ward Primary President in her church responsibilities! She loves the children, and they love her. It is evident to all who watch her work.

Jessica (almost 14) is finishing up her last year at the middle school. She'll be a big freshman in high school next Fall. This thought fills her parents with unbelief. Can our baby daughter really be old enough to be going to high school this next year?! Jessica excels in her schoolwork and has enjoyed getting involved in school, church, and even a cheerleading class. Her most recent involvement has been in one of the lead roles in the school musical "The Boyfriend." She has turned into a beautiful young woman, both inside and out.

Christine (12½) was our Muny kid this year. She played the part of one of the orphans in the Muny production of Annie this past summer. She also sang and danced as one of 40 Muny Kids from the St. Louis area at over 30 different events/locations. We all missed the excitement of Annie when it was all over. It was a sacrifice for the entire family, and it brought us together as we worked toward this common goal. It was a neat experience all the way around. Christine has also done well in her schoolwork and has turned into more of our primary babysitter this past year.

Brad (10) is Mr. Football. He, his brother Craig, and up to 10 other neighborhood boys have managed to beat the grass in our backyard to a pulp with all their games. He has spent a lot of time on the computer this year playing some of his favorite computer games. This year Brad discovered clothes and hairstyles as he

could often be found getting some serious "mirror time." He is a great big brother to Craig and Laura, and he even finds time to make comments and tease his older sisters. His schoolwork has also been exceptional.

Craig (almost 7) is young Brad's shadow. He watches his big brother like a hawk and tries to model his every move. Craig is reading and spelling every word he sees now. He has done so well in school, particularly in his reading that his teacher could not believe that at the age of 3 he could only say a few words as a result of his ear troubles. He has come such a long way! Craig is a happy boy that enjoys each day to the point where he nearly collapses in bed each night.

Laura (4) has probably changed more than all of us. She is getting to be so grown up and is gaining the vocabulary of a teenager. She is her mother's big helper during the day while everyone else is off to school or work. Laura has also been known to be a little bossy at times. She enjoys playing with her brothers and sisters and her neighborhood friends. She is also quite content to play alone in her room for hours on end. It is quite interesting. Sometimes it's hard to open the door to her room, there is so much STUFF on the floor.

All in all, it's been a tremendous year. We sincerely hope you and yours have a wonderful Christmas and a super New Year 2000!

Love,  
Brad & Laura Lewis Family

## **2000**

Dear Family & Friends,

What a great 2000 it's been for the Lewis Family. The highlight of our year was the birth of baby Emma Patrice on October 23<sup>rd</sup>! She weighed in at 8 lbs. 1 oz. and was 21 in. long. The entire family looked forward to her coming with great anticipation, and she finally came! All of the children were there at the hospital to share in the experience. What a blessing little Emma has been to us. She is a happy baby that rarely cries. I wonder if that has anything to do with her being held about 22 hours out of every day?! At first the kids kind of fought over her, but that has settled down now.

The year began with Laura and Brad enjoying an unbelievable week on a cruise to the Caribbean! We loved being together with Brad's parents, brothers, and sisters, and spouses. Thanks dad and mom Lewis for making this possible! We will



never forget it. In fact, it took weeks after our return home to even quit thinking about it.

Jessica (15) had a busy year. She was an orphan in a local young people's production of Oliver. In the summer she enjoyed her first "Especially For Youth" conference with her

cousin Ashley at the University of Kansas.

Jessica is a big freshman at the new Fort Zumwalt West High School and loves early morning seminary. In fact, she says it is, by far, the highlight of her day.

We've noticed her

spending a lot more time on the phone and email this year. The only benefit we see from that is less calls getting through trying to sell us aluminum siding and thermal windows!



Christine (13½) was selected to be in the Muny's production of Sound of Music this past summer, but she chose not to participate so that she could attend Girl's Camp. She absolutely loved her first year at camp and was even able to complete both her 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year camp certification. She had missed last year due to the Muny production of Annie she was in. Christine was also in the local production of Oliver as an orphan. I think she's being typecast into orphan roles. She is in eighth grade where she takes Math and Science at the middle school, and then comes home for home school the balance of the day.

Bradley "Brad" (11½) continues to be a sports fanatic. The highlight of his day is to come home from school and play football or baseball with his brother and neighborhood friends. He started the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at the middle school this year. Once he became accustomed to the overcrowded halls, he began to enjoy it more. He has really been an active 11-year-old Boy Scout and will easily have his Star rank by his 12<sup>th</sup> birthday in February! His goal is to be an Eagle at 13.

Craig (nearly 8) is a sports nut like his older brother. He didn't stand a chance with both his dad and brother hooked. Craig is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and watches out for younger sister Laura on the bus to school each day. He enjoys playing the piano and will be baptized after his 8<sup>th</sup> birthday later this month. His big

accomplishment for the year will be reading the Book of Mormon before his birthday.

Laura (5½) is our kindergartner. She loves school and her teacher Mrs. Bailey. Isn't that the perfect Kindergarten teacher name, Mrs. Bailey? Laura loves being with a lot of girls in her class since she is surrounded by boys in our neighborhood. She can often be found busily playing with her dollhouse or coloring. She has adjusted pretty well to no longer being the baby in the family.

Laura (30 something) spent most of the year "carrying" baby Emma. She always looks so beautiful when she is pregnant. She literally glows. Laura loves having a new baby in our family and absolutely works miracles with Emma and the other children. Her responsibilities at Church have changed from Ward Primary President to Stake Young Women's Secretary. She is now serving with her mother, who is the President. They form a powerful team and have already made an impact on the lives of young women in our Stake!

Brad (also 30 something) completed his second full year as a manager in the Information Technology Department at Ralston Purina Company. He has a new boss that he really enjoys, and the work is challenging as he leads 5 teams of technology specialists through PC support, Y2K projects, and hardware/software deployments. He has adjusted, as much as can be expected, to the 75-mile round-trip commute. The job makes it all worth it.

What a super Year 2000 we've had. We hope that yours has been equally as great. Have a wonderful holiday season everyone and a rewarding new year. Take time to appreciate the blessings of each day and tell the ones you love, "I love You."

Brad and Laura Lewis Family

## **2001**

Dear Family & Friends,

It can't really be time to write another year-end letter, can it? Where did 2001 go? Why is it that each year passes more quickly than the last? What a great year it's been though. Our picture, included with this letter, was taken at Pere Marquette park in Illinois after we camped together this past fall. What fun! Now I'll try to run you through the year for our family:

We'll start with the youngest, Emma. Emma is now nearly 14 months old. She's been walking for almost 6 months already, which was way too soon for us. She has been such a joy this year as we've watched her grow. We love to sit around her as a family and have her entertain us with her antics. It's been interesting the last few weeks trying to keep her from pulling down the Christmas tree and ripping up our Nativity scene. We can't wait to enjoy a 2<sup>nd</sup> Christmas with her.

Laura (6) is quickly growing into a little lady. She towers over most of the kids in her

school class, and can still out-eat me on spaghetti night. She absolutely loves 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and is always telling her teacher about little sister Emma. With the bus driver strike in our school district, and the resulting carpools, she often gets a ride home with her teacher Mrs. Eikermann. She's still young enough that it's cool to be seen doing that.

Craig (9 on Sunday) has had a fun year. He has enjoyed 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and makes friends easily. He's our happy-go-lucky guy who loves life. He plays ball at every opportunity – wiffle ball in the front yard or touch football in the back. He likes going to cub scouts each week and playing computer games. He's studying up for his spelling bee at school. His quick wit has caught us off guard several times this past year. What a kick he is!

Brad (12) earned his Life Scout recently and is already working to get his Eagle Scout Project approved. He hopes to get his last 2 merit badges and finish his project soon after his 13<sup>th</sup> birthday! He purchased a drum set earlier this year, so our walls shake during certain times of the day. Our neighbors have to wonder what is going in "that house with all the kids!"

Christine (14) is a freshman this year, half-day at school and half-day in home school. She's also in her first year of early morning seminary, 5:30 a.m. every day. She's very involved as a member of the Rising Generation Youth Chorus that performs music and dance in public and church settings in St. Louis and



surrounding areas. She loves all the time she gets to spend with Emma in the afternoons.

Jessica just turned the big 16 this year. She had a fun surprise party in late November! She hopes to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> licensed driver in our home soon. She better start practicing. Jessica is also a member of the Rising Generation Youth Chorus along with her sister. She thinks she now needs to be doing something with her friends all the time, and is being fairly patient with parents learning how to raise 16-year-olds.

Laura (mom) has focused a lot of her time and attention on little Emma this past year, and she has managed to do that while still keeping everything else in the Lewis household running smoothly. She is amazing. She's fortunate enough to be able to stay home and spend these important years with our children. Laura has also been actively involved with the Young Women of the Church serving as secretary in the Stake YW organization. She enjoys this opportunity a great deal!

Brad (dad) now works for Nestlé Purina PetCare Company, having been just recently acquired by the Nestlé, the largest food company in the world! They are establishing the St. Louis operation as the headquarters of the entire pet food business operation, so the future looks bright. The biggest news this year has been his call to serve as a bishop in his congregation. This has been a humbling responsibility that is teaching him a great deal. Craig and Laura think it's cool to have a dad that's bishop.

We hope that all of you have had a wonderful year and that your holiday season is a peaceful one. May the Lord bless you and your family in 2002.

## **2002**

Dear Family & Friends,

Happy Holidays to one and all! We hope your 2002 was a great one! Where to begin?

Our family picture, included with this letter, was taken in August on the banks of the Mississippi River in Nauvoo, IL where our Church has so much important history. We were there for a few days as part of the 2002 Nelson Cousins Reunion. It was a wonderful time!

Well, let me run through some of the highlights for our family. This could take awhile, so I'm warning ya:

Emma Patrice just turned 2 in October. She has perfected her native tongue of Emma-ish. Just when we were able to begin to understand what she was trying to say to us, she began speaking English later in the year! She is such a joy to have around, but don't mess with her. She'll come after you – and get in your face real quick.

Laura, or "little Laura" as we refer to her, is 7, and soon to be 8. She is excited for her baptism in March. Laura is our child that absolutely adores going to school, learning, and spending time in class with her teacher. We get glowing reports of the energetic, helpful personality she brings to her class. She loves to read, and can often be found cuddled up somewhere with her nose in a chapter book.

Craig is coming up on another birthday. He'll be 10 on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. He continues to be a sports nut – playing everything that has anything to do with a

ball, running, jumping, passing, or shooting. He has become pretty good on the basketball court after having played so much street ball with his older brother Brad and the neighborhood gang. He is on his first organized basketball team, which should be great fun. This year he was a bit injury-prone, breaking his arm in the summer playing basketball in front of our house (we even have the fall on video tape) and getting a black eye while playing basketball prior to a recent Cub Pack meeting.

Brad will be 14 in February. The highlight of his year had to have been completing his Eagle Scout project and earning his Eagle rank! For his project, he built a 10-foot long footbridge for a bike path in Castlewood State Park. It turned out really well! He is relieved to be finished with his Eagle, for sure. He is also majorly into sports, but seems to be settling on basketball as his favorite as well. He was selected to play on the middle school's Junior Jaguar team – a feeder team for the high school basketball team. He's enjoying the practices and games, and has developed into quite a ball-handler and shooter.





Christine is our High School sophomore now. Wow! It doesn't seem possible. She is having another fantastic year in school! She sings as a member of the Rising Generation Youth Chorus for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row, and continues to enjoy sharing her talents on stage. She seems so comfortable up there! Christine was recently called to serve as the Mia Maid class president at Church (young women ages 14-15), and has a very sensitive, caring spirit. She is always concerned for those less fortunate.

Jessica is now 17 years old, a junior in school. Can you believe it? We're already beginning to think about things we need to do as a family just one more time before Jessica goes off to college in just a year and a half! She began working her first real job this year – she's in "production" at the local Steak 'n Shake restaurant and can make a mean chocolate malt. She seems to enjoy the work and her friends there. The money is just stacking up in her savings account! Haha. She is always on the go and can often be found with her 35 lb. backpack doing homework.

Laura (mom) survived another year, and is more beautiful than ever. I appreciate all she does for me and our family more each and every year! It's just her and little Emma at home in the mornings, but they manage to find just a few things that need doing before the older girls start coming home for ½ day home school. Laura was recently asked to be a member of the Boy Scout Troop Committee, with an emphasis on advancement to Eagle. She's working with those young men that seem to be stuck between Life and Eagle. I know she'll be very successful helping them and their parents.

Brad (dad) enjoyed a successful year with the new Nestlé Purina PetCare Company. His team of people had much to accomplish in order to ensure a smooth blending of the two companies, their computer systems and support services. It's already been 1 year since Nestlé acquired Ralston Purina. In just a few months, Brad will hit his 2-year mark as Bishop of the local LDS Church congregation. It continues to be a great learning experience for him and has brought many blessings to the entire family. 2003 should bring the start of a new Ward building in Lake St. Louis to accommodate the growth of the Church in this area. It's thrilling to see.

Well, enough of the standard holiday letter! We love and appreciate you all. May the Lord's choicest blessings be yours this year as you do your very best to follow the example set by the Savior Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Be Good!

Love,  
The Brad & Laura Lewis Family

**2003**

Dear Family & Friends,

Happy Holidays to everyone! I'm sure you really don't want to read another long, drawn-out letter about another family with a bunch of kids and all the things they did in the past year, but that's just too bad. We're not breaking from tradition! You get it anyway. We let most of the kids write their sections this year.

Emma just turned 3 in October. Her mom is her nursery leader at church, but not for long, because soon she'll graduate to the Sunbeam class in Big Primary. She loves to draw and color, play with dolls and stuffed animals, and the kitchen and dish set she received for her birthday. She is excited to now be in a "big girl" bed. Her older brothers and sisters like to give her a lot of attention, which she absolutely LOVES! She is now saying funny stuff every day.

Laura (8) is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Mrs. Midyett's class. She is the student council representative for her class, so she serves with older brother Craig on that council. She has made a lot of new friends this year, and is having so much fun with the girls in the Ward (Church congregation) at Activity Days. She is a big help with her little sister Emma. She was baptized this year and had her family, both sets of grandparents, and friends from church there to celebrate the special day,

Craig is almost 11 and is in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in Mrs. McKeon's class. He is involved in many school activities, including choir and student council – where he is the student council president for the school – his campaign was "Just Do It – Vote for Craig Lewis." He's also on the safety patrol and is a member of the computer club. His parents recently bought him a suit for Church and his dad thinks he looks like a missionary. He says he has good memories from our awesome Thanksgiving with family and our Nelson's Cousins Reunion at Moon Lake, UT. He misses his Grandpa and Grandma Lewis and cousins who recently moved from this area to Utah. He will earn his Cub Scout Arrow of Light Award this month and begin Boy Scouts at the start of the new year. Another Eagle Scout on the way!

Brad (14) started high school and seminary (early morning religion class) this year. His summer had many highlights, including his first Especially for Youth

conference, Stake Youth Conference, and a high adventure Scout trip of rock climbing, bike riding, and camping in Wisconsin. He also made the Rising Generation Youth Choir, joining his two older sisters in that regional singing group. He started half-day home school this year and has already finished a year of Social Studies in just 10 weeks. He is anticipating his 15<sup>th</sup> birthday in February when he can get his permit to drive motor vehicles (legally).

Christine is 16 years old, and will turn 17 in a few months. The highlight of her year was receiving her driver's license after many stressful drives with her mother constantly clutching the handle of the door. She is currently working at Hometown Buffet so that she can save up for college. She is not looking forward to her sister Jessica leaving for BYU next fall. She also misses Grandpa and Grandma



Lewis tons and is sad that we can't spend Christmas with them this year.

Jessica just turned 18 this week and is a senior. Can you believe it? She completed her application to BYU and sent it off a few days

ago. She is hoping for a speedy response. She is only up at the school for 3 hours a day and is loving her schedule. All she does in those 3 classes is lift weights, sing, and read. Couldn't get any better than that!! Her hard work the first 3 years of high school paid off. Jessica is still working at Steak n' Shake. It's been almost a year and a half now, but she loves it. She is really starting to save her money well to prepare for college. If she ever has any spare time, she LOVES hanging out with her friends and just chillin'. She's going to miss her family so much when she goes away to college.

Laura (mom) often wonders what keeps her so busy. The days and weeks seem to fly by. She is grateful that she gets to be a stay-at-home MOM. This year was busy working with the Stake Young Women organization and the "Modesty is Always in Style" Fashion show. The local Dillard's department store even went out looking for modest Homecoming dresses because of some of the young women and their leaders talking to their buyers. She has since been released from her

position with the Young Women and now helps in the Nursery each Sunday. Laura turned 40 in August, but no one believes she's that age.

Brad (dad) is stunned that another year has passed so quickly. He also hit the big 4-0 this year. The hair's not falling out too rapidly yet, but it's turning a color he likes to call "wisdom" gray. Things were a bit tense at work at different times this year, but they are finishing strong and he is feeling relatively comfortable about the future with Nestle Purina. He is approaching 3 years as Bishop of 1 of the 6 growing local LDS Church congregations in St. Charles County. He is so grateful for the lessons he is learning from this experience and the wonderful support he receives from the family – as he is often gone in the evenings and nearly all day on Sundays. He was able to enjoy a weekend in early November with Brad, Christine, and Jessica in Independence, MO visiting church history sites and then a separate trip to South Bend, IN with the boys to take in a Notre Dame vs. BYU college football game. It was a blast!

As previously mentioned, we miss having Darin and Aimee and their children and mom and dad Lewis here close to us. Both moved from the O'Fallon area within the last few months. It doesn't feel the same around here, but we are excited for them and the new lives they are starting there in Utah. Laura and Brad are anxious to see mom and dad Lewis and all the siblings and spouses at the March 2004 7-day Caribbean Cruise!

Hey, you made it through another Lewis Family Christmas letter! Congratulations. We love and appreciate all of you. May you experience a whole bunch of happiness, peace, and good health this holiday season and during the coming year!

Love,  
The Brad & Laura Lewis Family

## **2004**

Dear Family & Friends,

We thought we'd use the time between Christmas and New Years to get our letter together this year. Our picture was taken at the St. Louis Zoo last week. Each member of the family provided their own year-in-review. Here's a bit of an update:

Emma (4) is Mom's shadow. Emma loves to work at home on preschool activities and loves to write her name and color. Emma has a little playgroup with her friend Lacy from church.

Laura (9) likes her 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher Mrs. Vogelsang, and she continues to love school. She recently got glasses and is happy that she can see. Her favorite things to do in school are writing and being with her friends. Laura's favorite hobbies are reading, playing the piano, and singing. She also loves to dance. Laura is a big help around the house with her younger sister Emma. At Church, Laura has many friends that go to Activity Days. She also likes to play sports that the neighbor kids play. Laura is a very creative girl that loves to make crafts for Emma.

Craig (12) is now a deacon at Church and will have his first Sunday to pass the sacrament on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January. He likes to be

organized in his school work and enjoys Middle School. He's currently playing on the school's Junior Jaguars basketball team and loves it! In scouting, he's First Class and soon to be a Star. He drives mom nuts when he stays up late watching sports with his dad. He recently had his first chance to go to an NFL game, the Rams vs. Eagles on Monday Night Football. He was in heaven!

This year for Brad (15) has been full of driving with his driver's permit, hanging out with his friends, and half-day home school. He goes to West High School for four hours each day where he enjoys four fun, but educational, classes: Spanish, drafting, key-boarding, and P.E. If he stays on pace, he will be finished with High School during this next summer. In his leisure time (which he has a lot of) he plays the piano, plays games on the computer, and plays basketball. Yes, it's a rigorous schedule, but he somehow finds a way to fit it all in. He looks forward to driving and dating (in that order) when he turns 16 in less than 2 months. He also desperately needs to find a job to pay for both.

Christine (17) a senior at Fort Zumwalt West High school just found out this week that she was accepted to Brigham Young University! Christine has been working at the YMCA where she looks after children in the nursery and she absolutely





loves her job! She is working hard to save money for college next year. Christine and Bradley both attend early morning seminary at 6:00 a.m. each morning and then go on to school from church. Christine is in her fourth year with the Rising Generation Youth Chorus and has enjoyed being involved with that group.

Jessica (19) a freshman at Brigham Young University enjoyed her first semester out on her own. She was pretty homesick at first but eventually eased into college life. She wouldn't be able to survive without her cell phone, as she talks to her mom at least once a day. She had a tough schedule but ended up doing pretty well. She didn't have a lot of time to spare but always made time for hanging out with her friends. She has been home for two weeks for Christmas break and flies out on Monday. She has loved being home with her family and catching up on old times but she looks forward to going back to Brigham Young on Monday.

Laura (mom) was able to go out to Salt Lake City in October to General Conference and see our prophet and leaders speak. She was also able to visit with Jessica and see how she was doing out at college. Laura is working in the Nursery at church and is also the Scout Committee Chairperson. The days and weeks seem to fly by as we try to keep up with the various activities we are all involved in.

Brad (dad) finished up his 6<sup>th</sup> year at Nestlé Purina PetCare as a manager in the IT Department. It is shaping up to be a very good year for the company! Keep buying those Purina products for your dogs and cats! Brad is also approaching his 4<sup>th</sup> year as Bishop of one of the local LDS Church congregations. This year was extra exciting because he was able to participate in the planning for a new Church building just completed in Lake St. Louis. Once it was finished, a new congregation was formed called the O'Fallon Ward, and he was called as Bishop of that new Ward. The building is absolutely beautiful and will be a great addition to that area. The last few months have been some of the busiest he's ever experienced, but also some of the more rewarding.

We send our love and wishes for another great year for you and your family. We invite all you out-of-staters to come through and visit whenever you get the chance.

Sure Love Ya,  
The Lewis Family

## 2005

Dear Family and Friends:

Here's the latest after another year with the Brad & Laura Lewis family:

Jessica just turned 20 years old on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December. Jessica's college experience just keeps getting better. She loves teaching the gospel doctrine Sunday school class for about 60-70 college students. Jessica loves rooming with her cousin Ashley and just hopes that Ash doesn't get married anytime soon. She is thinking about a major in Social Work or something along those lines.

Christine (18) finished off her senior year and headed out to Brigham Young University with her sister for the fall semester. She enjoys being a freshman and has already learned a ton about what it takes to make it on your own. After much hard work and lots of studying, she earned straight A's her first semester in college. She has no idea what her major is yet, but hopes to figure that out this next semester.

Bradley (16) has had an eventful year. He started driving in February and started working in May. While finishing up his home school high school curriculum, he started going to the Community College and is enjoying the classes and flexible schedule. Bradley is in the Rising Generation Youth Chorus. The quality of the

group keeps getting better. In his free time, Bradley is down in his studio, playing his keyboard and writing new songs.

Craig has started his eagle project at the ripe old age of 12 – he'll be 13 on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, Joseph Smith's birthday. He has

been enjoying after-school sports. He has been working hard in school and likes his teachers. Craig is serving as the deacon quorum president for our ward. He is prepping for basketball season that will begin next year. He loves playing on the computer and with his friends.



Laura will turn 11 on March 17<sup>th</sup>. She is growing like a weed and is almost taller than her older sister Christine. She loves school and her teachers. She enjoys playing sports, especially basketball. She keeps an eye on her younger sister, Emma. She just saw "Wicked" at the Fox with her mom and absolutely loved it.

Emma just turned 5 on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. She loves to sing and dance and entertain her older brothers and sisters who adore her. She is going to be starting kindergarten in the fall and mom is helping her with her numbers and letters. She loves to collect little things and trinkets all around the house and carry them around with her. She's our little squirrel.

Laura (mom) is excited to relax at Grandma and Grandpa Lewis's for a few days this Christmas season. She keeps busy preparing Emma for kindergarten, acting as a chauffeur for the kids many activities, helping out with the Inter-Faith Partnership, and with her church calling as the Laurel Advisor. She has also undertaken the huge task of tearing down wallpaper with the help of the kids to prepare for a big painting project. She loves being a Mom and having all of her children home for this Holiday season.

Brad (dad) has now been with Nestle Purina for 7 years as a manager in their IT department. He's busier than he's ever been there at work. Life at home and Church also keeps him hopping. He doesn't have a lot of time to get in trouble, which he says is good. After serving over 4½ years as the Bishop of our Church congregation, he was recently called to serve in the Stake Presidency working with 10 different congregations in St. Louis, St. Charles, and Lincoln counties. He is excited to serve with so many great men and women throughout the area! Our family has been richly blessed this year.

We hope and pray that you experience peace and goodwill this Christmas season and prosperity and happiness in 2006. Thank you for your love, your friendship, and your examples. We love you!

The Lewis Family

**2006**

Dear Family & Friends,

Here's the Lewis Family Holiday update...

Jessica (21), a junior at Brigham Young University, received her Church mission call to serve in the Baltic Mission for eighteen months. This mission covers the countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. She will go into the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah on January 17 where she will spend 9 weeks beginning to learn the Latvian language. From there she will fly to Latvia, where she'll stay until she completes her mission in July 2008.

Christine (19), a sophomore at Brigham Young University, will be leaving January 9 for a five-month stay in Zhongshan, China. There she will be teaching English to Chinese children as part of an International Language Program. She will also be able to travel and experience a different culture. Her job at the YMCA doing summer camp for children was great training for this adventure.

Bradley (17) has enjoyed his classes at St. Charles Community College and will complete his Associates Degree in May. He was able to do this at a young age by graduating from high school early via home school. He continues to compose music and play the piano as much as time permits. This is his 4<sup>th</sup> year as a member of

the Church's Rising Generation Youth Chorus.



Craig (almost 14) will finish up 8<sup>th</sup> grade this next year and start High School in the fall. He's excited to have finished his Eagle Scout project and to have passed his final Eagle Board of

Review. Craig's Middle School Junior Jaguar basketball team has started their regular season, and he is in heaven as starting point guard for their "A" team.

Laura (11) just started middle school (6<sup>th</sup> grade) this year and is doing very well. She loves to talk on the phone and e-mail her friends. Laura takes voice lessons and has learned some Italian songs. She is also enjoying playing on a Junior Jaguar basketball team. She's always smiling and telling us a story about something that happened to her.

Emma (6) is in half-day afternoon kindergarten and loving her first experience with school. She made her singing debut at the Nelson's Thanksgiving sharing

event singing the old-time favorite "You Are My Sunshine." Emma gets a lot of special attention from each of her brothers and sisters.

Laura (Mom) is looking ahead to the fall of 2007 when she plans to take some classes at the St. Charles Community College. Emma will be in 1<sup>st</sup> grade by then and gone all day. Laura teaches the Young Women, ages 16-18, at church and enjoys the challenge of keeping their attention. She is so grateful for the great blessing it has been to be home with all of our children until they go to school.

Brad (Dad) turned 43 this year, but doesn't feel old yet. He has had quite a busy year with work responsibilities, Church assignments, and family fun. He tried something new and tackled putting ceramic tile in both upstairs bathrooms in our home! We won't talk about how long it took him to complete the job. He loves being home a bit more during the evenings than he was with his previous Church assignment as bishop.

What a great year we've had! How blessed we feel. We hope and pray this letter and family update finds you well, happy, and enjoying good health. May we all find peace in the knowledge that Christ our Savior came to earth as a babe, lived, died for us, was resurrected ... and will come again.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

The Brad & Laura Lewis Family

## **2007**

Dear Family and Friends:

Another Year has come and gone! We want to wish each of you a Merry Christmas and hope you find joy in this holiday season. We love this time of year when we receive letters and photos of your families and catch up on what you have been up to during the year.

Jessica left for a mission (teaching others about our church) in the country of Latvia. In January she went to the church's Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah to begin learning the Latvian language. She was there for nine weeks and was ready to leave the beginning of March. She flew to Houston, Texas then London, England and then on to Riga, the capital of Latvia. The first area that she served in was Liepaja, Latvia – on the coast of the Baltic Sea. She is now in Riga, Latvia, the capital, where she will serve until the end of June 2008. Jessica e-mails



us each Wednesday, and we eagerly await her letters. We share her letters with family and friends. We will be able to speak with her by phone on Christmas day. Jessica has done well with the Latvian language and is able to speak with the people there.

Christine had an exciting experience in China this year teaching English to Chinese children. She was in China for almost six months with the International Language Program. Christine loved the opportunity to be in a different country, travel to different areas in China and teach the Chinese children. She has decided to major in Elementary Education with a minor in English as a second language. Christine has also decided to serve a mission for our church after this next semester of school!

Bradley graduated from St. Charles Community College with his Associates Degree and was then accepted to Brigham Young University as a transfer student this year. He worked during the summer cleaning carpets and earning money for school. Christine and Bradley headed out to Provo, Utah the end of August where he has thoroughly enjoyed college life there in Provo. He is planning to major in Advertising and seeing where that leads him.

Craig has eased into his freshman year at Fort Zumalt West High School. He attends early morning religious instruction we call Seminary at 6:00 a.m. Monday through Friday.

This has been an adjustment, but Craig hasn't complained. He made the freshman basketball team at the High School and that keeps him very busy. Craig is also enjoying his first year in the Rising Generation Youth Chorus. Thus far, he has performed in Old Town St. Charles, at a Habitat for Humanity event and at the Galleria Mall.

Laura is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade at the middle school, so we have children in three different schools. She went from taking voice lessons to piano lessons. Her piano teacher says she has good technique. When Christine and Bradley left for college we decided to put each of the children in their own rooms. Laura has helped in the decorating of her room. She is a lot of fun around the house, at school and at church.



Emma is enjoying First Grade but mentions how much she misses Kindergarten. She is learning how to be a good friend and enjoys playing with friends at school and at church. Mom started Emma on piano this year and she has played for a talent show at church and for the Nelson family at Thanksgiving. Emma turned seven and is starting to read the Book of Mormon this year before she is baptized.

Laura decided to take an American History class at St. Charles Community College this fall. She has enjoyed every minute of learning. Laura is involved for the third year in organizing a Celebration of Faith with many different Faith groups involved. She also helps to find events for the Rising Generation Youth Group (Craig's singing group) to perform at. Laura is grateful to be a mother.

Brad is busy with family, church, and work. He takes good care of all of us. Brad enjoyed a trip out to Utah with Craig and Laura in October where he was able to visit with his family for several days. That was a special trip for all of them. He just completed his 9<sup>th</sup> year working in the IT Department at Nestle Purina PetCare.

Well, that wraps up another year-end report for the Lewis clan. Thanks for reading. We're thankful to have loving family and friends like you. We are grateful to celebrate the birth and life of our Savior Jesus Christ at this time of year. May the Lord's choicest blessings be yours this Christmas and throughout the coming year!

Sure Love Ya, The Lewis Family

## **2008**

Dear Family and Friends,

We are grateful for your love and friendship and for this special time of year when we celebrate our Savior's birth. Since its December, it must also be time for another rundown on the Lewis family—

Jessica: Returned in June from serving a mission in Latvia. She was married in August to Jared Johns in the Mount Timpanogos Temple in Utah. They had dated during her freshman and sophomore years. They are attending Brigham Young University, working, and enjoying married life.

Christine and Bradley: Both attended BYU winter semester and made preparations to serve missions for the church. Christine was called to serve in the Italy Catania Mission for eighteen months. Bradley was called to serve in the Utah Salt Lake



City mission for two years speaking Spanish. Their responsibility is to teach others about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They are working hard and enjoying the people they serve.

Craig (almost 16): Just made the West High School Junior Varsity basketball team and is counting down the days until his sixteenth birthday. He is looking forward to driving and the prospects of "group" dating.

Laura (13): Is in the Eighth grade and last year of middle school. She was in the play *Cats* at St. Charles Community College last spring. She is on the middle school Junior Jaguars basketball team. She keeps us energized!

Emma (8): Loves animals, enjoys drawing, reading and writing stories. She is also enjoying playing the piano. She was baptized in November by her dad, a very special day for her.

Laura (Mom): Spent a lot of time helping get Christine and Bradley ready to go on their missions, preparing for Jessica to get home, and then Jessica's wedding. She enjoyed taking an English class up at the Community College.

Brad (Dad): Celebrated his 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with Nestlé Purina. Suffered his first broken bone (right arm) during the annual Thanksgiving family football game, complete with surgery involving 2 screws and a small plate to help the healing process.

We have had a wonderful year, enjoying time with Brad's family cruising the Caribbean, and out to Utah twice as a family. Jessica was able to visit with Christine and Bradley in the Missionary Training Center before they left for their missions – a special reunion for them! And Thanksgiving week was a fun time with the Nelson gang as always.

We send our love and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and the Happiest of New Years!

The Lewis Family

2009

Dear Family and Friends:

Is it really time to write another one of these again? Well, another year has passed, and we as a family feel blessed to report that we are all happy, healthy and grateful for the wonderful and eventful year we've enjoyed.

Dad keeps pretty busy with his calling in the Stake Presidency for our church but his favorite place continues to be home sweet home. The highlight of his year was celebrating his 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with Mom in Italy, where they picked up their daughter Christine from serving her LDS mission.

Mom's life is her children... and they keep her plenty busy. Lucky for her she still has three of them at home. She too enjoyed her first real trip outside the country to Italy with her best friend. She has enjoyed taking classes every now and then up at the community college; this year she took a Spanish class.

Jared and Jessica (24) have been married for a year and a half now and loving every minute of it. They are so good together. Jared is working really hard and doing very well as a Pre-med undergrad, and Jessica works two jobs and takes two classes. She is anxiously awaiting her graduation in April.

Christine (22) returned early November from serving an LDS mission in Italy for 18 months. The transition turned out to be a lot more difficult than both she and her family thought, but she's received a lot of love, support, and patience from those around her. She's back at BYU this winter semester and moving on with life and all it has to offer.

Bradley (20) is still working hard as a full-time missionary for our church in the Salt Lake City Mission. He loves

the work and is an incredible example to his entire family. Some recent exciting news is that Bradley sent in an audition tape and was accepted as a performing missionary in Nauvoo. This means that weeks after being released as a full-time



missionary in April he will be set apart as a part-time performing missionary for another 4 months.

Craig (17) is enjoying his time off of the Community College right now. This was his first year there and he was extremely busy with classes and work. He is learning how to use his time wisely with so many things to do. He is also our computer wiz kid. He has enjoyed his 3<sup>rd</sup> year in Rising Generation Youth Chorus and continues to take voice lessons and play piano.

Laura (14) has transitioned well to High School. She has a really fun group of friends and is always excited to "hang out" with them on the week end. Laura continues to play the piano and take voice lessons as well. She is enjoying her first year of Rising Generation Youth Chorus. She is going to be in the High School Spring musical, Willy Wonka.

Emma (9) loves being at home. She likes carrying around her new friend Brady (her guinea pig). Emma enjoys art and was asked to be in the Art club at school. She also took a fun art class at the St. Charles Community College. Emma continues to love animals and reading about them

From our family to yours we wish you a Happy New Year. We feel so grateful to know each one of you and to have been blessed by the example of your lives.

The Lewis Family

## **2010**

Dear Family & Friends,

Jessica and Jared Johns are in Provo, Utah. Jessica graduated from BYU and is working full-time for a company that does language translation. Jared will graduate April of 2011 in Exercise Science and will be applying to Medical School shortly after that. You can learn more about them on their blog that Jessica keeps up to date at [jandjjohns.blogspot.com](http://jandjjohns.blogspot.com).

Christine and Matt Swensen met on their missions in Italy, reconnected again at BYU and then were married July 20<sup>th</sup> of this year. They both attend Brigham Young University. Christine, Matt, and Bradley have formed their own band, have played at a couple of events and enjoy sharing their love of music with those willing to listen. Their group is called, Amiamo, translated from Italian means "We love." You can find one of their songs, Phone line, on iTunes.



Bradley returned from his two-year Spanish-speaking mission in Salt Lake City, Utah where he had a wonderful experience teaching others about our church. He promptly went and served a shorter mission up in Nauvoo, Illinois as a performing missionary. He sang and danced about events that happened in Nauvoo. Nauvoo is an historic city for the church. We enjoyed going to see him perform throughout the spring and summer. He had some incredible experiences there before returning to BYU in the fall.

Craig is working on his 2<sup>nd</sup> year at St. Charles Community College. He is spending most of his time on his schoolwork because he is working hard to get into BYU. He still enjoys playing basketball and other sports in his free time. He just recently started a new part-time job working at a local rest home. Craig is the president of the Rising Generation Youth Chorus, a church choir with youth from around the St. Louis area.

Laura is a sophomore and enjoyed being in the play *Willy Wonka* and helping as stage manager for another. She also sings in the Rising Generation Youth Chorus. She taught voice lessons to young girls this summer and has one piano student that she is working with during the school year. Laura is saving up money for Spring Break because she wants to fly out to Utah and spend time with her brother and sisters out there.



Emma is in fourth grade and enjoys her teacher Mrs. Michalka. Her greatest excitement is looking forward to getting a dog in the new year!!! We can't believe we're really going to do this. We hope the dog

will get along with Brady, our Guinea pig. Emma continues to play the piano and is also enjoying her weekly hip-hop class.

Laura (mom) has been enjoying this year and has just finished up with a Speech class at St. Charles Community College. She prepared for Christine and Matt Swensen's Wedding and we all had a great time at their reception in Utah!!! Laura is in charge of close to 20 Activity Day girls, ages 8-11, at church.

Brad has now been with Nestle Purina for 12 years. It looks like he'll soon be another one of the many employees who has a dog, so he'll feel so much more comfortable working for a pet food company! Haha. In his Church responsibilities, Brad has been serving in the Stake Presidency for 5 years this month, and he enjoys it very much. He feels a great love and appreciation for the good people of the 11 congregations that make up the St. Louis North Stake. Brad and Laura were thrilled to have all of their children and two sons-in-law home for the Thanksgiving Holiday and the 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary celebration of Laura's parents. It was certainly a highlight of their year.

May each of you and your families enjoy peace and happiness at this special season of the year and throughout 2011 as we seek to follow the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Sure love ya!

## 2011

2011 has been an eventful year for the Lewis Family. Here's a glance at some of the highlights of this past year:

Brad and Laura (Dad and Mom)-

Going strong in their 27<sup>th</sup> year of marriage, Brad and Laura continue to watch as their children grow older. Perhaps no one was more happy about the Cardinals winning the World Series than Brad (dad) who proudly sports his championship gear whenever he gets the chance. One of the highlights of the year was running a half marathon as a family, a feat that all those still at home participated in.

Laura continues to take a few classes at St. Charles Community College and this last semester was in a guitar class with Laura (daughter).

Jessica and Jared-

2011 has brought new jobs, a move and a medical school acceptance to Jared and



Jessica. They moved back to St. Louis this year while waiting to hear back on medical school applications and enjoy being close to family. Jessica enjoys her job as a contracts assistant at an international marketing organization. Jared is working as an MCAT tutor and was recently accepted into medical school and has quickly become a fan of the St. Louis Cardinals, rooting them on to victory.

Matt and Christine-

This year was full of excitement for Matt and Christine with the announcement of Christine's pregnancy. She is three months along and is looking forward to being out of the first trimester. Christine finished her last semester of classes at BYU and is doing student teaching this semester until she graduates in April. This year Matt changed his major to Information Systems and is loving his new field of study and works as a web developer on campus.

Bradley-

Bradley continues to chug along in school, now in his Junior year at BYU. Bradley was accepted into the Advertising major and has really been enjoying himself so far. He has been spending a lot of time in the student advertising agency, working as an account manager and gaining a lot of real-life experience. He continues to write music and teaches Spanish part-time.

Craig-

Provo surely felt the shock as BYU's self-proclaimed "Number one fan" was accepted into BYU and came to Provo for his first semester. Craig loved his first experience living away from home, especially the rich social life and the intramurals at BYU. As is common in our church, Craig accepted the call to serve as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ([mormon.org](http://mormon.org)) in Carlsbad, California. Craig will depart February 1<sup>st</sup> to go to the Missionary Training Center where he will learn and prepare to teach in the Spanish language. Craig will serve for a period of 2 years, teaching others about our church's beliefs. He will be missed but we are all excited for this opportunity he has to dedicate to God. The family made a music video before Craig leaves on his mission. Check it out on Youtube. Lewis Family Edition Tonight, Tonight.

Laura-

Laura hit the "sweet sixteen" this year and is now driving. Watch out! She's a great driver and works part-time at Club Fitness in the nursery taking care of kids. Laura started her first semester at St. Charles Community College and is taking

classes to prepare to study graphic design. She enjoys weekly practices for a church choir she is in which consists of youth from around the St. Louis area.

Emma-

Emma's relentless efforts in convincing the family to get a dog paid off as the family finally got a black lab named Mason who has quickly become the new center of attention of the family. Emma could open up a veterinarian's office with all the knowledge she has obtained from watching online dog training tutorials. She is a talented girl, taking piano and dance lessons and recently played the lead role in the school play.

Happy New Year!

Love, The Lewis Family

## **2012**

Hello Family & Friends!

Merry Christmas to you! Our family has enjoyed an amazing year. We'd love to tell you about some of the highlights:

Jared & Jessica moved to Kirksville, Missouri in July where Jared has begun Medical School. A wonderful miracle occurred in their lives when they were blessed to adopt newborn twin girls: Nora Abigail and Evalyn (Eva) Ruth! We have all fallen head over heels in love with these girls and know that they are a gift from a loving Heavenly Father.

Matt & Christine have had an exciting year. Christine graduated in April from Brigham Young University in Elementary Education. On July 4<sup>th</sup> she gave birth to our first grandchild, Bennett Matthew. Matt continues his schooling at Brigham Young University and has an internship this summer in Sandy, Utah.

Brad & Mindy Lukens were married on August 11<sup>th</sup> in the Nauvoo, Illinois temple. They were both able to be in St. Louis this summer while Brad had an internship with Nestle Purina in their Advertising Department. We loved having them close to us. We enjoyed a Church history trip to western Missouri together.

Craig left for his mission on February 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. He is serving in the California Carlsbad Mission, Spanish-speaking. He will spend 2 years teaching others about Jesus Christ and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is



learning the language quite well and loves his life as a missionary. He tells us in every email that he's "Living the dream."

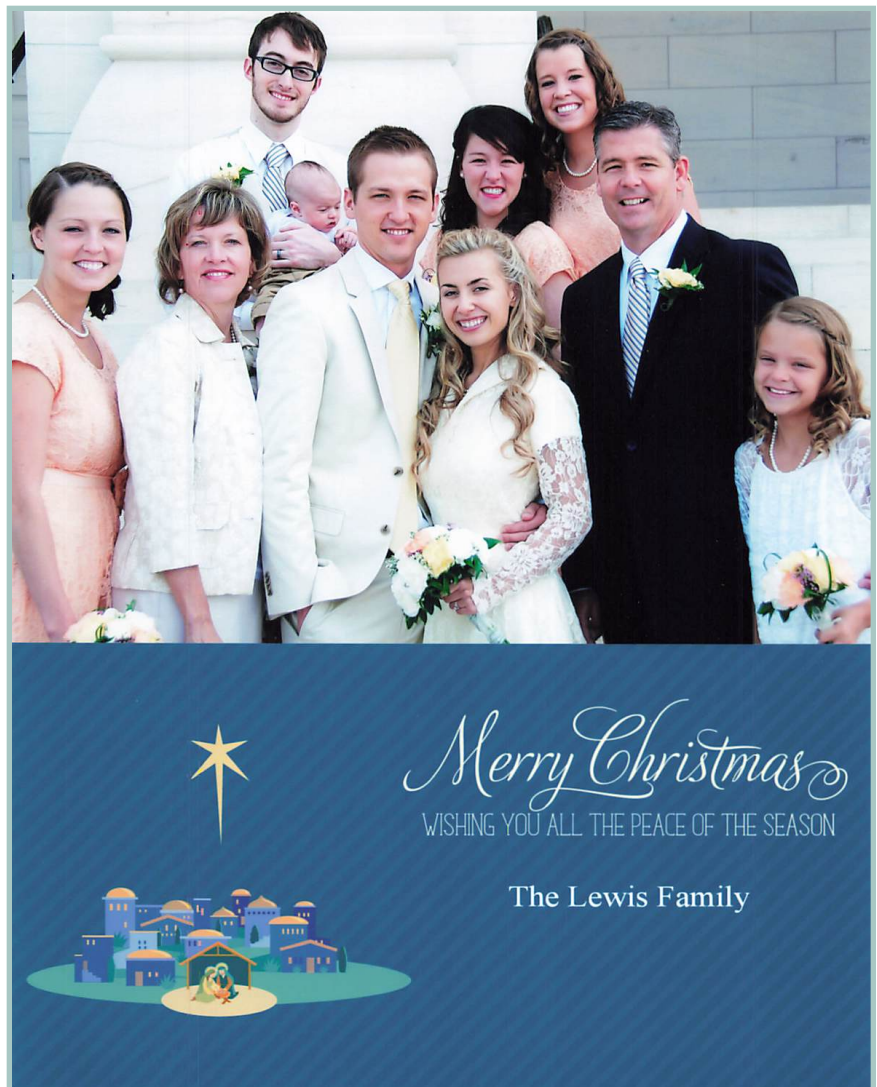
Laura (17) is completing her third semester at St. Charles Community College and will have her Associates Degree in April. Laura stays busy with early morning seminary, school, and work. She recently got a new job at the YMCA, working in the nursery and the hub with kids. She enjoys her job and the kids love her!

Emma (12) is excited to be in the Young Women's program in the

O'Fallon ward now that she is twelve. She began middle school this year and is in the drama club. She has a part in the school play, *School House Rock*, where she will sing some solos.

Laura (Mom) drove to Utah (with the help of her mother "Grandy") this summer with Laura and Emma. They went to be with Christine after she had Bennett. Her birthday was celebrated with a special event: Brad and Mindy's wedding! Another highlight has been to go up to Kirksville to spend time with the twins, Jared, and Jessica. Laura loves to help with her new grandchildren, and she's very good at the grandy thing already!

Brad (Dad) experienced a first this year: He spent 2 weeks in Switzerland at Nestle headquarters for a Management Development course. It was held at the company's Rive Reine training facility in Vevey. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that he thoroughly enjoyed. During the visit, he was able to take a





Panoramic train up into the Swiss alps and spend the day in Gstaad – a trendy, ski resort town often visited by celebs. He didn't see any. And of course he couldn't leave company headquarters without carting nearly \$100 of Nestle Swiss chocolate home with him! Despite this unique experience, his greatest joys this year have been seeing one son leave on a mission, another get married in the Temple, and to have 3 grandchildren. It's been awesome.

There you have it. The Lewis Family update. Of course the year had its challenges, but we marvel at all the blessings we have received. We hope and pray this letter finds you and yours well. We give thanks regularly for such great family and friends in our lives. Please know of our love for each one of you. May you feel the love of our Savior Jesus Christ at this special time and throughout the coming year.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Brad & Laura Lewis Family

## 2014

Emma (14) – 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She was a slithering eel in *The Little Mermaid*. Piano lessons. Loves spending time with family and friends.

Laura – Completed 1<sup>st</sup> year at BYU. On 18-month mission (Spanish speaking) in Ogden, Utah. Loving her missionary opportunities and experiences.

Craig – Returned from his mission in Carlsbad, California. At BYU in Provo. Served a Young Performing mission in Nauvoo, Illinois during summer.

Bradley and Mindy – Living in Chicago. Bradley took a new job with Allstate insurance in Marketing. Enjoying being parents of Samuel (1).

Matt and Christine –  
Living in Provo, Utah.  
Matt graduating in  
April 2015 from BYU.  
Christine loving being at  
home with Bennett (2).

Jared and Jessica –  
Living in O'Fallon,  
Missouri. Jared in 3<sup>rd</sup>



year of Medical School – doing rotations in St. Louis area. Jessica keeping busy with Eva (2) and Nora (2).

Laura (Mom) – Recently completed an online College Algebra class with BYU Idaho!!! Loves time with family.

Brad (Dad) – Wishing he lived closer to Mom Lewis. Loving his Grandchildren. Called as church stake president in November.

## 2018

### Lewis Family Update

- Jared & Jessica's family and Brad & Mindy's family are both living in California
- Jared & Jessica adopted a newborn boy just last month! We're eternally grateful to his birth mother for the gift she's given us... Baby Bradley
- Matt & Christine, Craig & Claire, and Braeden & Laura's families all live in the Salt Lake Valley
- Emma turned 18 and will earn her Associate's Degree in May 2019, then off to BYU-Idaho in the Fall
- A 2018 full of blessings and opportunities to learn important lessons and grow individually and as a family



May the Peace available through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be yours this Holiday Season and throughout the coming year!

**2019**

Merry Christmas from the Lewis Family!

2019 was such a special year...

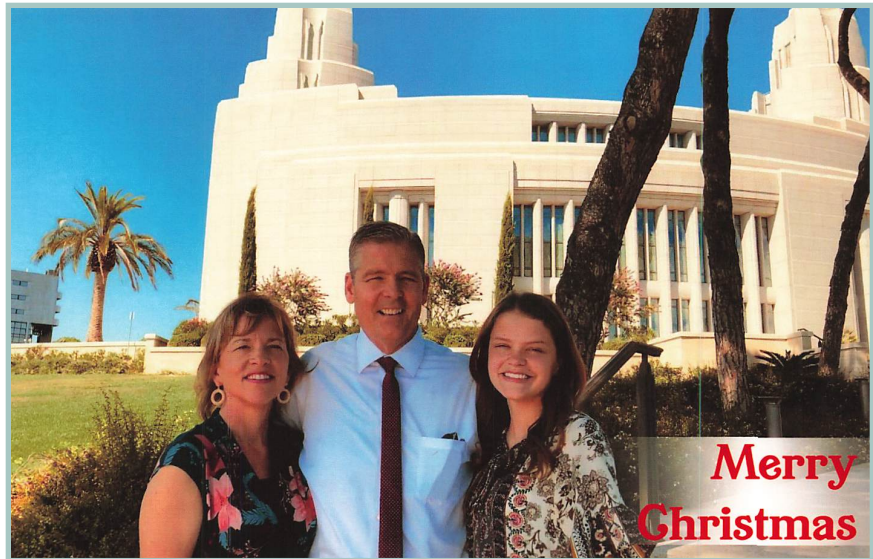
It began with a memorable family cruise with Brad's mother, siblings and their spouses.

In the summer and fall, two grandsons joined the family, bringing the number of grandchildren to 10!

During the late summer, we enjoyed a special 2 weeks in Palermo and Rome, Italy with Matt & Christine and their boys. Of all the sites we visited, the Rome Temple left the strongest impression as the most important building there.

Our last child Emma left home for her first semester at Brigham Young University-Idaho in Rexburg, and we started adjusting to life as "empty-nesters."

We feel so blessed. We love you and pray that your holidays and coming year will be full of Peace and Joy!



We invite all of you to go to [lighttheworld.org](http://lighttheworld.org) and view the 18-minute nativity film entitled, "The Christ Child." It is the most powerful depiction of the birth of Jesus Christ that you may ever see!