

Wednesday, 12 December 2007 10:59pm

Dear Mamma,

I come to you tonight really seeking understanding and looking for direction. Yes, I know, I have been praying, but I really wish I could actually hear your voice and your opinion. Granted, if that were possible, I would not be in this situation to begin with, as you would still be in control. Its funny, I never thought family leadership was that important, but for this family, you and grandmother really had a way of ensuring everyone that we are one – regardless – we are one.

Mother, you know my heart, you know I love everyone in my family and would do anything in the world for each and every one of them. BUT – you also know me – I have both you and Daddy's heart – I have you drive and determination – I have Daddy's stubbornness and desire for seclusion (meaning – I just don't want to be bothered with nothingness and nonsense..

Mother, I am back again tonight with frustration. With all the issues over the past twenty months, one thing my confidants say is that I manage to keep in touch with family through some type of communication every month. Even when I was not answering the phone, I was still sending updates in the mail and doing things for the family – like placing ads in reunion books – in fact the AJMHS reunion cost me \$300. (Oh remind me – I have to share with you an ad I posted for Alicia's daughter. I got a really nice note back from her.

Anyway, I already had anxiety to begin with today because I knew I had to tell Aunt Theresa about the water bill, and did not want to come across in the wrong way. (I think I told you about this on Sunday) Anyway, the water bill was over \$500 and taken out of the bank account. Today, when I called to try and resolve, they would not let me do anything due to the name on the account. Also, they started asking for death certificates et al. As a result, I asked Aunt Theresa to discontinue the automatic payment deduction from American Bank. I believe that is what upset me the most, the fact that the money was taken directly from the bank. Teso said she

would take care of it, that way, I will just pay the bill next month, and until we get this resolved.

Last week, I wrote to you and told you that I was going to take Aunt Novella to the December Ivanhoe Bridge Club meeting. All the club members were so excited – even Aunt Doris and Mrs. Williams drove back from the casinos in order to be present for the event. Aunt Doris had said they were going to make this a special thing for Aunt Novella – she even printed up the tallys with Aunt Novella's birthday on them and also – she was listed as an honorary member (oh, looks like they have Mrs. Harris in the club now, as Aunt Novella's replacement).

Anyway, I forgot to tell you that last Thursday or Friday, I called DeSoto because I had failed to mail the invite letter to Aunt Novella earlier in the week and wanted to make sure they were aware to I would be there to pick her up at 1:30. Well, Aunt Theresa jumped and said that she would bring Aunt Novella – and I just responded – we'll see. The original offer was for me to go and pick up Aunt Novella – and this was to accomplish a couple of

things, first, some free time for Aunt Theresa and second, for me, some alone time with Aunt Novella.

*Well, today rolled around – Wednesday, 12 December - - - - -
I think it was about 1000am when I called DeSoto and Aunt Theresa said that Yvonne was going to take off from work, but decided for Julius would bring them down. I still told her that I would pick up Aunt Novella, but she said they wanted to go to the cemetery and put out new flowers and also run a few other errands, so they would come on to Waco. I finally agreed and proceeded to rearrange my day. You know, I am preparing for the East Austin Bid Whist Club Christmas meeting on Monday, and in addition, Donna has planned a Christmas brunch for her employees on Saturday – she wants me to make my egg soufflés and Cheese Garlic Grits – then in addition, she has planned our annual food delivery to the mission in downtown Houston. So I decided I would make the 150 sandwiches to get that out of the way.*

So I continued working and mixed in a little decorating in between. At noon – I decided to run to Wal-Mart to pick up the little expensive air fresheners, picked up some white roses for Aunt

Novella, grabbed some coffee from Starbucks, and was back at the house by 12:45. It was close to 1:15 when Aunt Theresa called and said they were in town and they were leaving Mrs. Moseley's house (she had some brownies for them). She said they had some errands to run and they could just meet me at Ryans. I asked why didn't they just bring Aunt Novella by the house to let her blow for a few minutes and I would take her out there as planned. I don't really remember her response, but they showed up about 30 minutes later.

Since I had taken off for the afternoon – when they showed up, I shut down the computer and used the opportunity to bring up the issue with the water bill. I even asked Julius to take a look at the patio outside in the back – looks like someone had redone an area, wondering if it had anything to do with the water issue. Both Julius and I agreed, it was not from the water heater, and could just be water from the patio cover.

We did minor chit chat for a while, I got a chance to spend some time with Niya and remember telling them about my issues with AT&T – so I reminded them to call me on one of the cell numbers. I also remember Aunt Theresa asking how long we would be there and

I responded, we should be no more than 45 minutes or so. About 2:45, Aunt Theresa and Julius started to leave. Asked were we leaving, said they started at 3 right? So I told Aunt Novella that I would pull the car into the garage when Julius pulled out. As we all started to walk out, I noticed the flowers were still on the table. I said, let me get something to put the flowers in Aunt Novella thought they were for the table, not for her.

Then Aunt Novella and I headed to Ryans.

Aunt Novella appeared to be excited as while we rode, she talked about the idea of her birthday and the bridge club members. I told her, when the weather gets nice again, we will plan to do this in the Spring.

We arrive, and Ms. B. Johnson, and Mrs. Farrow are the only ones there. I ask, I thought you guys started at 3, and jokingly, Mrs. B. Johnson said, we are suppose to – I am hosting – normally, I am the one running late. We sat and chatted for awhile. I walked outside to get my bag out of the car and got a phone call, so I talked for a few minutes – Mrs. Harris arrived while I chatted. When I

returned it was about 3:30, Ms. B. Johnson asked me to call Aunt Doris. Aunt Doris said are you here, we are outside going in now.

NOTE: Make note of the time as I will refer back later...

So now, just about everyone had arrived. With Aunt Doris came, Mrs. Moseley, Mrs. Flewellen, and Mrs. Williams. Only person missing at this point was Mrs. N. Johnson. And just as the thought occurred, there was Mrs. N. Johnson. Everyone excited about seeing Aunt Novella. I overheard Aunt Doris say to someone – no one called you to tell you Edwin was bringing Novella, we were all suppose to know that. Aunt Novella saw people with gifts and made the comment – Oh, I did not bring anything – both Aunt Doris and Mrs. Moseley said, almost at the same time – Novella – this is for you – we have 8 people to exchange Secret Pal gifts with and we are honoring your birthday. About that time, Mrs. Moseley asked Aunt Novella if she was ready to eat and said she would make her plate. Then, the fish came in – oh wow, they even make crab cakes now – in addition to the fried fish, and shrimp. I think I stepped out for another phone call, came back through the dining room and grab salads, pea salad, chicken salad, tuna, crab. I also grabbed a couple of scrimps and crab cakes.

I had heard faint sounds of different phones ringing. It sounded like they were in pockets or purses, so I did not pay attention. Then there was this very distinctive music ring – Aunt Doris pops up, pulls the phone from her purse, and says hello. She then hands the phone to Mrs. Flewellen. Then Mrs. Flewellen said – the alarm is going off at my house? The garage door is up? No I closed the garage door before I left. When she hung up the phone, she looked to Aunt Doris and said, I need to get home. Aunt Doris came over to me, leaned into my ear and said, “Edwin, would you mind running Imogene home and bringing her back. We are getting ready to exchange gifts – and I want the people at Ryans to sign Happy Birthday to Novella – so we should be finished by the time you get back”, she then turned and said, “Grace, who had Imogene’s name?” They quickly exchanged gifts with each other, and Mrs. Flewellen and I left – it was about 4:20.

We arrived at Mrs. Flewellen’s house at about 4:35 – Mrs. Flewellen kept saying, boy, how did you get over here so fast. And I told her that I just went down Valley Mills Drive, then hit I35 – it probably seems faster because we did not have any signal lights.

Garage door 2 was fully open – and garage door 1 was cracked. We got out of the car, walked in the garage. I checked the door, it was locked. (All the time, Mrs. Flewellen was explaining how she made sure the garage door was closed) And where did this box come from – there was a box in the middle of garage one. She also explained that the alarm does not go off when the garage doors open. I walked over to the door in the corner, tried the door knob, it opened – and the alarm went off. Then the phone started ringing – So I had Mrs. Flewellen unlock the door, we went in, then there was someone at the front door (It was Luchias). Then there was someone at the back door – the garage. Told Luchias I would meet him in the garage. Went back there, and the police officers were there. Right about that time my phone rang – it was about 4:50 and it was Aunt Theresa. She said, hey, are ya'll heading this way? I said no, Aunt Novella was still there. Aunt Doris asked me to take Mrs. Flewellen home because her alarm went off. Aunt Theresa said, well, we will go out there and pick her up. I said, no don't do that, that does not make sense. I have to go back out there and take Mrs. Flewellen back in the next 10 minutes. (Now, Mamma, there were a couple of phone calls, and I started to get the anxiety feeling in my gut – it's the one that made me not even want

to go in the house on Pryor after they popped in on me last December – when I was talking to my therapist, she leads me to think it is that lack of feeling of mutual trust – respect – I will get more into this before I close tonight) Anyway, all of this happened, while I was talking to the police, trying to show Mrs. Flewellen how to reset the alarm – and you know me Mamma, it is possible I said something that did not go over well with the relatives – but there was no intention behind it – I was backed up against the wall. In fact, it was frustrating to be rushed – when, I did not ask anyone to bring Aunt Novella to Waco – I wanted to pick her up. In addition, they were having a little – mini birthday party for her – what was Aunt Theresa going to do – send Julius in and have Aunt Novella removed from her own party. It just did not make any sense. I called Aunt Theresa back and told her to just go on and I would bring Aunt Novella back to DeSoto.

Mrs. Flewellen and I made it back to Ryans about 5:20 – I think I called Aunt Theresa again to confirm that I would take Aunt Novella to DeSoto. Now, I know I did not come across well on the phone with Aunt Theresa. But the original plan was for me to pick Aunt Novella up and take her back, Aunt Theresa pushed the idea

of bringing Aunt Novella to Waco. Well Mom, I will be honest, I did not come across on the phone with Teso well, because I was frustrated. Mostly because I did what anyone in my position would have done – I was asked to take Mrs. Flewellen home – there was no way I could have refused. Also, I did not want them to go out and pick up Aunt Novella – what were they going to do – go in and remove Aunt Novella from the card table. Yes, they did start playing cards. In fact, Aunt Novella set the first hand and they were finishing the second hand when Mrs. Flewellen and I returned.

I was helping Aunt Novella with her coat, and Doris said, no Novella – sit there one more hand (she had set up for the restaurant to come and sign happy birthday and bring cake. You know what is so interesting – these ladies were excited that Aunt Novella was there and they planned time to honor her and celebrate her birthday. They also paid for the food for both of us – then gave me an envelop, I think it has \$30 in it – but I already took it out to the Credit Union and put it in the Scholarship account.

Anyway, Aunt Novella and I pulled out of there about 5:25. We went by the house, then hit the highway. I stopped to get a soda in Elm Mott, then stopped in Alvarado to get gas and Aunt Novella and I both went to the restroom. I enjoyed the time with Aunt Novella. We talked all the way. She talked about missing you and me – and I reminded her that I was not doing anything different than normal – meaning – I normally do not do family holidays. I think I am normally away on Christmas – and on Thanksgiving – I would be with family early – but usually by 3 or 4, I was on my way to Houston. Aunt Novella said she understood, but she just missed seeing me. She said she does not have a phone, but Yvonne and Aunt Theresa always make sure she can call me anytime she wants to... I also told her that I was disappointed with all of them from Thanksgiving. Everyone always tells me there is jealousy in families – but I always thought our family was different. I told Aunt Novella that there is nothing that will make me forget this Thanksgiving. I sent 5 pies to Cheryl's house for the family – I also sent Thanksgiving cards. I received one from DeSoto – Friday after Thanksgiving – no one called me on Thanksgiving – and I am still waiting for Cheryl to thank me for the pies. I thought you and your sisters did a pretty good job teaching us the right thing to do – but

maybe we all just don't know how to practice it. I remember Grandmother saying, even if you are mad at someone or a situation – kill them with kindness – and the least Cheryl could have done would have been to put a thank you note in the mail – she did have to speak to me. (Oh, thanks for the release)

I told Aunt Novella that we were going to do this again in the Spring. At 7:25 we were at the front door in DeSoto.

We stood at the door in the light mist for several minutes. I called Aunt Theresa and she said they were in the garage. Yvonne finally opened the door. Aunt Novella went in and I followed with her box of goodies. Yvonne stood at the door with the door open. You know – this is strange but funny – as I was talking, I noticed Yvonne just standing there with the door open – so I assumed that she did not expect me to stay, so I just turned around and walked out the door. Then, of course you know I could not let it go without the last word – I turned and told Yvonne to tell Aunt Theresa, that the next time I say I will pick up Aunt Novella – I will pick her up so it is on my time – and no one is rushed. Aunt Novella told me that Aunt Theresa was trying to help out – and under my breath I

said “for the past 20 months, no one from my family has lifted a hand to help me ,why start now?”

Mamma, I also have a question of concern that bothers me from time to time. Shirley brought it up to me – she said when she was here for your services – the tone of the conversation is that they are scared of me. I think it may have had something to do with an artificial plant at the house on Pryor – because I remember finding it behind the door in our room – it was used at Christmas and was in the foyer – it did not make sense for it to be taken all the way down the hall and put behind that door – it could have been put in the closet right there by the foyer. But the impression I got from Shirley, no one wants to do anything to upset me or set me off.

You know, we had a conversation about this not too long ago. I really left here when I was 17 – and yes, I was a spoiled brat. Hell, I used to get away with everything. But that was 30 years ago. What most folks around here don't know is that when I graduated from Fisk – my classmates were looking for my brothers and sisters – as no one really knew I was an only child.

I am your child – the child of two people with the kindest hearts in the world – Eli and Ethel. And in addition, I had two Grandmothers – both named Ora (talk about kind heart). I question this whole scenario – what in the hell do these people think I am going to do to them? Why are they afraid of me? Mamma, when I think about it sometimes it is funny.

I think back to things we talked about all the time. I know we used to say – don't approach me stupid or you will get stupid back. Well, I have changed that because I no longer like the word stupid. Don't approach me WRONG – cause you may get WRONG or WRONG-ER back. That's what happened today. I wanted Aunt Novella to have a good day and I wanted to spend time with her. In addition, the bridge club ladies thought it was such a wonderful idea, they planned a party – a celebration for Aunt Novella.

Well Mamma, I think I will close out for now. Tonight, as I close, I want to really tell you how much I miss you, Daddy, Grandmother, and even Jon Paul. You know I had a drink with Daddy a couple of weeks ago right before Thanksgiving, November 19th. But mostly Mamma, I miss you. The past 10 years, you were

my family. We had a mutual trust and respect for the other. Even when we were wrong – we respected the other's choice and supported each other's decisions. Truly you carried on Grandmother's Philosophy – I Am Always with You, I am with you when you are right because you are right – I am with you when you are wrong, because I am going to make you right.

It has been so hard for me to go through the past six months without you – I thank God everyday for Michelle and Shirley. I do not believe that I would be able to maintain my sanity without them. Michelle and I can not even count the number of times we are on the phone with each other every day. Shirley makes it a point to touch base with me weekly. Both of them continue to reassure me that I am OK and mostly they give me the courage and drive (filling in for you) that I need to want to get up the next day and keep going.

And, as I have written to you before and told you – there are others you would appreciate knowing support me – I even can make AJD laugh these days. She and Mr. D can be funny. Mrs. D also makes it a point to call weekly. A couple of weeks ago, she called and talked to me for over 30 minutes. I realized that she too is missing

you. She talked to me like she was talking to you. I think she just needed someone to hear – someone to listen. I am also thankful for Aunt Doris, Aunt Ouida, Mrs. Farrow, Mrs. Hobbs, and I sometimes talk with Mrs. Moseley and Aunt Zelle. Here recently – Louis has called more frequently – and we talked for 15 or 20 minutes when he passed through town after Thanksgiving.

The point I am trying to make is – I miss your UNCONDITIONAL LOVE – there is nothing like it. I know I still have it – as I feel you pushing me through all the time. But like I told Aunt Doris, it has been hard to adjust to no real acknowledgement. The past six months have been a big struggle – bills are still over my income. But God has a plan for me – and as Rev. Dinks at Columbus Ave BC says – I going to get my joy back – Got to Get My Joy. I enjoy Rev. Dinks' messages. The sermon that moved me the most was his sermon on joy. It reminds me of your love and that there is no other love like it and I also have to realize that I may never have that type of love again. I have good friends, Michelle, and Shirley – but I want to feel like I can do anything, say anything and just like you always did – whatever the

situation – I knew my Mother loved me and accepted me for who I am, and what I have to bring to the table.

Rev Dink's sermon on Joy ended with the following:

There are 3 kinds of love:

-----1-----Conditional (I love you if you love me)

-----2-----Because of (I love you because you love me)

-----3-----and the love of Joy (I love you period) - in spite of - I know you and I know your short comings - but I love you period.

II Peter 1:6-8

And to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness. And to godliness, brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you so they shall never be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mamma, I love you unconditionally and I know you love me the same. I am going to continue to pray and hope that there will be some growth in my relationship with the family. In the interim, I will continue to do whatever I can to assist my family in any way. Also, prayer does wonders and Aunt Ouida reminds me all the time – just keep praying on the situation and it will work out the way God intends for it to... Mamma, that's all I can do...

Love you – always missing you,

Edwin