

Unto the Least of These

By Shirley M Haws

Though there is little doubt that my mother, with her constant dedication to the Church, will inherit the celestial kingdom, am I wrong to think that my dad, with his constant dedication to mankind may be there too?

My mother has always put the Church before anything in her life. For example, she taught a class in Sunday School for seven years, and I never remember her missing one time. She was there each Sunday, completely prepared. When the bishop would announce that they needed a dollar from the members, she's give two. If there was a call for volunteer workers, she and all her children would be there from start to finish. She brought her children up believing that to refuse one in authority was the same as refusing the Lord.

One of the many times she demonstrated this belief was just before I was born, the youngest of twelve children. My Great-Grandmother Bennett, blind, crippled, ill, and not the best natured person in the world I'm told, was living with them. Needless to say, my Mother had more than her hands full. To say all of this, the bishop asked her to be Primary President. She never hesitated for a minute. If that's what the Lord wanted, that's what he got, and he'd give her strength to do it all.

Then there was Dad. I guess you could say in most ways he was just the opposite of my mother. When I close my eyes to picture him now, I see him slumped down in an old captain's chair, his feet on the oven door of our coal stove, with a hand rolled cigarette in one hand, and a cup of steaming black coffee in the other. This, curiously enough, gives me a warm, comfortable feeling inside. He very seldom went into the church house, and then it was only in an emergency, such as a funeral. Every time he went, he'd come home and say that the crack in the ceiling of our hundred year old, one room church house had gotten bigger when he walked in, and someday, if he didn't quit going, the building was going to fall in.

I stepped lightly and cautiously, just in case.

The fact that he didn't go to church didn't, however, stop him from keeping the coal and wood bins at the church full, nor stop him from keeping the coal and wood bins at the church full, nor stop him from caring for the church lawn. If an unfortunate family got as far as Cedar Fort, and could get no farther, this didn't stop the bishop from sending them up to Dad for help, whether it be food, clothing, money or just someone to fix their car.

Dad was always doing something for someone, and our yard and house were always full of people, whether coming for a favor, to pay back a loan, or just a person who needed a friend. There was the deaf and dumb amputee friend of Dad's-Dave Garn. He had no family, except a niece. I wonder what his life would have been like if twice a week Dad hadn't invited him down to play cards.

Then there was Nels Otterson, the old sheepherder. He had the fattest stomach I've ever seen. His Levi's couldn't start to cover it, so he wore them down around his hips. I always wondered what made them stay up, until I touched them one day. They were so stiff with dirt, they couldn't have possibly fallen. The only time, he ever came down from the herd, was to visit my dad and get supplies.

A man named J. Golden Kimball would come and go prospecting with my dad. I never knew until after I was married that he was an apostle. Dad treated him just like all the others. One night after a date I came home to a whole houseful of stranded Indians. They were eating supper, and Dad was telling them about the Book of Mormon.

Dad was a farmer and he used to thresh wheat for other people. they would pay him with part of the wheat he had threshed. When he'd tell them to come and check how much wheat they got before he took it to the mill, they would say, "Oh, you just take out what you feel you deserve, and take the rest to the mill. We trust you."

Jesus told a parable that sounds like it could have been about my dad, and it ended like this, “Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Who can say that my Father’s dedication was any less than my mother’s?