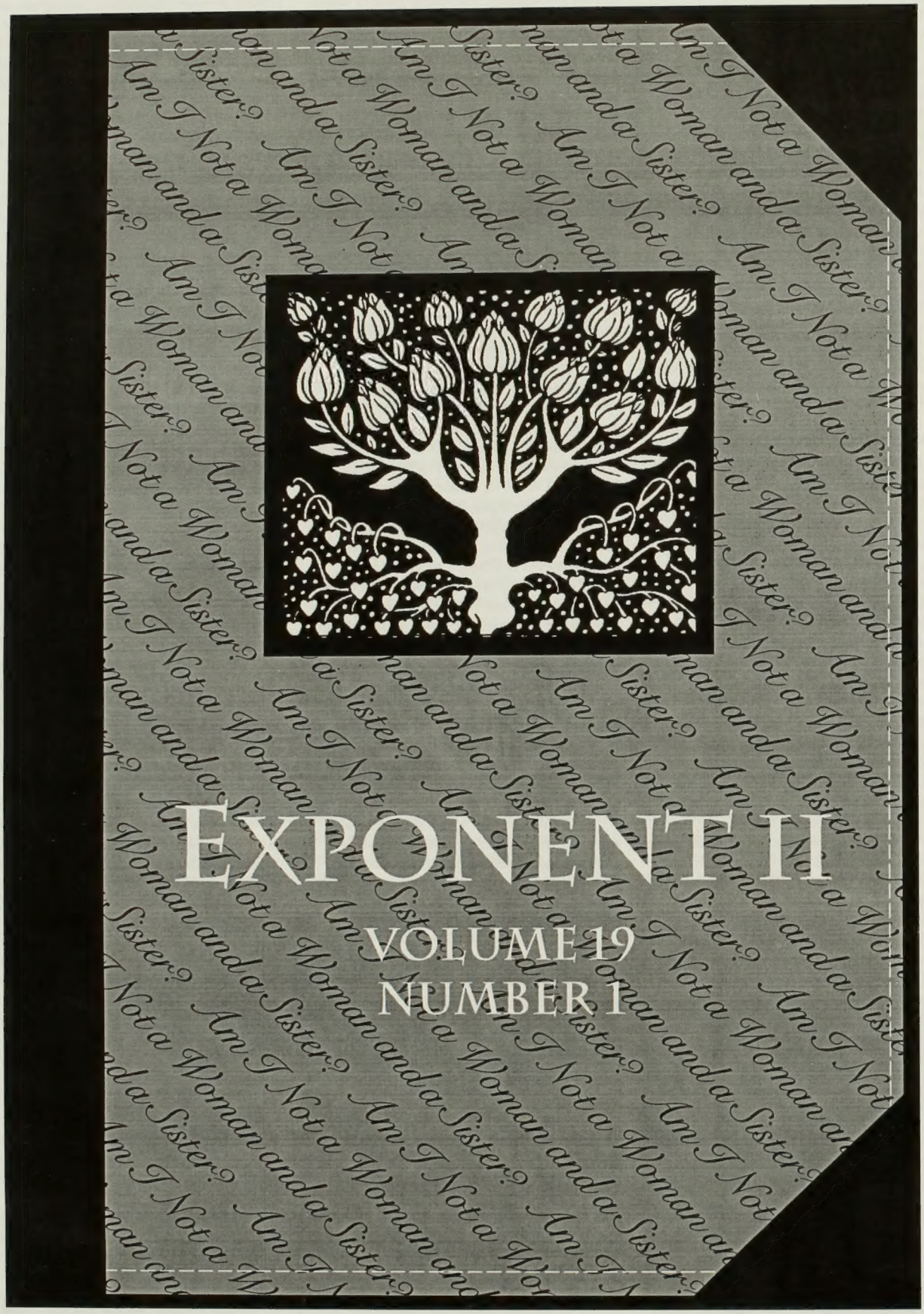

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Exponent II is 20

Claudia L. Bushman
First Editor, Exponent II
New York, New York

Exponent II is celebrating its twentieth anniversary; the periodical is close to achieving its majority. I expect that most people will greet this anniversary with considerable surprise. *Exponent II* has come to a great age for a modest little publication. For a whole generation now, this little sheet has made its way into the homes of the faithful like a quiet stream, carrying with it beauty and refreshment, news and encouragement.

What have been the achievements of *Exponent II*? The first is certainly endurance, when remuneration has been largely spiritual rather than financial.

The second has been providing a forum for airing the opinions of a fairly broad spectrum of people. These views are heartfelt and justified, but still they are views that might not find a home in other publications. The twenty years of issues reflect the honest views of Mormons, mostly female, honest views on homely matters not necessarily welcomed elsewhere. In the pages of *Exponent II,* we find a combination of the personal, the modest, the sisterly, the wise, the desperate, the indignant, the outrageous, the disappointed, and the heartbroken not met with elsewhere.

Finally, the paper has created a network of friendship and connection that transcends distance, as well as class and educational differences, and even gender. I look at the dozen or so young matrons photographed with John Harvard so many years ago and think of the experiences that we shared before we diverged in direction and destination. I think of the many years of meetings, retreats, dinners, and *Exponent* Day speakers and marvel that a group has been able to hang together so well so long without serious breaches. Even though I am long gone from the scene, I count these women with whom I shared so many experiences, among my dear friends. The network continues to grow and the connections between the people are increasingly strengthened with shared disclosures, decisions, and events. This network, fearful and awesome, sometimes transcends other attachments.

When I meet new people even today, I am often classified as an *Exponent II* woman. When I meet again people whom I knew in those old days who did not do *Exponent II* activities, they ask me why they were not involved. The shadow of the publication has so grown and lengthened that they wonder how they could have lived in Boston in those days and not been part of those discussions and paste-up sessions.

Exponent II began in a modest and simple fashion and has remained faithful to its original style and efforts. Perhaps I will still be around for the fiftieth birthday. It seems just a few days ago that I was commemorating the tenth anniversary.

Drawn into the Spotlight

Judy Dushku
Watertown, Massachusetts

For Mormon women in Massachusetts to suddenly have a highly visible but little known political candidate who shared our religious label running in one of the most publicized and contentious Senate races in the nation was a new kind of experience. For years, most of us had lived with beliefs and habits that were quite invisible to our neighbors. Efforts at missionary work were frustrated by the indifference that most people exhibited to what mattered to us. But when Mitt Romney began sharing the political spotlight with a man that everyone in the state knows everything about [Senator Ted Kennedy], those around us wanted to know everything about us . . . as Mormons.

"You are a Mormon like Romney, aren't you? Well, what do you think about mandatory death sentences?" "So what do you Mormons think about gays in the military?" "Because you are a Mormon, what would your—and presumably all Mormons'—position be on day care vouchers for poor women?" "What about U.S. troops in Haiti?" We probably all thought we had opinions on these issues, around which debates have been raging for months or years, but when the questions came flying at us from all sides, it was a new kind of daily challenge to be crisp and precise and to articulate our beliefs accurately. And, it was quite a responsibility to be clear about what beliefs have been shaped by the Mormonism that we share with Mitt and what beliefs have been molded by other experiences or influences.

Naturally, in our very Catholic state the issue that has been for years the center of the greatest contention and fury and that has become the one that defines for most citizens just how a political person stands on "women's issues" is reproductive freedom. So, naturally our voting neighbors wanted to get clear where we Mormons stood on this tough one. We were asked, over and over, "So, what's your view . . . exactly?"

Mitt came out early in the campaign for "choice," but for months he was ambiguous on the subject of public funding for abortions. To Massachusetts voters, backing off from public funding has long been the signal that one's commitment to choice was weak. So the public was kept guessing, and we Mormons often became the object of random polling. Mitt favored the distribution of the "morning after" pill, which people associated with his being in favor of empowering women to make their own choices about continuing a pregnancy. But, others described Mormons as being part of the "religious right" and that usually meant that they made some connection between Mormons and the right-to-life groups that blockade abortion clinics. "If you believe in the right to choose, which trimester do you favor for cutting off access to abortion?" "If you don't believe in abortion, what form of activism have you chosen to support your position on terminating pregnancies?" "Is abortion a criminal act? If so, what do you believe should be done to those who perform abortions?"

In Boston, the "right-to-lifers" stand across the street from the clinics with signs showing bloody fetuses and maimed babies. Often, directly across the street from these folks, stand the protectors of choice with their signs. "Were you there?" we were asked. "On which side?"

Some of us loved the opportunity to clarify, while others pleaded for more time to shape our positions. Mitt's coming out openly for choice made some of us who had secretly held that position for decades feel emboldened and safe to speak up; others could only remember those friends whom we know had been denied temple recommends for that same position, here and far away. Some asked themselves if they would feel so bold once this Massachusetts election was over, once there was no Mormon candidate "for choice." Others committed themselves to a life of activism, having come alive because of this time of having our opinions valued so much. Some said that, as transplanted Westerners, they at last felt that they were part of the political fabric of the state where they had long made their homes and lives. Some who have defended a non-choice position felt betrayed by a Mormon whom they had called "leader" and still feel confused that this issue has not yet been "decided." No matter what our point of view, we were all brought into the dialogue.

But whether we felt heady and bold or fascinated or frightened by the complexities of this long-privately-debated issue, we felt more sharply the blow that came on December 30, 1994, when two loving and nurturing women were gunned down at their receptionist posts in the foyers of women's health clinics in our own city of Boston. Just last year, they may not have felt so close to us because their daily battles were more foreign to us. They might have felt more like outsiders, caring passionately about something most of us may not have felt part of. But over the months of the campaign, we had become part of this debate and part of the people who cared deeply and had opinions. We could now relate to these women and their families, to other people who worked at these clinics or who went there as patients.

The sharpness of the shock comes from realizing that these victims are not only our geographical neighbors but also our close associates in spirit and in the struggle for solutions and peace of mind around this difficult issue of managing mothering. Many of us have visited the clinics to add our flowers or notes to the large collection. Many of us have stood in silent vigil, wondering if those who happen to be standing near us are family or close friends of the slain or if they come, as we have, to share each other's burdens in the hour of fear and grief. No good person could have wanted these murders to happen, but I genuinely believe that they have provided an opportunity for us all to commit to a position on these questions and to feel powerfully that we have, just as much as the next person, a responsibility to involve ourselves in the solutions to this battle over women's bodies. If no other good can come of this horror, let it, at least, catapult us into deciding what is right and what is not right, what is intolerable and therefore will not be tolerated, and then committing to speak our conviction.

Since the day of the murders, every day has seemed like Mother's Day to me. My heart is with mothers, and I love them for their strength to make hard decisions in hard times. I want them to have more power, not less. I am appalled that they are so unprotected and disrespected. I feel tremendous solidarity with the women who died and who were injured and with the mothers whom they helped and supported. We must bear one another's burdens and keep one another safe.

Women's War

Shari Siebers Crall
Temecula, California

On Memorial Day, I unroll the paper and gaze at the usual photo of war veterans marching in parade on a sunny southern California day. As I read on, it is not until I finish all twenty minutes of my small town newspaper that it hits me. On this Memorial Day, the paper is not filled with reminiscences of traditional soldiers, but warriors of a different sort.

Next to the front page photo, a story reports that an ex-wife and her five-year-old daughter have been shot and killed by their ex-husband/father. Turning the page, I read of a bride, shot dead in her white gown on her wedding day by a jealous ex-lover. It came as no surprise that a restraining order against him proved useless. Next, I read of "Sweething Barnard," age eighteen. Since she was five, her father had molested her sexually. Running away from home at sixteen, she attempted suicide several times and used alcohol and marijuana to numb the pain. The news release stated that she had finally checked herself into a mental institution and found seven other personalities residing within her.

There is more. Another page tells of Charles Campbell who is awaiting execution for three murders of revenge. The paper reports that he slashed the throats of Renae Wicklund, Barbara Hendrickson, and eight-year-old Shannah Wicklund, whom he nearly decapitated. He was mad at Wicklund about serving time for raping her and at Hendrickson for her testimony against him on that charge.

All in one paper, all in one day, Memorial Day. I sit and wonder, where are their memorials?

All of this has hit hard because our small town of 28,000 is mourning the loss of our first police officer killed in the line of duty. In the early hours following Mother's Day, Officer Kent Hintergardt came into harm's way responding to neighbors' calls of a disturbance at an apartment building. Hintergardt arrived at the building and stopped a man in the parking lot. The man, Mark Kamaka, had his twelve-year-old son in the car. In front of his son, Kamaka shot the officer point blank in the head, killing Hintergardt, a young father whose wife was pregnant with their second child.

During the resulting commotion, a neighbor saw a little girl wandering in her pajamas. He approached her and the breathless six-year-old told him that her mommy was upstairs and wasn't moving. The neighbor followed and found that Officer Hintergardt was Kamaka's second victim. On her bedroom floor lay Allison Jacobs, single mother to little Brittany, her struggle futile against her one-time boyfriend's strangling hands.

There are more incidents, of course. We all know battle stories. Our neighbor down the street, our sister, ourselves. That is the point. I know a few veterans; I can think of two who saw combat; yet, in the same circle of my acquaintance, I know scores of women who have suffered violence at the hands of men, regular men who hold jobs and don't serve time unless they finally kill one of us. In my suburban, almost rural, setting, I know only two people who have been robbed and one whose car was stolen; yet, I have three women friends who have been raped.

As I read the paper that day, I thought back to another incident. After shopping at our local department store one day, I loaded three of my kids into our van. I noticed a couple parked directly in front of me, chatting, I thought. I saw nothing strange as I put my key into the ignition, although he was leaning in particularly close to her. We prepared to pull away when the woman opened her car door to get out. The man grabbed her belt and flung her back into the seat. As if in slow motion, I watched as the expression on her face turned from normal to surprise to oh-so-much humiliation. Stunned, I sat there. Eventually, both of them lit cigarettes and looked toward me. If nothing else, I was determined to remain a witness. They both mouthed, "It's okay; it's okay."

It's okay? What's going on?

The bus stop where I and my neighboring housewives bring our kindergartners seems innocuous enough. In fact, it is lined with old soldiers. Four of the six suburban mothers waiting there are recovering from violence—physical, sexual, verbal—by fathers, stepfathers, uncles, teenage boys, fathers of friends, and a man whose children one of them babysat; all four of those women are Mormon. Some days, long-hidden land mines explode as we walk through the minefields laid in our youth.

At this daily gathering, we check on each other. If someone begins to cry or we realize that Bea is wearing the same thing she wore yesterday, and the day before, one of us goes over later with a flower or a poem. Chatting in the poignant dignity of survivors watching the parade pass on, like old soldiers in uniform, we wave to our smiling five-year-olds as the bus lurches forward.

Of course, there are no parades or uniforms for veterans of women's war. Not even a rally saying, "Give peace a chance."

Where I live gangs have yet to make a dent. You can go for a walk at 9:00 P.M., and ranchers, who never did, still don't lock their doors. Yet, it seems violence to women is inescapable. Beside Allison Jacobs, our lively town hall receptionist, Sally Gilbert, was shot dead by her boyfriend who then turned the gun on himself. Her memorial service was the first public gathering held at our brand new community recreation center. The same week, thirty-seven-year-old Sharon Maxwell was beaten to death with a hammer by a former boyfriend while her two small children slept in their nearby bedrooms.

I want to stop listing story after story, but I am compelled to tell their names, determined that somewhere their deaths will be counted. Surely these women have sacrificed their lives in as senseless a quagmire as any found on a battlefield.

Don't think it won't touch you. Don't think it isn't touching you now. Statistics claim one in three women is sexually abused by the time she is eighteen. Think of three women you know: count down three women in the row in front of you at church; your daughter and her two best friends; or three female co-workers. chances are, no matter how sheltered their circumstances, one of them has fought this war.

Maybe some day we'll build a memorial to the women whose lives were lost before we won the battle to make the world safe for our daughters to grow up in. Last Memorial Day, the body count in my local paper stood at six dead and Sweething Barnard, who just wishes she was.

Shari Siebers Crall

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: Reflections in Fifteen Fragments

Diane Brown
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Beginnings

My earliest memories of the sacrament are not actual memories but feelings. Curled up in my mom's lap, I felt safe. Looking up at my father on the stand, I felt important. Carefully balancing the teeny cup of water without spilling, I felt grown up. Taking only one piece of bread when I wanted to sneak more, I felt obedient. And thinking about Jesus, I knew I had a secret advocate—someone who understood even when the kids in Sunday School made fun of me for knowing all the answers. I knew He had gathered the little children around Him. I knew He would have gathered me.

I didn't quite understand why He had a beard, when no one else at church did. Looking back, I believe this was my introduction into the not-so-comfortable world of ambiguity.

The Sanctification of Jello

Fernand, a seventy-five-year-old priest in France, believed that any meal shared between friends is a replication of the Lord's Supper. And, for us, a meal was the only sacrament we could share as two Mormon missionaries and a Catholic priest with separate rituals and lines of authority that refused to converge. Fernand insisted on sharing a meal with his *petites soeurs*. A holy meal, he said. We figured he was just lonely. We fixed a truly American feast: hamburgers and lime jello left over from a Christmas care package. We taught him "I am a Child of God," sang, blessed the food, and ate together as an unlikely trio in his studio apartment. He called it holy. The sacrament of friendship, he said.

"And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it."

I grew up in a homemade bread family. Whole wheat, from flour ground in the mill sold by a couple in the ward. The rare occasions when we bought Wonder White were cause for celebration. Not only could I finally take a sandwich that looked like everyone else's to school, but I could sneak downstairs and play sacrament. I would sing sacrament hymns, break the bread, and pronounce the prayer on the bread, as best as I could from memory. Then I would eat it all. I rarely moved on to the water because the Dixie cups in the bathrooms were still far too big and also because it was the white bread that was such a novelty. I debated techniques. Was it best to tear it into strips first and then move from strips to individuals pieces? Or should I just do it piece by piece? Which method would I choose? Should I break it quickly, or slowly and deliberately? What if I encountered the absolute embarrassment of not being done before the end of the sacrament hymn? What if I got the prayer wrong?

What would I do if I blundered in front of the whole ward? Thankfully, I learned to snap myself right back into reality when I remembered that those questions didn't matter for *me*. Not for *a girl*.

Symphony

I remember when our ward changed from paper sacrament cups to plastic. My father was outraged at the way these noisy new cups disrupted the essential reverence of the sacrament. He posed question after question: Was this decision economic? Was it official church policy? A change in the handbook? Who on Earth would have made such a thoughtless policy?

Now, after many years of plastic cups, I would be lost without the soft symphony of those cups dropping into metal trays. When concentration is impossible, and the atonement—at best—a mystery, I close my eyes and welcome the hypnosis that comes from focusing on the sound of cups. Every Sabbath offers a unique composition of rhythm only, no change in pitch. The milli-seconds of silence between plastic plunks stretch out in my head. The cadence mesmerizes me. I hear no babies, no coughs, only the familiar sounds of ancient ritual translated into a modern, plastic world. Christ in the upper room had no noisy cups, no shiny metal trays.

A child of my generation, I fear I would have been lost among the stark silences of the meridian of time.

Souvenirs

I invented many anti-boredom sacrament games. My favorite in fourth grade was the lipstick game. The rules were simple: count the number of cups with lipstick marks in the bottom of the tray. Penalties accrued if Mom ever caught on. One glorious afternoon, I counted twelve: brilliant half-circles from Passionate Pink to Frosty Orange. Triumph.

Capernaum

In the village of Capernaum, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Christ rebuked the crowd for following Him. It was not enough to follow Christ; one had to follow for the right reasons. That day, His followers came because they had eaten the miraculously provided loaves and were filled.

Christ quickly moved from His rebuke—which was for putting the physical before the spiritual, the physical loaves before the bread of life—to a proclamation of who He was. He was and is the bread of life. His bread was not Sinai's sustaining manna; manna only offered the children of Israel a few more years of mortal life. Christ's was the bread of a more enduring sort. Eternal life, eternal bread.[1]

But even in a ritual of salvation, Christ does not divorce the sacrament from the physical body. The bread is His flesh; it symbolizes Christ's *body*, not His soul.

He was and is the bread of life. To partake is to enact an event so sacred that I am often afraid to partake.

The Tray

The water tray begins its odyssey entirely full of cups. The members of the congregation remove the cups one by one and systematically the tray is transformed from full to empty. The holes in the tray torment me. They speak of emptiness, of loss, of something *not* being where it should be. I feel an unspeakable burden. Faced with the empty space in the tray, I know that I should be filled. That somewhere—because matter is not lost—the plenitude must have been transferred. Am I filled after partaking? Have I truly drunk to my own salvation?

Etymologies (I)

Take (transitive verb). **Partake** (intransitive verb).

To take is to take directly: grammatically the verb *take* governs a direct object. I take a class, a break, a book off the shelf. To partake, on the other hand, requires the distancing of the object. *Partake is* intransitive. One partakes *of*. One does not partake directly. The grammar of sacrament reminds us of our need for an intermediary. Just as we do not *partake* the sacrament, but rather *partake of* the sacrament, we do not partake of redemption without mediation. Christ is always positioned between us and the redemption that we crave. The grammar of existence does not allow eternal life to be a direct object.

Etymologies (II)

Sacrament. Eucharist.
Mormons only celebrate one sacrament. The Roman Catholic church holds that there are seven sacraments; many Protestant groups recognize two: baptism and the Lord's Supper. The English word *sacrament* stems from the Latin *sacramentum,* which defined a military oath of allegiance. It carries great weight because of its root *sacer,* or sacred. In other words, the sacrament is a sacred oath, some sort of holy confession. The sacrament prayer makes the covenant explicit: we eat and drink in remembrance of Christ. We are then promised that as we always remember Him, we will have His spirit to be with us.

Eucharist, the term used in the Catholic mass for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is Greek in origin. The word is derived from *eucharistos,* which means "grateful" or "thankful." It also carries a sense of grace, for *charis* is Greek for "grace."

As Mormons, adopting the term *sacrament*, we may be linguistically aware of the sacredness of the ritual, but we miss what other worshippers might not: that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a moment of gratitude and grace.

Perhaps we can learn to increase the sacredness of our *sacramentum* as our hearts remember *eucharistos.* Grace. Gratitude. Sacred grace and sacred gratitude, a wedding of the Latin and the Greek.

A Mormon Considers a French Jew Who Considers the Catholic Eucharist

Simone Weil envisioned the Eucharist as a moment where we contemplate absolute purity.[2] Because there is no *direct* relationship between a piece of bread and the divinity of God, the piece of bread is pure symbolism. In the act of considering something entirely pure (the bread), we forget the evil that we sense within ourselves. Through this consideration, Weil writes, a part of that deep-down evil is destroyed.

In other words, salvation dwells in the realm of metaphor as it cannot exist in the physical world. We enter sacrament meeting with our whole selves, with our bodies that lust and sin and so often betray the pure longings of our spirits. Then, in the act of pondering a symbol, we can attain a moment of cleansing and redemption.

I do not believe the cleansing moment described by Simone Weil can endure more than a moment. We are always already brought back to our bodies. Because we are mortal, we cannot singlemindedly ponder the bread; the world of the metaphor cannot be sustained. Physical, mortal, hungering, we eat. We take the real bread into our real bodies in a sacred weaving of the spiritual and the physical, of the sacred and the profane.

Singing

My favorite sacrament hymn is "There is a Green Hill Far Away." Oh dearly, dearly has He loved.

The Offering

The sacrament tray passes from hand to hand. The deacons offer us the tray. We eat or drink and then pass the tray along. We feed each other in a chain of giving and partaking. I hold the tray while you take; you continue the chain and offer it to your neighbor. My father often takes the tray with his left hand, holds the tray for himself, and then takes the sacrament with his right hand. This act, while innocent enough, erases part of the community of communion. It speaks of self-sufficiency at the very moment when one should be aware of dependence. We are dependent on others to pass us the sacrament, just as we depend on Christ to offer us His saving grace. The sacrament, like salvation, cannot take place in isolation. We need to receive with gladness and then pass along what we have received. Hands, mouth, hungry, filled. We are never quite alone in the community of Christ. It cannot be otherwise.

Kneading

Several years ago, my ward began asking the Relief Society to provide homemade bread for the sacrament. I was the Saturday morning bread maker in our home of all boys, so I knew about bread, knew the feel of the dough as it responded to my small hands. As I thought of women in the ward making the bread for the sacrament, I was filled with wonder. My eleven-year-old self marveled at the transformation of the quotidian into the sacred. The mixing, pounding, folding, punching, greasing, baking were sanctified as a community of believing women offered baked bread to the ritual of communion.

I don't think it is a coincidence that the seemingly arbitrary symbol of Christ's body is something that itself undergoes transformation. Jesus could have chosen a carrot, or a fig, or an apple—something that appears in nature much as it appears on our table. But He did not. Rather, He chose a symbol of transformation. As the flour, the yeast, the water undergo metamorphosis—from the inedible to the staff of life—so we can become new creatures as we move from the raw ingredients of an unformed, unholy life to the refined, kneaded life of discipleship. And like the rising of bread in the impatient time table of an eleven-year-old, sometimes the process of rising takes a very, very long time. All Saturday morning, and sometimes even longer . . . .

Reluctant

My mind wanders during the sacrament. Sometimes this is simply evidence of my humanity. Other times, though, it is because the weight of what I am accepting in Christ's gift of atonement is too much. I must consider some sobering truths:[3]

1. He was wounded for our transgressions.
2. He was bruised for our iniquities.
3. With His stripes we are healed.
4. He poured out His soul unto death.

Wounded, bruised, crucified all because sometimes I find it *inconvenient* to obey. I must be healed, but must the price be so high? Does it *really* require His stripes? How could I require that? How could I ask so much?

Are my unkind words, my unforgiving heart, my rebellious acts, my deliberate sins a worthy justification for the suffering and death of one who knew nothing of rebellion and sin? It is this disparity that causes me such pain. Reluctantly, cautiously, I take the healing bread and water, knowing that I will never fully understand the cost. And knowing that I will bring sins to the altar again and again. With His stripes I am healed; I am sorry to require so much.

Sinners' Bench

Sometimes I sit on a bench where we all tend to shyly pass the tray on without partaking, which invariably confuses those around us. How did all the sinners find each other? Do they save seats for each other? Are they marked?

I ask very different questions. When will we still sit together but also partake together? When will we cease to stubbornly close our mouths to the nourishment that would heal us? How long will we cling to the frail fellowship of those who think themselves outside of Christ's love? When will we finally know that the arms of Christ's mercy are extended all the day long?

I do not know. I wish I did. ♣

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[1] John 6:26; 48-51.
[2] Simone Weil, *Waiting for God.* Trans. Emma Craufurd (New York: Putnam, 1951). Translation of *Attente de Dieu.* (Paris: La Colombe, 1950).
[3] Isaiah 53:5 and 12.

Illustrations by Linda Hoffman Kimball

Blessing the Sick and Afflicted

Lisa Ray Turner
Littleton, Colorado

My college friend, Michael, died recently of AIDS. Until now, AIDS victims have been statistics, cold numbers spit out by computers. Suddenly though, with the news of Michael's death, the numbers have faces. One is a familiar face with dark brown eyes, a goofy grin and stick-straight hair, the face of my friend, a vivacious young man with a whole life ahead of him.

Michael and I, along with a close-knit group of college pals, discovered life together and revelled in the joy of youth. We shared our dreams and frustrations, discussing ad nauseam what we'd do with our lives and the part we'd play in saving the world. We toilet-papered houses together and laughed until dawn while eating cheesecake in all-night restaurants. Now he is dead at thirty-three, not long after those nights of silly college pranks and talking until the sun came up.

Besides being a first-class prankster, Michael was a member of the Church. He had served a mission and completed schooling at Ricks and BYU. At the time of his death, he was not active in an LDS congregation, but the imprint of Mormonism remained. Although he had chosen a lifestyle that was inconsistent with Church teachings, many Mormon values remained with him like knotted threads of a carefully stitched patchwork quilt. He grew up in the Church, as did all the members of our college gang.

We all feel sad about Michael's death. But I feel sadder about the last years of his life. Michael never told any of us—the group of friends who shared big chunks of life together—about his illness.

We had suspicions, of course, and after Michael's funeral, a friend admitted he'd suspected the truth when he saw a carefully concealed bottle of AZT on Michael's counter. Still, Michael didn't want anyone to know. He guarded his secret and maintained a near-normal life until his last months.

Many Church members want to ignore AIDS, thinking it's a problem that won't touch their lives.

Why did Michael deal with his terminal illness alone? Why couldn't we, his friends, help and support him? The simple answer says we lived far apart geographically and were each involved in our own busy lives, relegating college relationships to Christmas cards and infrequent reunions. Maybe that's true; however, other college friends within the same group have shared their pain despite these deterrents. We've commiserated over crises as disparate as failed marriages, depression, and the loss of babies. Why couldn't Michael do the same?

I wonder if Michael thought we'd sit in our comfortable homes, so far from AIDS hospital corridors, and smugly blame, judge, and condemn. As someone who strives to follow Christ, this thought troubles me.

What bothers me even more is that perhaps Michael was right. I've been disturbed at the reaction from acquaintances when I've told them about Michael's death. Invariably, they have immediately asked, "How did he get it?" or "Was he gay?" as if they want to withhold compassion until they know how he acquired the disease.

The victims of this cruel disease are not meaningless statistics but friends, sons, daughters, and ward members.

My response is always the same: "Does it matter?" A young man has suffered through a brutal sickness and died prematurely. His mother and father grieve for their lost son and try to get back to normal life in their small Idaho town, amidst ugly prejudice and a disease that they can only whisper about behind closed doors. Michael's friends struggle to mend the jagged hole his passing has left. These facts are indisputable, regardless of how the virus was transmitted.

Many Church members want to ignore AIDS, thinking it's a problem that won't touch their lives. Many think AIDS victims are not worthy of sympathy because "they brought it on themselves." However, Church members are not isolated from this disease. There are Michaels in wards everywhere. The victims of this cruel disease are not meaningless statistics but friends, sons, daughters, and ward members. Surely we, as Church members and Christians, can show our love and share in the grief of lives cut short.

We can remember how Christ treated people, especially the lowly members of his society—sinners, Samaritans, and lepers. When the Pharisees brought a woman guilty of adultery to Jesus, he did not condemn, humiliate, or judge but simply said, "Go thy way and sin no more." (John 8:1-11) This kindness is particularly poignant when considering that the punishment for adultery at the time was stoning. When the unvirtuous woman washed the Savior's feet, the disciples criticized, aghast that an immoral woman would dare to wash Christ's feet. Jesus freely forgave the woman and accepted her contrite gesture. (Luke 7:36)

Perhaps the most profound example of compassion is in Christ's treatment of the lepers. Leprosy was a vicious disease, disfiguring and incurable. Lepers were regarded with such abhorrence that they were required to dress in the clothing of death and announce their condition by the cry, "Unclean!" Nobody would go near a leper for fear of catching the dread disease.

The leper's grotesque appearance frightened even the most kind souls. The disease literally ate its victims alive, leaving discolored skin and scabs, decayed gums and teeth, and raw fleshy sores. Eyes could be consumed and fingers and toes decayed until they were gone. It was a common notion that God gave leprosy as a punishment.

To these most feared and scorned members of society, Christ showed empathy. He touched them freely. How good it must have felt for the lepers to feel the touch of another human being. He healed and cleansed them. He loved them. He never asked how they got leprosy or whether they were worthy of his charity. It didn't matter.

Christ has given us a perfect example of how to treat AIDS patients and their families. We shouldn't ignore or walk around them, as the people did to the Samaritans in Christ's time. Nor should we make them outcasts like the Biblical lepers.

Instead, we can welcome them into our circles of friendship and acknowledge their pain, as well as their joys and their will to live. We can laugh with them, share their lives, and mourn with their families when they are gone. Mostly, we can treat them like everybody else.

I never would have imagined that my healthy young friend would become a casualty of AIDS before his thirty-fifth birthday.

While it's true that some of us will not come in contact with a Michael, many of us will. I never would have imagined that my healthy young friend would become a casualty of AIDS before his thirty-fifth birthday. The uncertainty of life is such that it's impossible to predict what lies ahead.

Given this uncertainty, I hope the next time I know somebody with this disease, I'll be able to show I care. I hope I won't find a hidden bottle of AZT. I hope I won't blame or criticize. As Church members and followers of Christ, we can share these same hopes and, in doing so, bless not only ourselves but the Michaels of the world.

I Give My Heart . . .

Jenny Atkinson
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Several years ago, in a class about the history of Christianity, the professor explained that the word credo, *which is often translated as "to believe," was better understood in the context of a phrase like "giving one's whole heart." As I have thought about this subtle difference, I've tried framing my testimony in these words. It was enlightening to see what I felt I could give my whole heart to. At the time, I expressed my testimony in this way.*

I give my whole heart to God: I think very seriously about what God expects of me and how I can live the way God would like me to.

I give my whole heart to my family: They are my favorite people and some of my best examples. I also give my whole heart to living in ways that will help me to be a good part of another family some day. I am learning to think of family as more than just the people with whom I am related by blood or marriage.

I give my whole heart to being a Mormon: The people who know me best are probably surprised to hear me say this with all of the concerns I have about church issues, especially knowing that I am not very invested in or committed to institutions in general, but I think that lots of Mormon things can be separated from the institution and I look for these things. One example of this would be testimony meeting. I have always loved testimony meetings because, except for a few people who are unfortunately excluded, anyone can come up here and talk about what they are thinking, how they feel about God, and so forth. This forum allows us to build a real sense of community where we can learn to love, serve, and trust one another.

I give my whole heart to following the example of Jesus: I love studying about his life in the New Testament and trying to live and love like he did.

I give my whole heart to the struggle: It's hard for me to explain exactly what I mean by this because so much of our discourse has been reduced to PC lingo—words are so politically and socially loaded now. The closest I can come to explaining, I guess, would be to say that I give my whole heart to *seeing* people and things that our society tries to hide or make invisible. Some examples I've been thinking about lately include: people who don't have homes, hungry children, incarcerated women, men who are unable to help support their families because they have been disabled in a dangerous job or because they work for less than a living wage, people who speak the wrong language or use the wrong words or live in a reality that is different from the one that most of us are familiar with. For me, part of being in the struggle means being very careful about the career I chose or the jobs I take, what products I buy, who I vote for, how I spend my money and my time, what assumptions I make about other people and experiences. This approach is hard for me, and I don't usually succeed. I also don't plan to give up.

I give my whole heart to being joyful: Sometimes in the face of horror and inequality in our own lives or the lives of others we cannot have joy or it seems wrong to have joy. I think that God wants us to be joyful. I am joyful when I see parts of the world that are still beautiful. I am joyful when I see good work that people do. I am joyful when I am able to make good connections with people.

Poultry, Prestige, and Power

Linda Hoffman Kimball
Belmont, Massachusetts

The summer before I started college, I had a job in a factory picking the meat off chicken bones. My first day on the job I was determined to do my job well, to pick the meat in just the proper way, to flick the lights and darks off with finesse. However, after an hour trying my best on the job, I nearly fainted and had to spend a short spell on the nurse's cot recovering. "What went wrong?" I wondered. "Was this just a befouled case of 'What e'er thou art, act well thy part?'"

This job needed to be done. The service provided was important, and the money wasn't even bad. I concluded, however, that it did not need to be done with the same part of my brain I used in every other facet of my life. After a certain point, excellence was not required to get the meat off chicken bones; excellence was required in approaching the work in a way that would keep me healthy, awake, and sane. I found ways to enjoy the hours at Polo Chicken. For example, some of my hair-netted colleagues and I made up songs to ease the boredom. Like little chain-gang chicken pickers, we worked better to steady rhythms. I still remember the lyrics:

> Chicken, chicken give me your body, do.
> I'm half greasy over the skin of you.
> It won't be a stylish plucking.
> I cannot stand your clucking.
> But you'll look sweet
> With your white meat
> On a chopper just built for you!

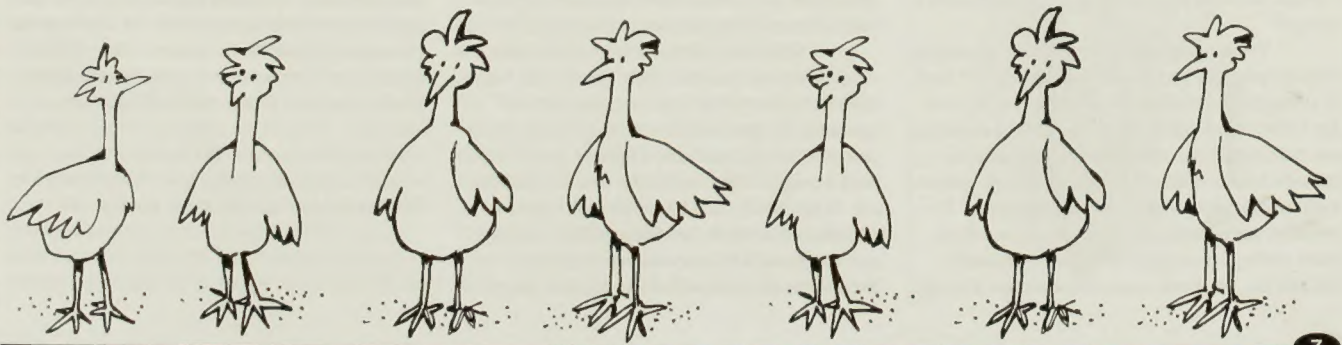
This job taught me things besides how to adapt poultry themes to music. It taught me respect for people who do production work day after day. When I am about to eat a Lean Cuisine meal, I really mean it when I ask God to bless the hands that prepared it. I praise mothers who watch Barney or Mighty Morphin Power Rangers five times a day. I thank God for long-distance truck drivers. And I raise my glass of milk in a toast to the diary farmers whose lives are scheduled around unrelenting bovine bodily functions.

All these jobs have a common element—tedium. But, tedium is not the only characteristic that can make an occupation trying. Depending on one's personality, any job can be a trial. Some people have not been able to choose their work situations and therefore feel trapped and resentful. Some *have* chosen their jobs and are still resentful. Some seem to have an inner core of contentment quite apart from whether they chose their work or had it forced on them. Although I respect people in each category, it is that last one—those with the inner core of contentment—from whom I have the most to learn.

In the scriptures, Christ picked out people for us to learn from. When I look at whom He chose, I see something I have begun to expect: Jesus has set the world's definitions on their ear. Poor widows and outcast women are honored and held up by Jesus as holy examples to all. Children are set on Christ's lap: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," we are told. How does it affect our understanding of truly valuable service when a simple young woman and an undistinguished carpenter become the guardians of the Son of God? When he calls fishermen instead of the politically powerful to be his leaders? Joy does not come from acclaim, nor success from wealth, fanfare, or the absence of conflict.

Clearly, this is not how our American society operates. Money and prestige and status get attached to certain occupations in ways that I have never been able to figure out. Recently, I got a modest pay check for some work I did for a periodical. Why was the photograph that graced the cover (and that took less than a second to snap) valued at three times the amount of the

(Continued on page 8)



Illustrated by Linda Hoffman Kimball

Poultry, Prestige, and Power

(Continued from page 7)

accompanying article that I had slaved over for weeks? I don't understand it, but I was glad to get a check.

I was asked recently, "What do you do?" It's a common question, but the answer is tricky. Do I list academic accomplishments? Do I list relationships to children or husband or parents or grandparents-in-law? Do I trot out my writing samples or my drawings? Do I talk about my hobbies or heritage or allergies? Do I talk about my Church callings? No matter which I choose to highlight someone might feel attracted, where another is put off.

I resist giving the expected answer: I'm a homemaker; I'm an artist; I'm a writer, or whatever. It is not just because I am perverse, although that may have something to do with it. I am full of contradictions. Am I a feminist, a devotee of the men's movement, an intellectual, a glue-gun expert, a liberal, a conservative? All of the above? None of the above? Labels give me the heebie jeebies. I feel as if I will be yanked asunder by all the tugging camps.

Still, answering like Popeye with "I am what I am and that's all what I am" doesn't communicate much. It will not get me a job or a temple recommend or, if circumstances were slightly different, a date. Society requires practical accommodations. I have tried to think of some handy and accurate titles to answer the question smoothly the next time it comes up—and inevitably it will. I could say I am doing field research in human development and child psychology. I am also the curator of a small private zoo. Given how many things I *choose* to do and how many things I *have* to do, I should just tell people I am a juggler. I covet a sweatshirt I saw advertised recently. It reads, "I am Woman. I am Invincible. I am Tired."

A socially acceptable list of credentials would not show the most important things I did last week. I listened to my eight-year-old read me *Mice at Bat.* I sang the complete theme song to the Yogi Bear Show with a friend in my kitchen. I wept over the recent loss of my mother. Society has no monikers for these connective accomplishments. But—I am coming more and more to understand—although society demands some accommodation, I do not have to give it my soul. I will, in fact, be damned if I do.

Does our Church society require accommodation? My mother made me think hard about that question just after my husband was called to be a bishop in May. My mother was not Mormon and didn't know much about the Church or its organizational structure. She had heard like the rest of the nation about President Benson's passing, and she knew that Chris was a new bishop. She asked, "Does Chris's promotion at Church have anything to do with Ezra Benson's dying?"

From her point of view, it was a perfectly natural question, but it made me chuckle. There is always some trickle-down effect, but not *this* far. More importantly, do we as Church members see calls as bishop, Relief Society president, mission leader, elders' quorum president, general authority as promotions? As prestige posts? Do we offer congratulations to someone to whom these callings have been extended—or condolences? Do we do the same for someone who has been called as a visiting teacher or a bulletin typist? Should we? Isn't one of our favorite Mormon pastimes speculating on who will be the next so-and-so in the ward or the stake? If we are thoroughly honest with ourselves—and God asks us to offer our *whole* selves, not just the good stuff—are we capable of letting go of this worldly reaction? What do we do with traces of ecclesiastical ambition?

But if, as imperfect human beings, we are not completely able (or willing) to give up this kind of evaluation, where do we draw the line in our accommodation to it? This question is not easy to answer. For example, in a ward where there are many new black members, but no black faces on the stand conducting, what do we do with the honest human need for mentors and role models? Where do the deaf go to see their language as the language of leaders? Do we women who lead have to have a podium to do it from? If you have answers to these questions, please let me know.

As a convert to the Church, one of its most appealing principles to me, at least in theory, is our commitment to lay leadership, to the fruit-basket-upset mode of Church organization. True, it can make for some boring meetings, peculiar management of auxiliaries, and teeth-clenching stress. But this system also provides the spiritual petri dish for something else. We can learn to love rather than just "deal with" one another. We can learn acceptance, tolerance, reconciliation, forgiveness, and patience. Hopefully, through all of this, we will also learn that our religion is no substitute for our individual relationship with deity. For all the "foyer follies," we are still called one by one to "come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him." (Mormon 9:27)

A ward can switch gears smoothly when changes happen or with squeals and groans, like a troubled transmission. Inevitably, some will prefer the old mode, and some will prefer the new. Someone who was once a stimulating Sunday School teacher is now a quorum secretary who has trouble with details. Someone with no rapport with children may be called to serve in the Primary even if it is obvious to the person, the bishop, and the Lord that the person really has no rapport with children. The question with Church callings is not "Why me?" or "Why not me?" Perhaps the question is, "What is the lesson I'm supposed to be getting out of this?" "What kind of service is required of me here?" As my experience at the chicken factory taught me, some jobs really only need to be done. When I get a Church calling I can ask "Is this the kind of assignment where I bring my creativity to the job itself or to the thinking up of chicken songs while I'm getting something dull accomplished?" More gracefully put, "How can I find peace, joy, and contentment in my present circumstance?"

Something different is going on with Church service than the "best" job for the "most capable" person. We're not supposed to be operating by the world's rules here. In my ward last year, my husband and I became good friends with a couple who were in the area for a sabbatical. While Marge and I buoyed each other as counsellors in the Relief Society, Bill was my second grader's Primary teacher. Bill had never been a Primary teacher before. He had been mission president in Hong Kong and had served as a bishop and in stake presidencies for years. I was very grateful that my son could be taught by a man who gave the same commitment to teaching second graders that he would have given to an executive calling. In the world's eyes, was this a demotion? Did I care?

When we lived in Illinois, I had the opportunity to be a temple worker. The kindly woman who trained me explained the simplest assignment first—to stand at various places in the temple to make sure people went the right direction. Someone had to stand at the door and greet people. Others had to stand farther back at stations in the building and gesture for the men to go one way and the women the other. These posts were only given in half-hour time slots because they were, of course, pretty boring jobs, and it was hard for some of the workers to stand up that long. The other assignments—the ones that required word for word accuracy and authority—were rotated with this assignment as "door keeper" as a matter of course. It was simply understood. It was just part of service in the temple.

I loved that! I was once again awash in the upside-downedness of gospel priorities. Do I lust for power? I will never get it. Do I chose to serve? I will be doused with the power required for it.

That first day at the temple in Illinois, I remembered a beautiful song called "Keeper of the Door" by a Christian singer, Twila Paris. She based it on Psalms 84:10: "...I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." The singer begins by describing a dream where she is proclaiming God's Word for thousands of people to hear. This seems like a holy ambition, similar to the "O that I were an angel" passage from Alma 29. It's a great dream; people come from all over to hear her, and her name is up in lights. But she sees the snag; whose glory is she more interested in? What—or whom—was she trying to magnify? Even a worthy goal cannot be fully accomplished without a humble attitude. She then prays to be a servant in God's kingdom. She prays to become familiar with the Way of Life in the dwelling place of God.

Door keeper. Chicken picker. Queen and priestess. Just put me where You want me.

That's the attitude I'm after.

My daughter, the vegetarian, can't stand to see me wrist deep in chicken parts. It's not my favorite thing to do either, but it is a great physical reminder of spiritual lessons. And what are those lessons still being worked into my own human bones? That as I live and work and worship I will search for ways to serve with joy and contentment; that I will examine my priorities; that I will try to discern the difference between God's view and the world's; that I will pray to know what questions to ask and have the courage to accept Godly answers; that I will understand the approach to take to accomplish what is required of me; that I will declare as Mary did, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word....My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." (Luke 1: 38, 46-47)

Nurture and Admonition

Hattie Soil
Las Vegas, Nevada

Ephesians 6:1-4 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I have some strong feelings about the responsibilities of parents. These ideas are shaped by my past experiences growing up poor and black and by Church teachings. It is Church doctrine that in the family children should be cared for and taught eternal principles. The most important of the Lord's work will be that which we do within our own homes.

In our home, my husband and I try to teach our children about gospel principles, including being morally clean and the importance of loving one another. When I was young, I wished that both of my parents believed in these principles.

My parents were divorced by the time I was six years old. My father, who was an alcoholic, did not share the responsibility of raising his family. He felt that because he was drunk all the time, it would be easier for him to leave.

My mom worked very hard and we saw very little of her. She made sure that we ate dinner with her or ate dinner while she was there. Most of the time, she did not eat dinner because there was not enough for her. As a child, I used to wake up in the middle of the night to find my mom on her knees crying and asking the Lord to help her feed her children another day. I learned something from this. I learned how to pray, what to ask for and that my mom loved us very much. I also learned an important lesson from my father and that was that I will never drink.

It is Church doctrine that children should be encouraged and allowed to receive as much education as possible to make sure that they are prepared for their life's work. My mom could neither read nor write and the only job she could ever get was that of a maid or a cook. She taught us how important it was that we should get a good education. She also stressed that what you learn or what you know should be shared with those who don't know.

We practiced this idea in our home with mother. We taught her the basic knowledge of words and how to sound them out. I remember that when I was in the third grade, she would ask me to read to her while she patched my brothers' jeans. She was hoping that she might learn something new from this. She didn't have time to go to school as an adult because she had a family to raise.

Years later, we taught mom how to read well enough to fill out a job application. She never had a desire to progress past this point. She obtained employment in a nursing home as a cook from the skills she had learned from her children. We were all so happy about that. We are also happy when mother sends her own Christmas cards out to her children. The cards never have return addresses on them so the postmen are forced to read and delivery them to us. We have never had a Christmas without a card from mother.

In our home, during family home evening, we discuss with our children the fact that grandmother was unable to read. We also discuss how much she missed out of life because of this problem. She has always told her own children that if she could read there would have been lots of things that she could have done and it would have b
een easier for her to raise her children. I disagree with her. With all the turmoil and racial problems that were occurring during the fifties these were the only jobs available for black women. I think that it is true that if Mother had been able to read, she could have made her life a little more exciting through books, art and literature and maybe understood things a little better.

It is also Church doctrine that we as parents should seek help first from family members and relatives who may be in a position to help. As a child, I have always lived in communities that were all black and all poor. My mother didn't have anything to give and no one had anything to give to us. It would have been a waste of time or a total embarrassment to ask relatives for something they didn't have. Her siblings talked about how sorry they felt for Mother struggling so hard. They wished that they could help her, but they were struggling too. My mother's favorite song during these times was "God Bless the Child Who Has His Own." We didn't quite have our "own," but we felt very blessed with the little that we did have.

The way we lived made us strong. We didn't have much, but we had each other. I know now that it wasn't easy for us and deep down it made us feel a little bitter toward society for the way we were treated, but we can't dwell on that because it will get in the way of our future and what we are trying to accomplish in this life. It is also Church doctrine that we teach our children good work habits and attitudes while they are young. These habits will likely stay with them later. This will make a difference between a useful, productive life and one that is idle and wasteful.

As children, we were never on welfare. We always helped Mother by working small jobs. My brothers usually had paper routes or delivered groceries and my sisters and I had baby sitting jobs or we went to work with mother and helped her. The ones who were left at home would take care of the other little ones and keep the house clean. We all pitched in. I am not saying that we didn't need welfare, but Mom didn't believe in it. Years later, I asked Mother if she had ever considered welfare. She said that she had, but that when she prayed about it, something always made her abort the idea. She had a lot of pride in herself, and she felt that she could have managed by asking the Lord for what she needed. Her ideas were shared by most black people in the fifties and sixties in Memphis. In the communities in which I lived, I had not heard of a family being on welfare. I was unaware that it existed until I moved to Chicago.

Some parents feel that they worked too hard when they were growing up and that they don't want their children to do the same. This is not my problem. I do want my children to work and help keep the house clean. I haven't quite mastered the concept of work in my home, but I am working on it. I want to help my children develop positive attitudes about work. I want to teach the lessons that work teaches. I don't want to tell my children how hard I have had to work all my life. I want them to develop a good attitude toward work. Perhaps the best way to do this is to help them find joy in their work even if it is just sweeping the kitchen floor.

I have included numerous black issues among these thoughts. I know that my children need to be aware of them and that they are as strong as I am. The hard times for them are ahead, and we have tried to teach them, in our family, how to cope with the problems that they will face as young black people. I do believe that they should remember one important lesson gained during our many discussions: *Do not judge people*; let God do that. If they remember this, they will be one step ahead of society.

None of us is perfect when it comes to raising our children. We were not born parents; we have to learn how *after* having our children. My mom made mistakes in raising us, and my husband and I have made mistakes in raising our children; however, we feel good when we know we have done the best that we could by building on gospel principles as well as the lesson learned from our lives.

The Lord of the Dance

Lisa Gosper Brereton
Orem, Utah

It is Hannah who first suggests we move into the old church. With lips pressed together, she concentrates on her leaps across the worn oak floor of the Pioneer Ward's gymnasium, knees high and arms outstretched.

"Find your starting shape again dancers," Miss Debbie calls out as the music ends, and she rewinds the tape. I recognize the tune as the Shaker hymn "Simple Gifts," but the words are new to me:

> Dance, then, wherever you may be,
> I am the Lord of the Dance," said He.
> And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
> And I'll lead you all in the Dance said He.

Hannah turns and skips to the music until she reaches me at the gymnasium door, where her classmates and her words tumble out together.

"My teacher says we can't dance here next year. They're going to tear down the church. But not yet. Can we live in it? Let's ask Miss Debbie." Hannah begins to lead me back to her dance teacher.

"I don't think Miss Debbie knows if we can live in the church or not." I pull Hannah and myself away from the listening huddle of mothers and children. "So, what did you learn in class today?"

"I already told you. They're going to wreck the church. We need a place to live. Why can't we live here?"

"I bet you're thirsty after all that dancing. Would you like a drink from the fountain?"

"Mommy, why can't we live in the church? No one will be here."

It's not the worst suggestion I've heard. "Okay Hannah, I promise to think about it."

We follow the crumbling sidewalk past the flower beds—now full of bright-faced pansies—as we had almost every week this past year. Yet just last month seems like a world away.

Four Sundays ago, our home burned to the ground. Like always, our family and everyone else in our Mormon neighborhood were in church for three hours that morning. By the time the firefighters were notified, the most they could do was prevent the blaze from spreading to nearby houses.

"Mommy, the wind goes through my dance skirt right to my tummy." Hannah skips ahead of me in the May breeze, a kite of peach tricot and caramel hair.

It doesn't seem possible that I can't drive home to 1072 Willow Way and find our brick colonial waiting for us. Just inside would be the mudroom lined with our coats, jackets, and sweaters of varying lengths and bulk, more or less hung on the two rows of Shaker pegs painted forest green. High on the walls would be the red berry vine I stenciled from a colonial pattern.

Past the mudroom would be the family room, where George convinced me to install the ceiling fan. "It will circulate the air," he persuaded, "and make the room warmer in winter and cooler in summer." I knew that he had heard this pitch from our neighbors, both with ceiling fans, who had heard this from the salesperson, with hundreds of ceiling fans. I didn't want to clean it, fix it, referee fights over it, but finally, it seemed like a small thing to make my husband happy. Until it caused the fire.

"Can we go out to eat, Mom? We can bring a corn dog back to Aunt Christie."

"Sure, Hannah. That's a great idea." I'm not in a hurry to get back to Christie's. Yes, I am very grateful she and her husband generously offered to share their home with us until the insurance claim is settled, but I don't know if any structure is large enough to happily house these four adults and ten children for that long.

While putting clean clothes away yesterday in our make-shift drawers of cardboard boxes, I found a stash of rusty wire, tin cans, a metal spring under Ethan's jeans: materials for his "makings," the last of which was a flat-bottomed boat that ended up as tinder when the fire reached the garage. And at least three times last night, I had to pull Stuart away from the TV. His cousins casually gazed at the murders on the screen while Stuart stared in horror. Finally, Eva and I found a quiet corner where we could read her favorite book, Children of the Forest by Elsa Beskow, that we had already replaced. The enchanting tale began as always: "Deep in the forest, under the curling roots of an old pine tree, was a small house. Warm and dry in winter, cool and airy in summer, it was the home of one of the forest families." But instead of working its usual magic and transforming us into the elfin family in mushroom caps, Eva and I could not be comforted.

I reach down for the Kleenex box wedged between the gear shift and my seat, feel only air, and remember the "tissue dispenser" under the dash of the new van, just one of the several "conveniences" in Package C that George was so keen on. Test drivers for Package C must have been part gorilla; my stretched arm stops short of the tissue dispenser by six inches. I miss "The Bee"—our old Suburban-with its comforting chatter and endless complaints of squeaks and groans. The kids and I loved how its cheery yellow heralded our approach to all who knew us. It had served us well; it deserved better than being burned alive in our garage. Even after the firefighters sprayed both our cars to prevent a gasoline explosion, The Bee somehow managed to preserve a small patch of its yellow, showing through the black and grey mess of char and phosphates.

I park the van in a far corner of the mall parking lot beneath a lone tree that seems a mirage in the shimmering expanse of asphalt. "The Eatery," with its neon signs of world-wide cuisine, is just inside the glistening front doors. We slide ourselves into the glossy booth. Hannah bites carefully into the bright orange cheese pieces skewered between the pink hot dog slices of her shish-ka-dog. I nibble at my mozzarella stick and search the house rental section of the newspaper. I make a list, a very short one, of the rental possibilities for families. After stuffing most of the available dwellings in town with all the single women and single men that a university attracts, there isn't much room left for those of us trying to live happily ever after. Especially those of us trying to rent a place for two dazed adults, four unpredictable children, and two hound dogs suffering from copious smoke inhalation and emotional trauma. Of course, the landlords are all suitably polite and appropriately sympathetic, as would be expected in a community known as "Happy Valley." Still, we do not fit their picture of perfect renters.

I think about the old church. Eva danced there before Hannah did, and that was the year I met Anne, Toni, and Kathryn. For one glorious hour every week, we'd talk in the foyer of the church: the unnameable red flowers that splashed the couch pulling us toward unknown rhythms and the serene green carpet rooting us in familiar patterns. We forgot everything else until the other mothers, rushing back from their fifty-eight minutes of errands, puzzled over us, cautious.

Sure-hearted Kathryn would be saying loudly, "... and I also think everyone in this valley would be a lot happier—and healthier—if we'd stop pretending that we're something we're not." Anne slid her eyes in the direction of the waiting mothers. One of them was in her ward.

"Don't worry about them, Anne," whispered Toni with her child-like grin. "They're just awed by the brilliance of our shining faces."

Hannah slides off the upholstered bench and down under the table, then emerges like a flower just burst into bloom."I'm done! Now what are we going to do?" I sweep the trash onto the orange tray and let Hannah dump it.

Back in the van, Hannah sings a story:

> ...so the little girl has
> nowhere to go,
> no place to sleep
> Her pillow is gone, oh where,
> oh where
> will she sleep?"

This spontaneous song sounds a lot like it could be from "The Sound of Music," which we watched last Friday night. We roll up miles of State Street and onto Christie's driveway.

Christie is supervising the planting of several yucca plants—all the neighbors have them this year. "What is that face for?" she asks me from behind the sweating, shoveling worker. "No reason to look so worried, is there?"

•

The clouds from the Sunday afternoon shower are just beginning to drift apart as we walk away from Christie and Allen's house. It's four blocks to the church, giving us some much needed time

before three hours of meetings. Ethan and Stuart spurt ahead, Hannah and Eva wander behind, and George and I talk.

"So what about staying in the university dorms?" he asks.

"They said there would be room," I explain, "as long as we don't mind moving each week to accommodate youth groups staying on campus through the summer.

"But that would be hard on you and the kids, wouldn't it?"

"You know, after spending seven hours trying to keep the Sabbath day holy in there," I glance back at the now smaller house, "I'm ready to live anywhere if we could have our own four walls around us. Anywhere."

George sings in mock desperation, "Some-wher-re over the rainbow..."

Allen drives by in his executive gray Volvo wagon, and Christie rolls down the window. Through the tinted glass, I can see Joshua shooting Nerf arrows at Jenny. "Is Janessa with you? We just realized she's not in the wagon."

They quickly catch up with Stuart; I see Christie waving her arms and shaking her head wildly. Stuart's shoulders droop, and his hands slowly open at his sides. They drive on, and we reach him.

"What's wrong Stu? Do you know where Janessa is?"

He will not look at us. "I told her Janessa ran past me to the church." We wait. "Aunt Christie told me I couldn't pick up the worms anymore." I remember now his bending and straightening in front of us along the sidewalk. "I was just moving them onto the grass so they wouldn't get squished and they could go back to their homes."

I put my arm around his slumped shoulders. "That's really kind of you, Stuart. I'm sure the worms really appreciate it. Just remember to wash your hands when we get to church." But as I look down, I see a smear of mud already on the front of his white shirt; perhaps his tie will cover it. Stuart walks, then skips, up to his brother.

"Meanwhile, back at the ranch," George continues, "there is no ranch. Except for the great little house in the 'tree streets'. . .

It was an older two-bedroom home on Oak Lane, and it was perfect; it even had a fenced-in backyard for the dogs. We had apprehensively mentioned our pets to the rental agent, and he had promised to check with the owner about the dogs before finalizing the agreement. George and I planned out sleeping arrangements while the agent made the call:

"Do you think Ethan and Hannah should sleep on the couch? Ethan stays up later than Hannah."

"Hmmmm."

"But Ethan might need more privacy than Hannah."

"Hmmm. Hmmm."

Then the rental agent turned and relayed the message: the dogs were welcome, but the owner would not allow children in the home. We momentarily toyed with the idea of bringing the dogs inside and setting up a tent for the children in the back yard.

●

I am made somewhat calmer by sacrament meeting, with its welcoming prayer and song and soothing rhythms, until the closing hymn:

> There is beauty all around, when there's
> love at home;
> There is joy in ev'ry sound,
> when there's love at home.
> Peace and plenty here abide. . .

Eva is still asking for water even after three trips to the drinking fountain; I grasp her hand and leave the chapel, suddenly also thirsty. I push the swinging door of the ladies room open but let it swing shut when I startle a group of women.

" . . so I bought their best carpet, but you should see it after just one month . . ."

Eva and I continue down the hall and out the smoky glass doors into the hot afternoon made just right by a cool canyon breeze. I sniff loudly and wipe my cheeks with the back of one hand, while taking Eva's smaller hand in the other. She looks up at me and sighs. I have a feeling that she has considered running from the chapel into the sunlight several times before. So have I.

I turn and look at the new church building with its pristine stucco, steel steeple and arched windows with plastic pane inserts, and I think of the old church. Its bricks are a warm blend of golds, pinks, and oranges—as if the church had been plastered with the sun-ripened skins of the apricots grown in the orchards that used to surround it. The wood around its many windows is painted the palest gold and looks like sunshine streaming out from inside the church. A small cupola grows from the gable above the front doors, home for several families of sparrows in brown tweed.

"What's the matter?" George catches up with the runaways. I take a deep breath. "It's just so hard. Too hard." I cannot continue, and what is there to say anyway? "Life is hard, and then we die." Too many times this past month, I have recalled Sister Nelson's jest from the Relief Society lesson that she gave that Sunday of the fire.

George picks up Eva and hugs us both to him. "I know. I know," he moans into my hair. The few remaining clouds bend and curtsey, then dance apart with the spring breeze.

●

After giving me the required four hugs and four kisses—"One for every year I am"—Hannah skips across the oak floor and finds a place in the dance circle. I watch her a minute and then tiptoe down the stairs to the foyer of the church. I can still hear the restless African melody from the gym; I put the book I had intended to read on the red-flowered couch. I am led to the left, down a long hall that ends in a steamy glass door of muted whiteness. Several rooms line the hall: a large one with just-right leaf green benches for the children's church meetings, another with *Jungle Book* characters painted on the walls for the nursery. Every room has at least one long rectangular window of veined glass, set high in the wall and scattering handfuls of light on the earthbrown linoleum. What would Ethan make, Stuart feel, Eva see, and Hannah do in these rooms?

Down the other hall is a large walk-in closet full of shapes I can't quite make out as I peer through the crack between the double doors. Beyond the closet is another door, which opens to more stairs, going down and dark. I can't find a light switch; so, I go down the stairs with my left hand on the wall, expecting to feel fur or flesh at any moment. I open the door at the bottom of the stairs and find a huge empty room with tall, tall ceilings ringed with wild light from the dimpled windows. Drumbeats from far away filter down through the room's vents to me.

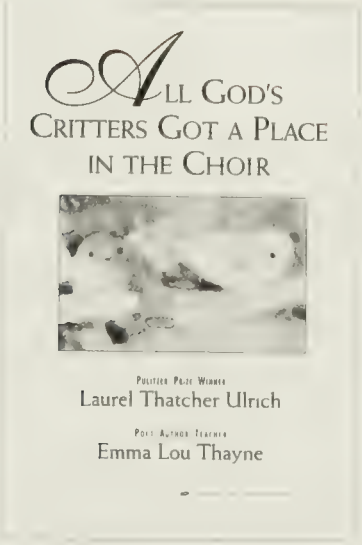
Back at the top of the steps, the hall turns and joins more stairs to the heart of the church where the chapel is. Its ceilings peak in the cooler air high above, but the chapel is warm with honey maple and stained-glass sunlight and geranium-red upholstery. My cold fingertips warm as I outline the carved finial of a beehive on the end of the pew. There's even a cry room in the back—separated from the chapel only by glass—something I had wished for many times as I sat nursing on the toilet seat in our church's modern ladies' room or walking a baby in the halls, unable to hear the meeting.

I climb the foyer steps again and pass the gymnasium. A haunting Celtic melody seeps through its closed double doors as I follow the steps to the top floor. The wide hall glows with light from the frosted-glass balcony doors and the old radiator coils shimmer in burnished silver.

The first room off the upstairs hall is large with three pairs of almost perfectly square windows: a wonderful master bedroom. Next to it is another classroom with two pairs of windows—plenty of room for two beds and a dresser for the girls. Past this room the hall narrows and tries to hide a small room with one wide window; I can almost see Ethan bent over one of his secret projects here. Next to it is another door—locked—maybe another bedroom just right for Stuart. At the end of the hall is the ward library—now only shelves with remnants of teaching aids: paper triangles torn from the bent corners of pictures, broken crayons, and the lingering smell of Borden's paste. I wonder where the water pipes are? This spot would be a nice one for a small bathroom.

Back in the upstairs hall, the open double doors reveal steps down to what makes the gymnasium also a "cultural hall": the stage. I let my feet lift and touch to the Native American music as I silently cross on the stage, behind the closed black velvet drapes. A cotton backdrop curtain swells towards me then bows back into place; behind it, I find an open door to the kitchen. It's like stepping into the fifties, back into my childhood: the appliances are white and chrome with rounded edges, all whirling in aqua linoleum, counters, walls, and ceilings. I cross the floor—balancing on the turquoise squares only—to another door that goes back into the gymnasium. I bend down to peek over the split Dutch door used for serving. Hannah and her dancing partners twirl and leap to the drumming from Miss Debbie's tape player. I look past the dancers up to the long row of windows—all-seeing sentinels—their light flows over the dancing children, over Miss Debbie, and over the half-door onto me still kneeling there.

"Wonderful work, all of you. Wonderful dancing! Now find your ending shape. . . ." ✤



The "East/West" in this issue comes in the form of Emma Lou's introduction of Laurel on the occasion of Laurel's receiving the Association of Mormon Letters Honorary Lifetime Membership Award and Laurel's lecture given at the presentation of the award. On January 14, 1994, these "East/West" sisters met and complemented each other once again, this time in person. Of special note here is the publication of Emma Lou's and Laurel"s new book of essays (some of which first appeared in Exponent II) All God's Critters Got a Place in the Choir *by Aspen Books in Salt Lake City. It should be out by May 1995 and will be $14.95.*

Introduction of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

Association of Mormon Letters Visiting Scholar Lecture

Emma Lou Thayne
Salt Lake City, Utah

Among our usual days, we find human beings who shine here and there. Such a one is this Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, like a prism, multi-faceted—New Hampshire scholar, wife, mother, friend, teacher, speaker, writer feted in just the past two years with a Pulitzer, the Bancroft, a MacArthur (in the world of letters right up there with the Ty Detmer Heiseman in football!), dinner at the White House, and invitations to be part of esoteric presentations across the history and literary worlds. She does everything the rest of us do—only better—even as she stays as natural as her Idaho beginnings and Utah education. How does she manage all this?

Maybe it can best be explained by what she does best—telling a story.

Hanging in a lighted corner of what used to be my mother's sitting room, in our home where she lived with us for fifteen years, is a sampler. On it are cross-stitched, meticulously, the alphabet, numbers to 14, and a verse: "When daily I kneel down to pray/ As I am taught to do/ God does not care for what I say/ Unless I feel it too." Most important is the cross-stitched signature, *Emma Turner, aged seven years, September, 1840.*

Emma Turner has been after me for weeks to find her. She's my great-grandmother, my namesake, and lately a presence in my dreams. Who was she? How did she live? When? Where? And why does she want me—a non-genealogist—to know?

Two days ago, I paid a very green visit to the Genealogy (geen-e-alogy, my dictionary says!) department—The Family History Center—to find her. A young sister missionary from Brazil fed me a keyboard, and lo, unto me were delivered these fifteen pages identifying my Emma Turner. In the Ancestral File, backward and forward, run her lines—from four generations back to 1721 on a pedigree chart to her birth in 1833 in Malvern, England, her marriage in 1857 in Salt Lake City, and her death in 1875 in Farmington, Utah through four generations on a Descendancy Chart—from her oldest child, my grandmother, Emma Louise Stayner, to my mother, Grace Richards, to me, Emma Lou Warner. Bonanza! I was thrilled. I had found her.

But had I? I knew her years, her coming to Deseret, her marriage, her ten children's births, her death at 42, my genetic connections to her. But what did I know *of* her? Not one thing. Never did I want so much to have my friend Laurel beside me. She could likely find it all—in the fabric of her sampler, in a sample of her writing, in a history of Farmington, or in a recipe book handed down to my grandmother to my mother to me. She might even find a connection between her birthplace, Malvern, England, and Malvern Avenue that leads into solid Tudor Highland Park Ward where I housed my first twenty-five years and where I am in the cornerstone as the first baby blessed there in 1924. Into the skeleton lines on these pages, Laurel could inject blood and tears, passion and frustration, longing and hope. She could bring me into the picture knowing why I am there.

That is why this woman tonight can ignite history with the matches she strikes in the dark in her search for significance in the ordinary. More even than a historian, she is that storyteller.

In a moving new film, *Shadowlands,* C.S. Lewis reiterates a student's conviction: "We read books so we know we are not alone." Laurel *writes* them to let that happen.

How better not to feel alone than to be given a companion from the past to walk into our lives and remember what is yet to come by redefining our sensibilities today? To feather our despairings and hopes with a real person's managing of dailiness?

Think what she could bring to my Emma Turner—and to me.

First, her dogged and illuminating *curiosity.* Laurel would find Emma Turner—in records and cemeteries—yes, but more . . . all that might erupt in the story, Laurel would spin as Emma might have the flax for the linen of her sampler. With Laurel's gifts—imagination flossed with surprise—that little girl would become a woman, her dailiness as visible as the dates on her headstone. My Emma Turner would have whatever tantrums or doldrums or fancies or frailties that went with her strengths and witticisms and loving kindnesses. She, like Laurel, like you and me, would be human. And graced with the divine of being unique .

Second, Laurel would bring her *selectivity.* Because Laurel has focus, all essential parts of the patchwork get pulled together. Even in their apparent haphazardness, she can discern pattern, feel feeling. I'd know a lot more than Emma's being a first wife of Arthur Stayner. I've heard, goodness knows, about him and his speaking seven languages and Brigham's urging him into an ill-fated sugar business and his dying at eight-two after marrying—can it be?—five wives? How did Emma feel about this, them? And about her ten children, two dying before they were two? Was my grandmother—Emma Louise, oldest child—elected or birthed into taking over the remaining 8 at 18, when her mother died? How I'd love to know.

If to the neurotic all things are of equal importance, Laurel's far-from-neurotic gift of focus would make Emma's story eminently sane to read and follow.

Third, she could let Emma Turner be herself. Laurel's *honesty* allows it. She has freedom of intent. She knows that to praise one thing is not to condemn another. In her candor, she lets be her capacity to appreciate difference even as she delineates our samenesses. As in the 15th Psalm, ". . . she walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in her heart." She can afford to acknowledge anger as well as affection, amusement as well as deference. Her story makes room for it all. She can be a model because she does not try to be—and do the same for the person she writes about.

Real freedom is allegiance without ambition. Laurel's Emma Turner could be real, not defending a stance, hers or anyone else's, with no hidden agenda that might color the truth. Because, like Laurel's, hers would be her own voice. And in fresh continuity her being could pass on to me options without chains, thoughtful opportunities without strings. She could converse without needing to convert—and thereby invite conversion.

She would retain her ability to question her own assumptions about her history, her education, her church, her relationships. What did she feel? Know? Being comfortable with *not* knowing is a great discovery. Being comfortable with what we know, an even greater one.

Was my great-grandmother comfortable with herself? As Laurel is? Was she like the Amish, needing to make no distinction between the sacred and the everyday? For them, "Five minutes in the early morning and five minutes in the evening were devoted to prayer. The rest of the day was spent living their beliefs. Their life was all one piece. It was sacred—and all ordinary." (*Simple Pleasures*) Did she also regard life as sacred—and simple even in its complex-

ity? Did attention to the ordinary make her extraordinary? As it has Laurel? With no deep, self-conscious search for self-expression—simply taking enjoyment in every step of the process?

Fourth, did she, like Laurel, grow as she grew up—even to her only forty-two years? Did she grow from the prayer on her sampler at *"aged seven years"* with God caring about her feeling it too? How did she become a grown-up version of *childness,* the only word I could invent to describe my death experience seven years ago—what we were born to, in whatever generation or circumstance, what we lose with our trailing clouds of glory and regain on our return. At the end of experience, did she know *allness,* the sum of our parts and players and fields and convictions—what the best know how to be true to. Like Laurel?

Finally, Laurel writes as a *personist:*. She represents an island—maybe a continent—of sanity and stability between extreme anything: male chauvinist on one end of the spectrum, radical feminist on the other. She is on the side of life—of finding it more abundantly, for both women and men through and with each other. She finds it in the fabric of living. And in recording it. Like her Martha Ballard in *A Midwife's Tale,* by "mustering grease and ashes, shaking feather beds and pillows to attention, scrubbing floors and lines into subjection, she restore[s] a fragile order to a fallen world." (p. 219)

As other historians are caught up in the flow of the proverbial river of battles and governments, tyrants and tirades, peace and its evanescence, Laurel Thatcher Ulrich saunters among us citizens on the banks, noting and celebrating, understanding where we come from and what we're about.

Of course Martha Ballard left a diary along with the bones of genealogy that even I might dig up. But it was not the diary alone that told her story. It was Laurel Thatcher Ulrich detecting and celebrating that story. Historians before had judged the diary "filled with trivia about domestic chores and pastimes." Laurel's gift of appreciation of what others might not see is what makes her the writer we honor today.

Oh, yes, I would have her in my pocket to derive and explain and make me smile at just who in the world I come from and am. And oh, would my Emma Turner beg to come alive under the exquisitely tuned eye of a Laurel Thatcher Ulrich.

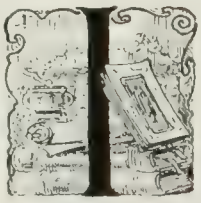
I yearn for her kind of story—not ever to feel alone. And with Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Winter Night,"

> The day has gone in hewing and felling,
> Sawing and drawing wood to the dwelling
> For the night of talk and story-telling.
>
> . . . .
>
> Here are question and reply,
> And the fire reflected in the thinking eye.
> So peace, and let the bob-cat cry.

The peace of a story to let us understand any cry. Tonight, we travel with Laurel, Clio, and Elijah in the Family History Center. Another story. Emma and I can hardly wait. ✤

Clio Meets Elijah at the Family History Center

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich
Durham, New Hampshire



I am a professional historian and also volunteer two or three times a month as a librarian in the Family History Center in our stake. When I was asked to speak at this Association of Mormon Letters gathering in Salt Lake City, I decided to tray bringing my two lives together by imagining a meeting of Elijah and Clio.

Every Latter-day Saint knows Elijah, the prophet who turned "the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers" by restoring the keys of genealogy and temple work. But who is the mysterious Clio?

When my husband heard the title of my lecture, he said, "Oh, yes, Clio. Isn't she mentioned in Paul's epistle to the Romans?" I panicked and ran to my Concordance. To my great relief, I did not find a New Testament Clio. It was very important to my comparison that Clio remain a pagan.

In Greek mythology, Clio is one of the nine muses who sprang from a union of Zeus and Mnesmosnye, or Memory. Although we usually speak of the "muses" collectively, each has a name and a mission. Clio is the muse of history.[1]

Historians aren't the sort of people who usually admit to having muses. Poets have muses. Historians have only footnotes. Yet, in language and in our institutional life, we acknowledge Clio playfully and with some affection. She is to our clan what the Goddess of Liberty is to the U.S. Congress—an abstract representation who has no immediate influence on our daily work. Clio is whatever we wish to make her. We name awards after her and sometimes invoke her name in the titles of books. When I was in graduate school in the 1970s, historians were heatedly debating the virtues of something they called Cliometrics —a marriage of history and statistics. Clio has survived many marriages since Hesiod first invoked her name. I suppose she can survive a meeting with Elijah.

I chose the title to my talk impulsively, thinking it would give me an opportunity to explore the relationship between my secular work as a historian and my Church calling at the Family History Center. I expected to discuss the differences between history (Clio's territory) and genealogy (Elijah's realm). Yet, the more I thought about the actual work that goes on in a Family History Center, the less satisfied I was with that comparison. I wanted to use the two figures more freely to symbolize contrasting approaches to the past. Yes, history and genealogy meet every day at Family History Centers across the United States, but I am not at all certain that Clio is responsible for all the history and Elijah for all the genealogy.

Clio was a Greek, Elijah a Hebrew. Hence, the two figures can be seen to represent the ongoing and never totally resolved tension in Western culture between the Greek commitment to reason and the Hebrew tradition of faith—a tension resolved, I think, in the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith and in the concept of the Kirtland Temple as a house of both "learning" and "faith" (D&C 88:119). To me, it is one of the great paradoxes of Mormon history that a man capable of translating the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of the Holy Ghost would take the trouble to study Hebrew so he could better understand the Bible. That's a little like what happens every day at our Family History Centers. Motivated by the spirit of Elijah, we sit in front of microfilm readers and do the works of Clio.

My contrast between Clio and Elijah is not, then, a contrast between good and evil, between the ways of the world and the ways of the Lord. It is a contrast between two very different ways of approaching the past, both of which have something to teach us, and both of which are perfectly evident in the Joseph Smith Memorial Building [the site of the AML meeting].

When I walked into the Joseph Smith Memorial Building, the remodeled and rededicated Hotel Utah, for the first time, I did a double take. The marble figure of Joseph Smith in his 1840s frock coat seemed entirely out of plan in the late-Victorian lushness of the 1911 building. Clio was leaning over my shoulder at that moment. Clio doesn't like anachronisms. She wants us to know the distance—materially, culturally, intellectually, and perhaps even spiritually—between 1842 and 1900.

Those things don't matter much to Elijah. He symbolizes the unity—not the distance—between present and past. As Doctrine and Covenants 128:18 tells us: "For it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of time, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time." The spirit of Elijah not only melts away the distance between past and present, it pierces the veil between heaven and Earth. Clio allows us to encounter the dead only through the things that they leave behind. She is behind an old aphorism in my profession: No source, no history. Nothing is more sacred to Clio than sources. She teaches us that we can know only as much of the past as surviving letters, diaries, censuses, and artifacts can teach us.

At a winter dinner party at our house, the conversation turned to genealogy and temple work. One of our guests told us about taking her

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)
mother to northern New Hampshire to find the birthplace of an elusive great-grandfather. "Mother has worked for years trying to find his records," our friend explained. "Of course, she's still not sure this is where he was born, but when she saw the town, she just felt it was the right place." That's what's known in Latter-day Saint culture as the confirming evidence of the Spirit. Historians can't get away with that sort of evidence. But I'm not sure that my friend's mother can either. She will have to prove her great-grandfather's existence through finite and earthly sources—Clio's sources—before she can do his temple work. She would be delighted with the new computer cluster in the Joseph Smith Memorial.

The Latter-day Saint interest in records is truly puzzling to outsiders. Last year at a historical meeting, someone shared with me a conversation that he overheard while he was doing research at a small archive in Pennsylvania. Two members of the staff there were discussing the impending visit of a team of technicians from the Family History Center in Salt Lake City.

"They are coming to film our records," the first man explained.

"Oh, we can't let them do that," said the other. "Don't you know what they do with those records? They'll turn all our ancestors into Mormons!"

The first man responded dryly, "If you really think they can do that, you'd better join their church."

For most Latter-day Saints, the two enterprises—genealogy and temple work—seem perfectly compatible. We never stop to think about the paradox inherent in our system. To renew our own covenants with God, we must connect ourselves to other people, long dead. We achieve that connection not only through vicarious temple work but by *library work,* saving ourselves and saving our dead by concentrating on the most mundane and tedious of tasks—researching names and dates. The emphasis on records is right there in Doctrine Covenants 12. In verses 2-4, the prophet instructed the Nauvoo saints to establish recorders in each ward. "You may think this order of things to be very particular," he continued in verse 5, "but let me tell you that it is only to answer the will of God, by conforming to the ordinance and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who would die without a knowledge of the gospel." There can be no mistake about the importance in Joseph Smith's mind of connecting the dead and the living through records.

Verse 24 concludes: "Let us, therefore, as a church and a people, and as Latter-day Saints, offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; and let us present in his holy temple, when it is finished, a book containing the records of our dead, which shall be worthy of all acceptation." If God knows every sparrow, he surely must know his children. I can't believe he needs our help to identify the dead. All this effort must be for our sakes—and for those other persons, once living, who remain connected to us.

Not too long ago, I was telling a historian from New York University about my work at the Family History Center. I told him how people from every walk of life fill our little room three times a week. "People really do connect with the past," I said. "As professionals, we are sometimes contemptuous of popular history and of genealogy, but it is important."

"Yes," he answered, "as long as those people are doing something more than filling in crossword puzzles."

I suspect that some of the amateur genealogists who come to our center are engaged in a diversionary pastime, like doing crossword puzzles. I am sure that many Latter-day Saints also miss the larger significance of their work. My experience at the Family History Center tells me that most people who really get engaged in research are animated by something larger, however, that there is a spirit to genealogical research. Whether it comes from Elijah or Clio, I cannot say. All I know is that the amateur researchers, mostly non-members, who come to our center week after week, have a glow about them as they follow the thin threads that lead them through the past.

It is true, however, that historical research and genealogical research are very different. When I go into a county courthouse to look at probate records, the clerks, assuming that I am a genealogist, usually ask, "What name are you looking for?"

"All of them," I answer.

At the moment, I am working on hundreds of probate inventories recorded in Hampshire County, Massachusetts, between 1690 and 1760. My objective is to understand more about the life of a woman named Hannah Barnard, who left a marvelous oak cupboard with her birth name painted on it when she died in 1717. It is not enough for me to know who Hannah's parents were or that her husband listed her furniture when he made his will in 1725 or that Hannah's granddaughter eventually inherited the cupboard. To fully understand Hannah's story, I need to understand the pattern of inheritance that made it difficult for early American women to transmit property from one generation to another. One name won't give me a pattern. Only by knowing "all of them" can I fully understand one of them.

My experience with Hannah's cupboard suggests the broader differences between Clio and Elijah. I became interested in the cupboard when I was asked to keynote a symposium on regional New England Furniture held in conjunction with a set of exhibits at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut. One exhibit featured Hadley chests, a distinctive furniture form built in the Connecticut River Valley between 1680 and 1720. Hannah's cupboard is a Hadley chest. When a reporter for the *Hartford Courant* saw the show, he saw a "protofeminist message" in Hannah's cupboard. Why else would a woman paint her maiden name in bold letters across a piece of furniture that she took into marriage? A local furniture collector came to a very different conclusion. Because men controlled property in this period, the cupboard must have been a gift from Hannah's future husband. It was "a Valentine in furniture." Each interpreter read twentieth-century experiences into an eighteenth-century cupboard. They wanted to connect present and past and draw personal meaning from that connection. They must have been inspired by Elijah.

The furniture historians assembled at the show were too high-minded to consider such questions. In their efforts to be objective, they focused on measurable attributes and broad but definable characteristics. While acknowledging that the woman's name on the cupboard "made a strong statement" about her role "as keeper of the household and a major portion of its assets: valued textiles and silver," the catalog of the exhibit concentrated on stylistic analysis ("The Barnard cupboard was a stage for new Baroque concepts conveyed through traditional Hampshire County ornament") and on details that could be empirically affirmed (under polarized light microscopy the paint on the columns turned out to be a mixture of white lead and Prussian blue, an artificial pigment first synthesized in Berlin in 1704). The furniture scholars were tuned in to Clio.

Bringing Elijah's question to Clio's methods yields a very different result. Instead of backing away from contemporary questions, as the furniture scholars did, or collapsing present and past, as the newspaper reporter attempted to do, we can use our own deeply felt need to understand gender relations to motivate a broader search of the evidence. Furniture was a form of property as well as a decorative object, and a close examination of early records demonstrates that males and females typically inherited very different forms of property in early America. Wills and inventories not only distributed family resources across generations, but also defined gender. "Real property," or land, was normally passed from father to son. Women received most of their inheritance in "moveables"—pots, pans, featherbeds, cows, and such. This division was hardly neutral. As anthropologist Annette Weiner has shown, the Western concept of "real property" (preserved in our use of the term *real estate*) is the Western European version of an ancient division between "alienable" and "inalienable" possessions. Inalienable possessions give the owners the ability to transcend death, perpetuating their names and identities across time. "Moveable" property, on the other hand, could be passed indiscriminately from one person to another. In Western society, women were themselves moveables, changing their names and identities as they moved from one male-headed household to another.

The name on Hannah Barnard's cupboard made it less moveable. It was handed down through the female line, carrying Hannah's maiden name and memory with it. While there is no other cupboard exactly like Hannah's there are hundreds of other household objects marked in a similar way. In a world in which women became *femmes couvert* at marriage, their identities legally subsumed in those of their husbands, marked spoons, chests, sheets, towels, and embroideries perpetuated female lineages.

Female property was not simply a parallel form of male property, however. Tracing the provenance of household objects allows us to see how women created a less linear, less exclusive sense of "family," preserving multiple allegiances and multiple connections across time. Of course, men did that, too. Patrilineal naming

patterns, like formal property law, obscure the real nature of kinship in early America. Following "male lines" from one generation to another misleads us into thinking that women were merely vehicales for perpetuating male lines of inheritance. Unfortunately, some of us perpetuate that fiction in our own genealogical research. Focusing on the top lines on our charts, we move the "moveables." As we redirect our attention toward all the lineages in our past, something marvelous happens. We are no longer part of the "Ulrich family" or the "Thatcher family." We become brothers and sisters across time.

I think that it is significant that the Church now emphasizes family history rather than genealogy. Genealogy gives us the opportunity to relate to the dead one by one. History asks us to consider the larger human family of which we are a part. There may be less of a contradiction between the two than at first appears. In a fascinating essay in *The New Yorker* some years ago, Alex Shoumatoff wrote about the relationship between human history and the "mountain of names" being gathered in Salt Lake City. While each of our pedigrees grows exponentially as we move backward in time (two parents giving way to four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents, and so on), at some point every pedigree collapses in on itself, as remote ancestors from one line begin to overlap with those from another. Within fifty generations, we are all part of the same family tree. "History can be seen," Shoumatoff concludes, "as a mosaic of billions of overlapping pedigrees" (60). Ironically, the more successful we are in tracing our own folks through time, the more we discover our relationship to others.

In Shoumatoff's words:

> If all of us could be made aware
> of our multiple interrelatedness,
> if the same sort of altruism that
> usually exists among close kin
> could prevail through the entire
> human population, if this vision
> of ourselves could somehow
> catch on, then many of the
> differences that have polarized
> various subpopulations from the
> beginning of human history . . .
> would seem secondary. (60)

Or, in the words of Malachi (an Old World prophet) reinterpreted by Moroni (a New World messenger):

> Behold, I will reveal unto you
> the Priesthood, by the hand of
> Elijah the prophet. . . . And he
> shall plant in the hearts of the
> children the promises made to
> the fathers, and the hearts of the
> children shall turn to their
> fathers. If it were not so, the
> whole earth wold be utterly
> wasted at his coming.

To summarize, in broad terms, Elijah represents faith, Clio reason; Elijah unity between present and past, Clio distance; Elijah a quest for personal connection, Clio a search for broad patterns. What then are we to make of the fact that Elijah is male and Clio female? Is this one more example of the absurdity of gender stereotypes? The irony is deeper.

Elijah, unlike Clio, actually has a history. He is not only the white-robed messenger who appeared to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple in 1836. He is the inhabitant of Gilead who confounded the priest of Baal, raised the widow's son, and fasted forty days and nights on Mount Horeb. Even in Greek mythology, Clio remains an abstraction. The muse of history has no history. No place, no time, no defining stories are attached to her name.

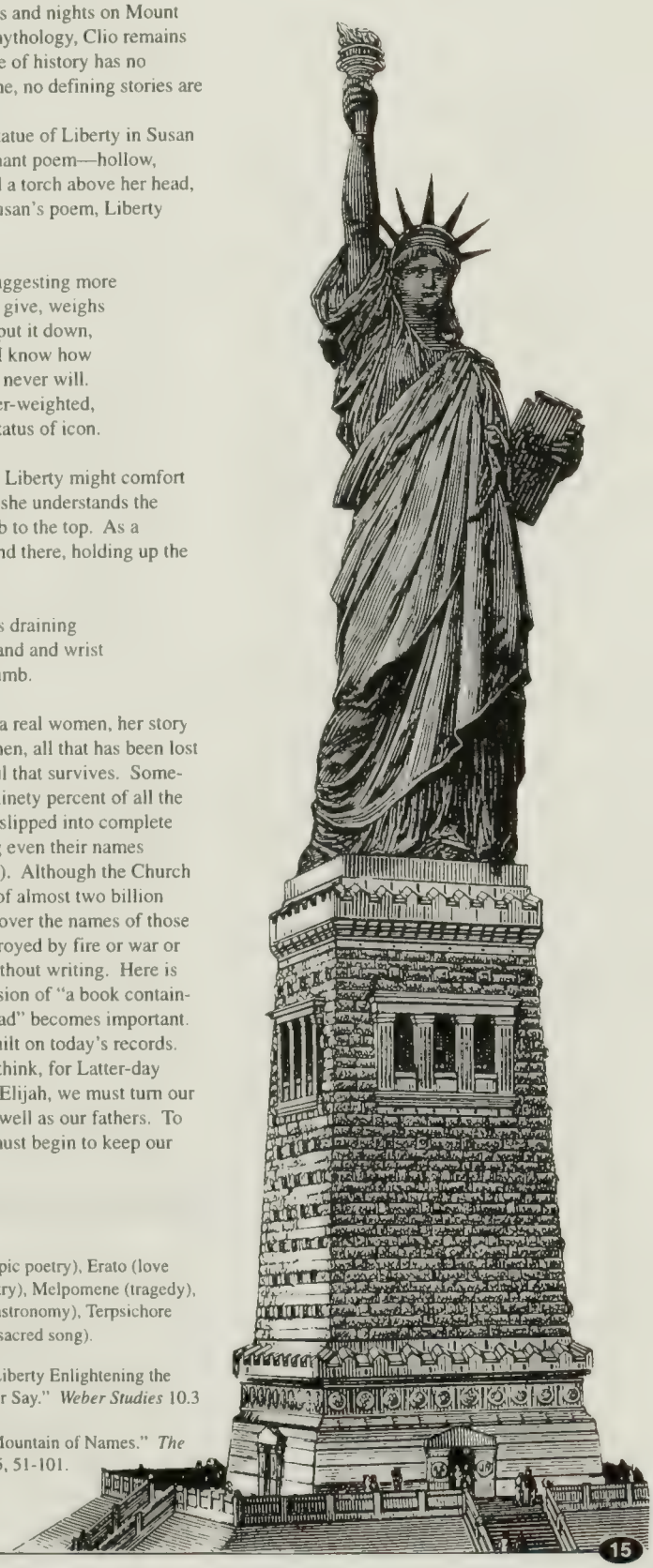
She is like the Statue of Liberty in Susan Elizabeth Howe's trenchant poem—hollow, empty, consigned to hold a torch above her head, a book on her arm. In Susan's poem, Liberty finally has her say:

> And the book, suggesting more
> Than it will ever give, weighs
> a ton. I want to put it down,
> Tell my visitors I know how
> Their lives go. I never will.
> I am huge, copper-weighted,
> Supporting the status of icon.

As a real person, Liberty might comfort her visitors, telling them she understands the vertigo of their stiff climb to the top. As a symbol, she can only stand there, holding up the torch, year after year,

> . . . Blood always draining
> From my arm, hand and wrist
> Always going numb.

If Clio ever was a real women, her story is lost. She represents, then, all that has been lost from history as well as all that survives. Someone has estimated that "ninety percent of all the people who ever existed slipped into complete oblivion, without leaving even their names behind" (Shoumatoff, 63). Although the Church has collected the names of almost two billion people, it will never discover the names of those whose records were destroyed by fire or war or who lived in societies without writing. Here is where Joseph Smith's vision of "a book containing the records of our dead" becomes important. Tomorrow's history is built on today's records. There is a lesson here, I think, for Latter-day Saint women. To honor Elijah, we must turn our hearts to our mothers as well as our fathers. To give Clio a history, we must begin to keep our own.



[1]The others are Calliope (epic poetry), Erato (love poetry), Euterpe (lyric poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Thalia (comedy), Urania (astronomy), Terpsichore (dance), and Polyhymnia (sacred song).

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Reflections on Meg Munk and Seasons of our Lives

Kay Atkinson King
McClean, Virginia

The author of Ecclesiastes (3:2) talks about a time for every season: "A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted." As I recently re-read Meg Munk's "Pillars of My Faith" in *Exponent II* [Volume 18, Number 3 (1994)], I thought about her time, my time, and about our seasons together.

Meg was my friend. She was a wonderful writer, poet, and human being. When she faced her terrible struggles—first with an armed attacker invading her home and then later with ovarian cancer invading her body—I, along with many others, felt compelled to offer love and support. But we did not know what to say to her or how to relieve her burdens. I felt frustrated and helpless—sitting on the sidelines, watching her battle against tremendous odds.

We shared some wonderful moments together. Just after she had finished her first series of chemotherapy treatments and her cancer was in remission, our families shared a beach house in North Carolina for a glorious week. She and we were full of hope and excitement. I have vivid memories of her bobbing in the waves, trying to keep the scarf, which covered her bald head, from being washed away in the surf.

But the cancer returned, and she was soon back to greater uncertainty and more torturous treatments. I remember talking with one of Meg's friends, sharing our frustrations about what we could do for her. We decided that redecorating her kitchen might cheer her up. Meg had torn out some tiles to start the process just before her life had fallen apart again. The half-tiled walls were a constant reminder of the disruption and chaos she was facing. We knew that Meg and her family were going to Cambridge for a few days for a Harvard class reunion—both she and Russ, her husband, had gone to school there. So as a surprise, we conspired to re-do the kitchen during her absence.

A few days later, I picked Meg up at the hospital and put her on the plane to fly to Boston to join the rest of her family who had traveled there earlier. Then I went directly to her house to start the work. Much to my surprise, word of this project had spread, and people came from everywhere with offers of help. It was obvious that I was not the only one who loved Meg and wanted desperately to do something for her. We had opened up a Pandora's box of love and frustration.

Over the next three days, thirty or more people pitched in to re-do the Munk house, contributing countless hours to help our project succeed. It was not so much that the house needed the work, it was that *we* needed the opportunity to do something tangible to show Meg and her family how much we cared, how much we wanted to help in some way.

What had started out as a project to remove the tile in the kitchen turned into a major overhaul. Kitchen walls were spackled, painted, and wallpapered; cabinets painted; curtains made; and a new floor installed. The people and the love kept pouring forth, and so the project grew larger. New comforters, sheets, and rugs were purchased for the master bedroom. The bedroom walls were painted. A new mattress appeared in one of the children's rooms. Windows were made to sparkle. The whole house was scrubbed from top to bottom. The lawn was manicured, trees trimmed, the garden tended, and the gutters cleaned.

This labor of love brought people together who did not even know each other. We worked together; we cried together. When we had done everything we could possibly imagine or had time for, we left a bouquet of fresh flowers on the dining room table and then—like the shoemaker's elves, who secretly made the shoes and then disappeared—we all left and locked the door behind us shortly before Meg's return.

I do not know if what we did was helpful to Meg and her family, but I would like to believe it was. I do know that it was immensely therapeutic and important to her "elf" friends. We felt better for being able to give something to her—to show her that we cared.

Just a few short months after the house transforming, I sat with Meg as she lay dying. She was beyond the point where she was awake or could even communicate. I realized that although we may have had some success in trying to renew her house, we could not renew her body. This temple was failing, and her spirit wanted desperately to escape it. I watched a moth inside the house, batting against the sliding glass door, trying to get out. I walked over to the door and opened it, giving it its freedom. It was not right to keep it trapped. As I returned to Meg's side, she stretched out both arms toward heaven and said, "Yes! Oh, yes!" —the only words she uttered while I was there. Her time to leave was very close.

I did not want her to pass through the door to her release; yet, I knew she had to. I wept.

Meg was gone just a few days later. It had been her time to be nurtured, and my time to nurture. That was eight years ago, and I still miss her.

Now the times have changed. Now I find myself where Meg was. In December of 1993, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Now it is my time to be nurtured. Now it is my bald head that I see in the mirror. Now it is my friends gathering around me, feeling frustrated because they want to help but do not know what to say or do—just as I was with Meg eight years before.

I want to tell them that it is not all so bad. Yes, I cried a lot when I found out (and sometimes still do when I am tired). Many of my reactions were as I would have expected after going through the experience with Meg. But there were some surprises also—some good, some bad. With every new challenge comes new understanding, new lessons to be learned. Most of the lessons I have learned have been very positive. But there are negative ones, too.

I have learned that while medical knowledge about the treatment of cancer has progressed in some ways since Meg's illness in 1986, we still do not know nearly as much as we ought to know. People ask me if I am angry that I got cancer. The answer is that I am angry that *anyone* is still getting it. I am angry that there is no known prevention or cure. Furthermore, progress with research on some women's health issues appears to be lagging behind that on men's. While there is an early detection test for some forms of prostate cancer, there is no blood test for the early detection of any form of breast cancer.

Yes, we have mammography, and I am grateful for that; however, in my case, it took far too long for the mammogram to detect my cancer. It had been there for years, and in spite of yearly gynecological exams and yearly mammograms, it was only last December that the mammogram showed up something that the physician had missed only the month before. Well, surely I've caught this early, I reasoned. Not so. The cancer had already spread to my lymph nodes. How can that be? Some cancers like mine do not have a lump and do not show up until they have advanced quite far. The recent discovery that a certain gene can signal breast cancer predisposition is a help, but since over 85% of all breast cancers are not genetically linked (including mine), we still have a long way to go. Yes, we need to have more cancer research—particularly on breast cancer, which will afflict one in eight women during their lifetimes.

I also learned that medicine is more an art than an exact science. Not only the cause, but also the cure, for this cancer is not known, and experts do not have definite answers about how to deal with it. It was not a case of "physician, heal thyself," but it was a case of "patient, choose thy treatment." I literally had to "pick my own poison." Three highly recommended oncologists disagreed significantly about the treatment I should have. Their disagreement was not comforting.

As for the positive lessons, I have been reminded of the wonderful family I have. They have always been there for me. But now, more than ever, I treasure all that they are to me. I could not have gotten through the pain of surgery and the sickness of chemotherapy without their support. My husband went with me to every doctors' visit, surgery, and chemotherapy and continues to give me incredible love and encouragement. My sons did our grocery shopping for months. (We've never had so many donuts and Pop Tarts in the house). My mother and sisters made trips from the west to see me and to help, even when it meant great sacrifice on their part. The list goes on and on.

I have learned how many truly wonderful friends I have, and how good, generous, and loving people can be. The number of friends was a surprise for me, because social time had been squeezed out of my life as I had become incredibly busy just trying to keep afloat with my family of three boys, a demanding job as Chief of Staff to a congressman, and a house that had been under renovation for eight months before the discovery of my cancer. Just previous to the diagnosis, I had commented to my husband that I was amazed that anyone ever sends us Christmas cards because we haven't had time to get cards out for years now.

I have had to learn to receive graciously because I am on the receiving end now. It has always been much easier for me to give than to receive. But now I am the one who finds people anxious to do something tangible to show their love and concern for me. I have been amazed at the number of friends who have come forward

with flowers, books, food, and other gifts of everything imaginable. I see so much goodness and compassion that I never had the opportunity to fully appreciate before. Now I know from this side how wonderfully helpful and comforting it is when friends take the time to call, express concern, and extend gifts of love.

I am learning better how to accept and deal with situations I cannot control. I am the "victim" here. I was accustomed to having more control over my life. I have always felt more power to be able to do something to change things. This experience has made me focus more on the many things I can't change. When I look at that bald head in the mirror, I see a concentration camp victim, or someone at army boot camp or a military academy, whose head has been shaved to humiliate. It is a constant reminder of the invasion of my body and how little I can really do to ensure my victory over this aggressor. I am reminded of it every time I see a beautiful model with gorgeous long, flowing hair in a shampoo commercial in a magazine or on television. I did not realize how many hair-care commercials there are! Having a "bad hair day" pales in comparison to a "no hair day."

The process of actually losing my hair was more traumatic than the resulting baldness, which one gets used to surprisingly quickly. Every morning, after the first chemo treatment, I would tug at my hair to see if that would be the day that it would start to fall—like autumn leaves—slowly, but surely. Finally, after about three weeks, my ritual tug produced an entire handful of hair. It was as though my hair was dead and just sitting on my head. I only had to run my fingers gently through it to pull it out. I felt like Hansel and Gretel, dropping bread crumbs everywhere I went—except that I was dropping hair. So I wore a hair net and looked like a waitress in a cheap diner as I awaited the full loss. Maybe I should have just shaved it off and gotten it over with quickly— some women do—but I just couldn't. And what do you do with the hair? I had been so attached to it before! I couldn't just throw it into the garbage, uncer-emoniously. So I put it in a nice little bag and decided that after I got my new hair, I would return this old dead hair to nature somehow—perhaps by putting it out for the birds to help them make a nest. I'm told that some Eastern religions insist that the hair be saved to remain with the body after death. I understand that sentiment.

The feeling of victimization was particularly difficult to deal with when I was first diagnosed. I am told that my reaction to this invasion is very similar to that of a rape victim. My body had been attacked by an unseen enemy. I lost my self-confidence. Making decisions—even small, relatively unimportant ones—became almost impossible. I felt vulnerable, fragile. I had an identity crisis. But now I am learning to cope and to find ways to feel more in control of my life.

Perhaps most important, I have learned the value of faith and prayer. I have never been in a situation where I needed the faith and prayers of others as much as I do now. I am deeply comforted to know that so many friends are praying for me.

When my ward held a special fast in my behalf, I was lifted and overwhelmed. I looked at the beautiful flowers that were in my room, and I thought that each little petal was like a prayer. When you put them all together, they make an incredibly beautiful bouquet reaching up toward heaven. My faith is strong, and I believe these prayers are heard. I also believe that if God wants me to be healed, I will be. And surely all of these prayers on my behalf will help. Perhaps because I have worked with Congress for so long, I feel there is great benefit in having large numbers of people (most far more worthy than I) lobbying with God on my behalf, seeking to convince God that I should stay on Earth a bit longer.

I have learned how much the Savior loves me. Through the premonition I was given a month before the discovery of my cancer that my family was about to face a difficult time with a serious health problem and through the wonderful priesthood blessings and prayers that have sustained me, I have learned that I am loved and I will be fine, whatever happens. I have not been spared the fiery furnace, but just as Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego, I have not had to face the flames alone.

Having a potentially terminal illness puts things into focus and helps you to define priorities very quickly. I have learned to look at the full half of the glass. It is so easy to focus on the negative. It is so easy to criticize and find things that can be done better. This is particularly true with human imperfections and the Church. But I have come to realize that even though some things are done that I think might be done differently, that is not important. Focusing on areas of disagreement only damages my spirituality and diverts my attention from important principles and the need to forge a spiritual relationship with the Savior. I am far from perfect myself. How can I expect the Savior to love and forgive my shortcomings if I am so quick to judge those around me, both in and outside of the Church?

As Lehi explained to his son, "For it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things." (2 Nephi 2:11) I do not know that God "sent" me this illness for my own good, but I do know that it is up to me to take this as a challenge and as an opportunity for growth. I just pray that in this "season," I will have the strength and insight to learn all I can and endure it well.

Single . . . and Welcome?

John A. Cox
Fairfax, Virginia

The last issue of *Exponent II* [Volume 18, No. 4] was particularly sad for me. As a lifelong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, my heart aches for the sisters who long for a husband but for any number of reasons have not found a male counterpart with whom they want to be sealed for time and all eternity. Sisters, your story also has its male side to tell.

For twenty-three-and-a-half years, I was married in the temple to a woman I believed to be the epitome of Mormon womanhood: a returned missionary, attractive, industrious, and possessing all the other virtues that we LDS men have been taught to look for in a wife. One day, a little over six years ago, my wife came home from a business meeting in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, to announce that she did not love me any more and that she wanted a divorce. I begged her to stay with me until our oldest son left on a mission and until after the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays were over. The ensuing divorce and pain could fill volumes, but as Howell Raines said so succinctly in his book, *Fly Fishing Through the Midlife Crisis*, "The winding down of any long marriage is a complicated story and a sad one, too, if the marriage has been a very good one for a very long time. I am not going to tell the entire history of that marriage because the story does not belong to me alone."

After the separation and divorce, I was thrown to the wolves, naive about the rules and protocol of dating in and out of the Church. Rules had changed. It was no longer inappropriate for a woman to call a man and invite him to dinner, the theater, or a Church social. For my non-Mormon women friends, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases precluded intimacy. I was comfortable with my non-dating status. My youngest son came to live with me and during the few years that we lived together I threw myself into a life that left little time for dating even if it had been available to me.

Nonetheless, I still cried real tears over the loss of the woman I loved, and I mourned the life that she was leading. My family and my wife had been my entire purpose in life and to see that way of life destroyed in front of my eyes was so painful that even if a woman had seen my anguish and had tried to befriend me, I would not have recognized any overture of kindness.

Time has a way of healing. I moved, to start my life new and fresh. I was determined not to wallow in my inner pain and to find a good LDS woman with whom I could have a loving and enduring life.

Unfortunately, I found nothing. A single, middle-aged man in Mormondom is a pariah. I watched as newly widowed and divorced women were figuratively wrapped in the loving arms of the ward members. Time and time again, I got the message that women are always the victims and that men who are single must be the wrongdoers. Week after week and month after month, I attended church faithfully. The bishops of the various wards I attended never talked with me, my home teachers only wanted to tell me their stories and hardships, and I was excluded from Church social events. Going to church became a reminder of the unworthiness that I felt as a rejected husband and parent.

I eventually stopped attending altogether. The weekly reminders of my status as a single, divorced male were too much to bear. I longed to talk with a Mormon woman with whom I could become the person I actually was: caring, compassionate, and sincere.

Friends universally told me that I *was* a good person, that I *was* good-looking, and that any woman would be proud to go out with me and be seen with me. I could discuss literature intelligently, talk about politics, and discuss theology rationally, without being dogmatic. I cried for the chance to meet someone, but I believed myself to be damaged goods: If I am a good person, why was I tossed aside by my

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)
eternal spouse, and why didn't anyone express any interest in me?

I spent a lot of time on my knees by the side of my bed asking God those same questions. If He could not help me win the love of my wife back, could He please erase the pain in my heart? Please! I prayed that I could just make it through the day without tears welling up in my eyes and without the stabbing pain that pierced my heart. After months and months of this daily prayer, I had a moment of epiphany: I realized that I was never going to marry again, and I realized that I could make it without a woman by my side. The heavy burden was lifted from my heart, my thoughts, and my desires. I knew that I could make it alone. I remember that moment as clearly as if it were yesterday. The lightness in my soul gave me a whole new perspective on life.

I changed careers and was offered the same job that I had had several years before. I threw myself into my work. I read, and I wrote. Life was looking good to me after years of pain. I met a divorced, Mormon woman, and she wanted to get married immediately. She even called me and told me that if I did not marry her now, she was going to marry someone else. With that knife held to my throat, I declined, and I wished her well. Ten months later, she divorced the man she had said "God had revealed to be the right man in my life." We began to date again, and I began to believe that despite the epiphany revealing that I would be single for the rest of my life, I had been granted a second chance at happiness. Then her manipulation began again. She had dreams that God was revealing to her how and when we would be getting married. There is apparently no argument when the other person claims that God has revealed certain plans to her. You can't trump God! Painfully, I parted company with this good LDS woman. Interestingly, she married her fourth husband just a few months after my departure. God must have revealed another perfect mate to her.

I began to direct my anger toward Mormon women in general. Why had she pushed remarriage when I hadn't known her well enough? I gave up on ever seeing another good Mormon woman.

I was transferred to the East where I was once again alienated from the Church. I had been encouraged by a childhood friend in the Washington, D.C. area to attend a singles ward in Alexandria, Virginia. In great pain, I drove to the church an hour early to make sure that I would find my way in a new and unfamiliar setting.

As I waited in the foyer for the meetings to begin, no one approached me or talked to me. Finally, the chapel cleared, and I sat down and waited for the meetings to begin. As the moment for church to begin approached, an attractive woman walked up to me and asked if I were a visitor. Flattered, I said that I was. Very embarrassed, she told me that I was in the Relief Society opening exercises and that the priesthood holders were meeting in the Cultural Hall. I picked up my scriptures and exited the chapel. Unfortunately, the priesthood meeting was even worse. As the instructor stood up, he welcomed all the visitors. I was prepared to introduce myself, but I was not asked to do so. I watched the bishop jump up to welcome two Ethiopian investigators who came in and sat behind me. He must have sensed that I was a member and that I did not need the welcoming. As I sat there in the singles ward listening to the instructor read the lesson from the manual, I was struck with the painful reminder that I was a single, divorced middle-aged male and that I was an anomaly.

Six months prior to my relocation to Virginia, through an organization that encourages the art of writing letters to friends, a woman ten years my junior had started to write to me. She was an excellent writer, and I was impressed with her directness and no nonsense approach to becoming acclimated to the dating world. When business brought her to Virginia, we agreed to meet for a strictly platonic date in Roanoke. The rest is history. We both fell in love with each other almost at first sight. Nine months later, we were married in her church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, in Charlotte, North Carolina. For someone who had such a strong epiphany of my fate to be single the rest of my life, I was little prepared for falling in love again, and with a nonmember of the Church as well.

Do I regret not marrying a good Mormon woman with a strong testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ? No. I've been there and have done that. I am a little bitter and disappointed that my brothers and my three sons would not or could not come to my wedding. Only my eighty-year-old mother and her sister came. It has been difficult to attempt to explain and excuse my own family's boycott of my wedding to my new wife and her family. Relatives of hers from as far away as British Columbia, Canada, and Houston, Texas made it a point to be at the wedding. I wonder if I had married an LDS woman if my family would have been there. Probably so.

I have just one message to the single sisters in the Church. We are there. No, you may not have seen me at church, but when I was coming to the meetings I would have melted at a kind word from you or even eye contact and a smile. Sure, there are a lot of single fellows in the Church that aren't worthy of you. I knew them when I was a missionary in Switzerland. They were dorks then and they are still nurds now. Still, I can tell you that for six long lonely years I was out there praying for someone to love me just a little bit, maybe enough to even marry me one day. Where were you when I needed you? That's all a moot point now. I love my Episcopalian wife very much and enjoy the sermons delivered by a learned and intelligent priest. No, it isn't *my* church, but I do hope that one day I will be able to enjoy reinstatement and fellowship again with my fellow brothers and sisters in the gospel.

I do have a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I could never turn my back on the teachings of the Church, and I would never dream of joining another church, but I will wait until the day that I can be welcomed back into the fold. President Hunter asked me to come back and I will. Will the membership welcome me back again? I hope so.

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The Retreat—July 1994

The water is cool;
the trees are green.
Canoes on the lake;
all is serene.
The women laugh
and splash and scream.
They gather to talk
and share their dreams.
They talk of children,
church, and men,
how to save the world,
and become spiritual again.
They share with each other
their joys and pain,
and make new friends,
and greet old ones again.
They come each year,
the old and the new.
They find acceptance
and lots of love, too.
As women they gather,
as strangers they meet.
But friends they become
at the retreat.

Sylvia Russell
Arlington, Massachusetts

Recovering From Modesty Lessons

Judy Dushku
Watertown, Massachusetts

Four years ago, I gave a Relief Society lesson on "modesty." I quickly covered the familiar points made in the manual about the specialness of our bodies, how we make a statement with how we dress about who we are, and that we are good modest women who cover ourselves in a culture where covering is less the norm.

Once I had made these points, however, I went on to describe perspectives from my own experience, perspectives not covered in the manual. I said that I and several other sisters in the Church had negative attitudes toward our bodies as a result of having been told so often to cover and hide them. I spoke about the need to be very careful not to be so zealous and excessive in teaching modesty that we suggest to women, including our vulnerable and sensitive daughters, that their wonderful bodies are somehow shameful and repulsive and unacceptable to the Lord. That was certainly the message that I heard growing up in the Church, and I have spent years trying to undo the body-hating lessons that I was taught by well-meaning but misled teachers.

So, as part of my Relief Society lesson, I urged moderation in the teaching of modesty, and restraint when urging sisters to cover themselves. Most of all, I urged being acutely sensitive to the impact of our words on adolescent ears, ears already hypertrained to hear words of criticism, mockery, derision, or amusement about their new and changing bodies. Do those of us raised in the Church, I asked, want our own daughters to dislike their own bodies as much as most of us were taught to dislike ours? What they need to hear is our celebration of them.

Then I told some stories, and other sisters offered theirs, about damage done by too much talk of covering and too little talk of accepting and loving our bodies and those of the girls and women we love.

One woman told of an enthusiastic, testimony-bearing, new convert who had spent hard-earned money on a special dress to wear to church on the first Sunday after her baptism. There she sat in her lovely sundress listening to a talk on the importance of covering our arms at all times in order to prove that we were clean-minded and pure-hearted women. She shrank farther and farther down in her seat as the sermon continued; she left in tears. No one could tell whether they were tears of humiliation or indignation. She did not return.

Then there were the string of girls' camp stories! Most began by describing a thirteen-year-old girl who was newly big of bust. In some cases, the sister telling the story was remembering with pain her own experience, maybe thirty years ago, still vividly. The girl had carefully packed her T-shirts for camp, knowing she would meet new girls and new leaders and would feel that she was being watched and judged on her taste and her good looks and her "coolness" and her nearness to the standards set by the really "in" girls—or her failure to meet all of these terrifying standards. Shy, insecure, afraid, self-conscious, cautious, and hating her unfamiliar body, the little girl acts flamboyant, carefree, cavalier and bold as she dons her choicest T-shirt for the introductory hike—or meal, or game, or skit—only to be laughed at—jeered, pointed to—for (of all horrible things) the tightness of her shirt, the T-shirt revealing those awful new breasts that seem to have grown even more since she packed last night. Sadly, it is not only the girls who throw barbs and jeer, it is also the leaders, some even suggesting that the offensive girl take herself and her breasts and her shirt back to the cabin for an alternative. What an entry into life among the Mormon girls and leaders, who—after all—are there to monitor righteous behavior and looks.

For others the story centered around bathing suits; for still others, it was shorts, shorts that they were absolutely certain were exactly the same length as those of other smaller, "less developed" girls but that attracted attention because they were on their own already unacceptable—more developed—bodies.

We all laughed and cried over these stories and how deeply their memories were etched in our minds and hearts—and images of ourselves. One sister said that she thought about her girls camp story every summer day that she had to dress to be outdoors with people. What a load to carry! Another said that she had avoided camps and outdoor summer sports ever since going to girls' camp. What a price!

In speaking of the high price of these lessons, a couple of women joked about what they had cost them in actual dollars spent in marriage counseling. We laughed sympathetically. Unspoken among us that day was the terrible loss that many of us have experienced in our relationships with the men in our lives because we, and they, wrongly learned lessons that our bodies were "not proper," that they were somehow "too much," or "too little." And worse was the further implication that we could and we should "do something" to make our bodies over, make them better, so that they would signal our goodness, our desirability to a righteous priesthood holder, our pureness of heart.

We talked about eating disorders that have their origin in young women trying to cover their unacceptable bodies with fat or trying to make their unacceptable bodies disappear with anorexia or excessive dieting. It was clear from the discussion that we had touched on a raw nerve and that it was not just a few of us in our big healthy ward who had struggled with these lifelong feelings of badness associated with having the body of a woman. During the next two weeks, I received two letters and three phone calls about my lesson. I expected the first letter to be critical of me for straying from the manual because I perceived the woman who wrote it to be narrow, inhibited, and inhibiting. It turned out that she saw herself in all of the same ways and resented and was sad that she did. She traced being ashamed of herself and her body to always feeling that because her womanly body made her so susceptible to sinning that she had to be on guard all the time, checking herself for improper behavior that might reveal her inner, wicked self. Hers was a powerful letter—crying out for some way to feel free, to live with herself in joy.

The second letter was from a woman, whom I will call Jenny, who reiterated the validity of the points from the lesson and added stories of her own that have led her to a life of hating her own lovely body, of always feeling compelled to hide and cover it because she feared being thought immodest, bad, sinful and reprehensible to the Lord and, in turn, to any righteous priesthood holder, like her husband. How, she said, she had tried to be freer to enjoy herself as a sexual, adult, attractive woman, how she fought the messages that told her that because she was a Mormon girl she couldn't be that. Jenny thanked me for calling her attention to the problem because she had two daughters and hoped now to be able to raise them differently. She also hoped that by focusing on these messages of body-hating as a problem, as an excess, she could fight them and modify them to her own benefit.

The first phone call I received was from a friend who described the messages that her father had delivered to her and her sister about the dangers that they were to themselves—one had long and beautiful legs and the other (my friend) had big breasts. His warnings, accusations, prohibitions, critical looks, and remarks about their bodies accompanied these girls every time they went out the door and continued when they got home. His constant warnings and negative comments about their legs and breasts left them feeling ashamed and self-conscious and hating those body parts that had imperiled their feelings of safety and well being. Even today, they shy away from their father's glances and accusing looks and assume that others like him—that is, other Church leaders—have the same condemning attitudes towards their bodies. What a burden to have been born with such legs and breasts!

The second caller spoke of how her self-consciousness in summer clothes had led to anxiety about summer even coming. "It has impaired even my ability to enjoy playing in the yard with my kids," she confessed with regret. The third caller said that she had been in therapy for problems related to sexual disfunction that she now believed were made worse by her carefully taught hostility to her own body and her fear of its parts being exposed. She had laughed and cried over the lesson, claiming that she identified with every story told.

Four years have passed, and I am not a Relief Society teacher any more. Last fall, we had another lesson on modesty. The sweet teacher covered familiar points, and frankly, I had forgotten my lesson on the same topic. But as we all left the room, several sisters squeezed my hand and recalled that day when we had shared our regrets about hating our bodies. Somehow modesty lessons bring it all back with a vengeance.

Jenny was there to say that she had made great strides in changing the way she looks at herself. She is not out of the woods, she says, and still has more self-consciousness and feelings of ugliness and wrongness and badness than she wishes she did, but she is improving. She can look in the mirror and admire her body . . . sometimes. When her husband genuinely compliments her on her good looks, she can accept his comments with graciousness. "What a blessing," she says. And best of all, she thinks she is setting a healthier path for her three daughters, who are not yet old enough for girls' camp but who, with their mother's help, are preparing themselves by learning to like themselves before that fateful thirteen-year-old's day appears. Good luck, Jenny. May we all be so healed.

Another sister reminded me that we had concluded that lesson four years ago with the mutual agreement that if you have to chose between modesty and self-esteem, self-esteem is more important. When she had arrived home after that lesson, she had put that message on her mirror. She had then added, "If covering up your body makes you hate it, uncover it!" ♣

Note: Please respond to Judy's experience by May 30, 1995.

Exponent II Readers in the Northwest To Hold Retreat

Re: The Third Annual Willamette Valley Women's Retreat
Date: April 21-23 (4:00 P.M., Friday to 2:00 P.M., Sunday)
Where: Camp Cascade on the North Fork of the Santiam River (approximately 40 miles east of Salem, Oregon)
Cost: $65 (all meals and lodging in comfortable facilities)
Purpose: To establish a place of peace and refuge for women, a place to explore ideas, share feelings, develop friendships, and renew our inner selves.
Theme: "Leaving Home"
Special Guest: Susan Howe

For information, call or write: Sue Phair , 510 Winding Way S.E., Salem, OR 97302, (503)588-2284 or send $65.00 to Sue to reserve your spot. (Include your phone number and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.) Our first two years were wonderful, and number three promises to be just as great. Bring a friend and join us for a warm and wonderful weekend of interesting workshops, music, and friendship.

Mormon Electronic Mail Options

If you have access to an e-mail surfing device, you may want to check out these addresses on Internet:

GENERAL MAILING LISTS

LDS-net: Contact David B. Anderson (**anderson@merl.com**); he can also provide a copy of his complete "List of Lists."
Mormon-L: Contact Susan McMurray (**catbyrd@onramp.net**)

WOMEN ONLY

Sister-Share (an "on-line Relief Society"): Contact Lynn Anderson (**lynnma@netcom.com**); for information about discussing LDS feminism and gender issues.

MAGAZINE

Saints-Best: Contact David B. Anderson (**anderson@merl.com**); there is no discussion, just "best of the lists" and news items.

There are also LDS-related lists on America On-Line, Compuserv, Genie, and Prodigy.

Rocky Mountain Retreat Set for May

Plans are underway for the 1995 Rocky Mountain Retreat (formerly the Southwestern Mormon Women's Retreat). Last year's retreat was a huge success, and this year's promises to be as fun, interesting, and spiritually uplifting.

So far, the speakers are: Cathy Stokes (an ambassador for the Church who helped establish relationships with the Kenyan government), Phyllis Barber (a widely published, award-winning author), Denise Volkman (a popular speaker who will discuss "Adversity: Who Needs It?"), Linda Trappett (a wonderful speaker, engineer, and single mom), and Jerrie Hurd (a well-known author who will continue her "Women in the Scriptures" series with her presentation "How To Read the Scriptures and Not Miss the Women."

Snow Mountain Ranch is a YMCA camp located on 10,000 forested acres high in the Rockies about 1 1/2 hours from Denver. Retreat participants can use the swimming pool, the skating rink, and the hiking trails. The cabins have indoor plumbing and beds and are wheelchair accessible.

Registration will be limited to the first 50 participants. For more information or to reserve your space, contact: Linda Tyler, 14759 East Chenango Place, Aurora, CO 80015, (303) 680-8475; or telephone Lisa Turner at (303) 730-6410 or Paula Goodfellow (303)460-7278.

Sunstone Announces Annual Fiction Contest

The Sunstone Foundation encourages all interested writers—novice or professional—to enter its annual Brookie and D. K. Brown Memorial Fiction Contest. Entries must relate in some manner to the Latter-day Saint experience, theology, or world view. All entries must either be taken to the Sunstone office or postmarked by June 1, 1995. Cash prizes up to $400 per winning entry will be awarded by the Brown family for two categories: short-short story—less than 1,000 words; short story—less than 6,000 words.

Stories will be judged by an independent board consisting of noted Mormon authors and professors of literature. Awards will be announced August 12, 1995, at the Salt Lake City Sunstone symposium banquet. Winning stories will be published in *Sunstone*.

For further information, call the Sunstone Foundation, 801/355-5926, or write, 331 Rio Grande, Suite 206, SLC, UT 84101.

EXPONENT II

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The purpose of Exponent II *is to promote sisterhood by providing a forum for Mormon women to share their life experiences in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Our common bond is our connection to the Mormon Church and our commitment to women in the Church. The courage and spirit of women challenge and inspire us to examine and shape the direction of our lives. We are confident that this open forum will result in positive change. We publish this paper in celebration of the strength and diversity of women.*