

Lessons in Living

Priceless Heritage

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In speaking of the pioneers, President James E. Faust declared: "In addition to the legacy of faith bequeathed by those who crossed the plains, they also left a great heritage of love - love of God and love of mankind. It is an inheritance of sobriety, independence, hard work, high moral values, and fellowship. It is a birthright of obedience to the commandments of God and loyalty to those whom God has called to lead the people" (Ensign, July 2002).

How would we have known of their courageous hardships had some of them not written journals during those trying times? They probably felt unworthy of publicity. And yet, how precious those handwritten scraps of paper turned out to be! They've proven to the world that one only needs to love and care about others to have our lives be meaningful.

During the summer, our hearts turn to our ancestors. Let me share a simple tale from my mother's life: her parents, Charles Willden Lillywhite and Margaret Coplan Lillywhite had moved to Old Mexico where they pioneered, built a lovely home, mill, and store. They were there with their nine children when Pancho Villa and other outlaws drove them out. They were only allowed 40 pounds of goods per family. My mother, Ida, and her sister, Irene, each had only one priceless toy: a little doll with a celluloid head. One was blond and one was brunette. When the time came to make their exodus, they hurriedly buried them in the ground for safekeeping. All their lives, my mother and her sister yearned to return and try to uncover those dolls.

When I was a five-year-old girl living in Los Angeles during the mid-twenties recession, I only had one toy at a time: one doll, one tricycle, and one bicycle. We didn't even think about getting another one when they wore out; we just went without. I attended only one birthday party and my mother gave me only one party. It was unheard of to have one every year! We entertained ourselves pretending lines of ants were cars driving along the road. We played in tubs of water containing polliwogs. Later, when sidewalks were paved, we played hopscotch and jacks. While living in Hollywood during my teen years, I sat on the curb in the evenings anxiously waiting for the Good Humor man to bring me a treat. My girl friend and I made our first playhouse of cardboard and gunnysacks. Our homemade dessert consisted of graham crackers and lemon juice served in a jar lid.

What kind of a legacy are we leaving our posterity today? Are we giving them too much, too soon, too easily? Can we imagine how much more it will mean to them in years to come to have the story of our lives as opposed to memories of trinkets long since discarded? If the tales of our forefathers, written on scraps of paper mean so much to us, think what our printed stories could do! Could our histories be the golden threads that tie our generations together? Let us consider the ancient Scripture: "And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come

and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal 4:6).