



Bye Bye Black Sheep

Second Edition

Jose Bonilla Flores

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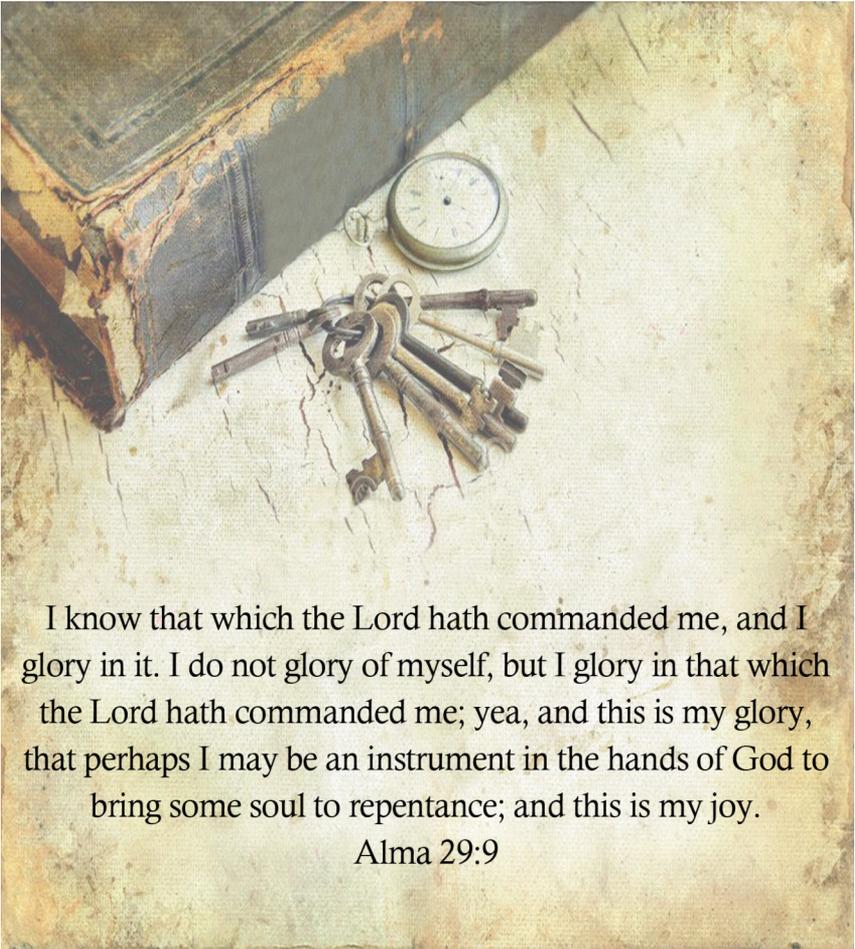


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I know that which the Lord hath commanded me, and I glory in it. I do not glory of myself, but I glory in that which the Lord hath commanded me; yea, and this is my glory, that perhaps I may be an instrument in the hands of God to bring some soul to repentance; and this is my joy.

Alma 29:9

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Introduction

What is a normal childhood? I imagine the environment one grows up in, at least in the early years, would seem to be normal. The first five years of my life were normal until I was visited by unfriendly spirits and then when I was six my grandmother died and almost immediately my mother came forth with hatred and persecution for almost my entire life.

My story is different in that over the years I received visits from great men of the church and inspiration from the Savior of the world that helped me grow into becoming a better man. For me it was not to be that my mother would love me in this life, but through forgiveness, visions, and dreams, I came to know that I love her now and she loves me and that, my friend, is eternal.

Forgiveness is a powerful healer. Everyone's journey is different and I hope the best in your efforts to seek reconciliation with family.

Jose Bonilla Flores

Grandpa's Store

I was born in 1948 in Maywood California. My parents lived in Pasadena where they say it snowed that year, which was very rare. I've since come to see the beauty of that area by the mountains. My older sister Eloise who is six years older than I am has given me many details of our movements in my early life. One year later we moved to Texas to a little town called Tornillo where my grandparents lived. Grandpa was called Don Clemente and was a respected man. He owned a general store, a gas station, restaurant, and the local bar. He was quite wealthy. My grandma ran the store and most of her children worked the fields. She was a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and to her husband. Grandpa was not a member and made his share of mistakes. He passed away not knowing Christ when I was three years old. Grandpa told me I had access to anything in the store when I desired it.

A lot of people worked for him, and on many occasions someone would not agree with him. One Friday night while the workers were enjoying a few drinks, this guy was telling a few other guys that he was going to do away with Don Clemente. Well, Grandpa got wind of it and did not waste a minute. He went directly to his house and banged on the door. Finally a woman came to the door and told Grandpa he wasn't there. It was later whispered that he was hiding under the bed. My grandfather and others never saw him again.

Grandma was a kind woman, always helping the needy. The store was situated along the main highway and she had a few tables and chairs in the store so people passing through could stop by for a sandwich or hot food. There was a woman nextdoor that had many children and no money to feed them so Grandma always gave her flour and things so she could make tortillas and beans. My Grandpa didn't approve but she would when she could anyways.

One day a man came in asking for something to eat. He told my grandma that he didn't have any money. She told him to sit down while she fixed him a plate. He ate his food quietly and when he finished he thanked her and stepped out. As she picked up his plate she went outside to see which way he went, but he was nowhere to be seen and it was the only building for miles in either direction. My grandma and many others believe it was one of the "three Nephites".

My Grandpa died while we were there so my Grandma sold everything and came back to California with us. They bought a house on Soto Street that year in 1951.



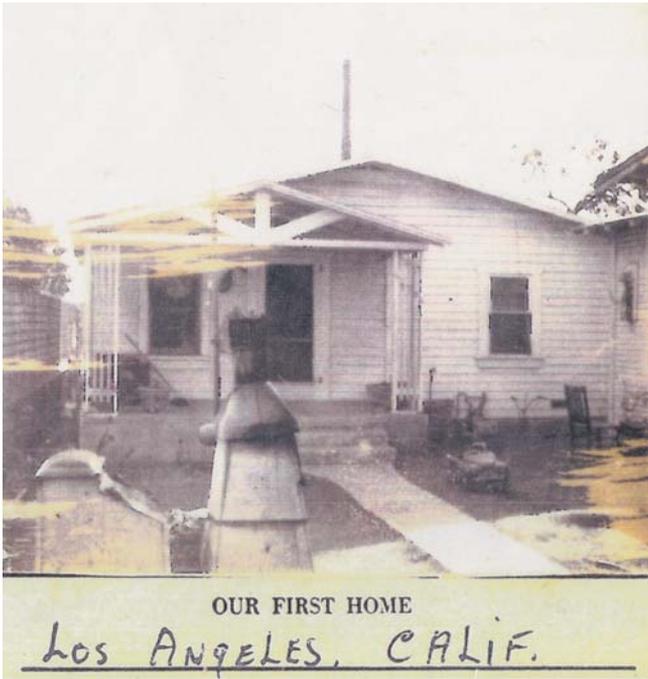
Grandpa's Store - Tornillo, Texas

Soto Street

My father Simon was a good man to everybody. He didn't make a lot of money but he tried to keep us happy. Once we asked him to buy us a kite, so he got himself a piece of writing paper and put a string about twenty inches long and told us to

run down the street. We couldn't figure out why it wouldn't go up in the sky. When I think back on it, I could picture my dad laughing, but he meant well.

My big sister Eloise had a duck and his name was Statue. It wasn't unusual to make a pet of any animal. One day we went out to feed him but he was nowhere to be found. The next day we had chicken for dinner which was unusual because all we ever had was beans and tortillas. About a week later my little sister Cindy came home and told us she saw the duck at the corner house, so we both went and sure enough it was. We told my father about it and he said it wasn't. My big sister was crying so we knew it was. We loved pop anyway. He always worked hard so he deserved the chicken dinner.



In this house I believe my dad wasn't making more than fifty dollars a week and we never had food in the ice box. When I got

home from school I was very hungry. I would come to know that many times it was intentional, and as the story goes it will make itself manifest. My little sister was home when I got there and she was hungry as well. We had tortillas to eat because my Aunt Isidria lived with us six months out of the year and the other half with my Aunt Juana. We'd go in the ice box and get a jar of yellow chilies and put them on a plate to take the seeds out and make tacos. They were really hot for us but hunger would win.

In this house I remember starting kindergarten with my cousin Charles. The first day of school my Uncle Charles took us and came in our class with us. I saw tons of wooden toys—more toys than I could ever imagine. The teacher told us we could play with them. When Uncle Charles told us he was leaving I kept on playing but Cousin Charles began to cry. I said to him, “we’re having too much fun.” but he wanted to go so they took him. I stayed and didn’t have a care in the world. It got even better because they gave us graham crackers and milk. I could have stayed forever because I never had those things before.

Percy Street

We moved to Percy Street in 1953, and in this house, I remember fun times like going to the Long Beach Pike and eating hot dogs, cotton candy, and seeing navy soldiers by the thousands—they were everywhere. We'd go to the beach nearby, wade, and collect giant sea shells. They were plentiful in those days. I liked going on the rides. It was a fun time for me. I can't remember anything unusual in that house. My Father spent time with my little sister and I. On Fridays he would take us to the Kress on Whittler Blvd. Toys weren't wrapped in those days. They would be in a big wooden box with small sections and most of the toys were a nickel. Once in a while he would give us a dime each, wow! It was the ultimate for us.



Eloise, me, my father

One Friday, we went to the Kress and I saw a bag of little airplanes—there must have been a hundred of them. I told my father about them but he said they cost too much, which was 99 cents. I never gave up asking even though weeks went by 'till he bought them one day. I remember playing for a long time with those. I loved my father and knew he loved me. As for my mother, I don't ever remember her holding me or kissing me. I never heard her say I love you in any way. In that house I don't remember hunger or hatred, but that could be attributed to the fact that my aunt Juana was always near and I know she loved me very much all her life. Things would change when we moved to a house on Marianna Street where my grandma would come to live with us. The school I attended was Lorena Street School. It was a country block straight down the street from our house. I remember playing on the monkey bars at school and running on the big yard that was asphalt with no grass at all.



My grandma lived with us but I don't remember seeing much of her. I had a dog and friends and lots of pigeons on the palm trees that are still there today. They lined the whole street which was along the Santa Ana Freeway. I played a lot on the sidewalk with my dog and friends, but we would stay away from the back of the house because they had two big German Shepherds there. The furnace where we burned our trash was also back there. My father always took the trash out and he knew I was afraid to go back there.

Chicken Feet

As a young boy I remember that every year for my Dad's vacation we'd go to El Paso Texas to see our family—some in Texas and some across the border in Mexico. It was near Fabens Texas. We always went to see my Aunt Elvira in Mexico first and we'd spend the night there. It was one big adobe house with four giant beds and a space for cooking. It was quite

crowded. They all just piled onto the beds at night to sleep but not before gathering in the dark outside to tell stories. There were no lights in that town, they would just put lanterns outside. My parents only stayed that one night but would spend the rest of the vacation in El Paso at my Aunt Lola's house. They often asked me if I wanted to stay and I said yes. The little town was about two blocks long with one little store. My dad would give me five dollars to spend and in Mexico that went a long way, I thought I was the richest kid in town. I would take my two cousins to that little store to buy sweet bread and drinks. I remember they had a bunch of baby pigs running around in the store. That's the way it was over there. It was a simple kind of life with clean air and no noise of traffic—a real serene environment. Many times there was no one around just me and my aunt. I would go out back and build little forts with twigs and play by the canal which always had running water. We'd get wet when my cousins were home. My aunt's backyard was as far as the eye could see—a lot of desert and mountains. When I played alone it was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. That was something I missed about that simple life. Days later my parents came to pick me up to go to El Paso. They were having a dance party later that evening in a big dance hall in town. Lots of friends and relatives would gather for a big dinner before leaving for the fun. Later that evening we all jumped into several vehicles and headed for the hall. The dance was going quite well, there was food and lots of fruit everywhere. Soon it was getting late for us kids, many started laying down on the benches that were everywhere, even I was getting sleepy. I was listening to people talking about a handsome well-dressed man who had been dancing with a lot of young ladies. Minutes later a young boy that was laying down two benches from us yelled out to his mother, "That man has chicken feet!" My mother and many others looked at the man's feet and he quickly disappeared and left a strong odor

of sulfur behind. This was witnessed by quite a number of people including those that were sitting near my father and mother. The group felt strongly that this was Satan. I have observed that Satan cannot be a perfect being and there has to be something incorrect when he appears.

Grandma Left Me

Life seemed to be normal until my sixth birthday. We were having a party with all my cousins and friends, we had a chocolate cake and white cake with lots of ice cream. It was quite a treat because we never had anything but beans and homemade tortillas. Everything was going great until the phone rang. My mother went to answer it and all of a sudden it got very quiet. Apparently they all knew something. My Grandmother had died. I guess that's why I don't remember her much in that home. She must have been ill for a long time. I don't remember anything about the funeral and I still had no concept about what death was. Things began to change shortly thereafter. I guess my father started working longer hours so she told him she would take the trash out, but after he left for work she sent me to take the trash to the furnace. I was scared of the dogs and she knew it. I was sure to get bit by one of them. In those days a rabies shot was given in the stomach with a needle that was very long so it could reach the spine. There was nothing I could do but comply with her demands. I began to feel evil and hatred coming from her, even though I never felt it so strongly before, I came to know in later years that she never really liked me. It's important to understand that it's never been spoken of my mother's childhood so I can't say or give reason as to why I was hated by her for my whole life. All I know is that she came from a prominent family that was well to do. She was a business woman and had high expectations. Apparently I could not fill that order. I grew up slow and not very bright and I was

often told many things about my stupidity. I know now that my sisters did the normal things and they enjoyed life as far as I could see. They saw the normal punishments but not the real abuse my mother did to me. So they did not believe me when I would explain these things over the years. Nobody was around when the real abuse happened, and now my grandma had died so it was only my mother and I so she could hurt me without any interference.

Well, sure enough I was bitten by the dog and scared to death but they checked the dog and found him without the disease. I believe my father was very angry about what happened and for once he put his foot down. I never had to go back there again, but she got back at me all the rest of her life as you'll see in the following pages.

My first experience with "evil beings" happened shortly after. I was taken to a lady's house to be babysat for the first time in my life. She took me to a real dark building and I quickly felt evil spirits around me. I was scared and I wanted to leave but I couldn't tell the lady anything. After that experience I came to feel the same ugly feelings when I was near my mother for the rest of my life 'til just before she passed away.

One day my friends and I were running down the street with our dogs. There must have been four of us. We stopped to rest on the grass and pet the dogs. I looked for mine but he was nowhere to be seen. One of the boys told me he was lying on the street. We ran over to see him. His tongue was hanging out with some blood around him. I called to him to come and play but one of the older boys told me he wouldn't be getting up anymore, that he had been hit by a car and was dead. Did I know about death? Probably not but just the same it was scary. I did learn to watch out for cars so some good came from this experience.

I used to take my lunch in a paper bag and always ate as soon as I left the house because I was so hungry. One day I noticed some of the boys bringing lunch pails to school that

were square shaped with pictures of the Lone Ranger or Roy Rogers. I went home and told my parents I wanted one. I described to them that they were square with a latch in the middle. I was so excited I could hardly sleep that night. The next day I came home from school to see an oblong pale with two handles like a picnic basket. It was very girly looking and well, I told her I didn't want it but she made me take it to school the next day. So I left a few minutes early and went behind these two bushes, ate my lunch, and left the pale there. I can clearly remember that I didn't care about any consequence and as far as I can remember she left it alone.

Things were changing with my mother towards me. With no one to watch, she really began to mentally abuse me. I began to notice that when the bell rang to go home I wasn't excited anymore because I knew my dad wasn't there like before. Instead, when it rang I would stop in my tracks and look up to the sky as if my protection was lifted. I would start walking towards the house knowing the dogs were around and there was no one home so I couldn't get in the house. When I got home I would quietly walk up the two steps to the porch which was a solid enclosure of cement. I would huddle in the far corner silently in fear of the dogs coming up to where I was. I would wait for what seemed to be an eternity 'til my father would come home. He would pick me up in his arms and kiss me. I loved him. He bought me a firetruck and that was a lot of fun.

Later, my mother would appear with my sisters Eloise, who is six years older than I am, and Cindy who is a year and a half younger than I am. I began to notice that when she was around, my father didn't pay attention to me—not even talk with me. Later, as I grew older I realized my father was not allowed to love me in her presence.

We moved to a little one-bedroom house behind the store which had a long driveway leading to our place. This was on 3rd

Street in East Los Angeles. I slept in a little corner next to the laundry room which was very small. There was a girl's school down the street called Ramona by the corner of Ford Blvd. I believe it's still there. I used to go to school about four blocks from home. My Aunt Isidria was staying with us and she would watch my little sister Cindy. Every day as I left for school Cindy would cry, go to the window and watch me going down the driveway. I looked back at her and waved. She would cry 'til I disappeared. Just like the other I have no recollection of being in class at school. I only remember playing in the yard and eating lunch. I would eat everything that was given to me.

In this house we still had beans with tortillas everyday, but eventually we got introduced to oatmeal and cornflakes. I think my mother was working then because my aunt would feed us. And Eloise would help when she came home from school. I don't remember eating eggs even in that house. I used to play a lot by myself in the tall grass of our little yard. I would eat little balls of dirt—they tasted pretty good back then. Cindy and I would jump the fence to the church grounds and pick up little sparrows that fell off the trees and hold them for a while then put them on the ground again. We didn't know what else to do with them. Cindy has passed but I miss her and think of her often.

Around this time we took a trip to Mesa Arizona. My little sister and I had no clue that we were going to the temple. We got to Mesa where my sister Cindy and I were introduced to two blind ladies that would be taking care of us for two days. I remember they had a wire outside the door that led to the outhouse. The thing we couldn't help remembering the most is that all we ate was peanut butter sandwiches the whole time we were there. The trailer they lived in was quite small and we never got to play outside. Little did I know that decades later, I would be taking care of two blind ladies. I will tell their story later. We later learned that my parents and

Eloise met the prophet David O. McKay. My sister took this picture with him.



One day Cindy and I climbed on the fence of the old lady nextdoor so we could reach her peaches. We ate our fill then began throwing them on her house. Suddenly she came out and scolded us and said she would tell my father when he got home. As we waited to see him coming up the driveway we were pretty scared. We hid behind the big black and white television set. He talked with the lady then found us and spanked us. When he walked away to another room we began to laugh. He could hear us and came back in threatening to spank us again so we started crying and then he left us alone. I don't remember abuse there but again my aunt was there and mother was gone most of the day.

The Hole in the Ground

One afternoon, probably on a Saturday, we all went in the car to a trailer-court to visit relatives. When we got there they

were gathered around a manhole looking inside. Someone removed the metal cover and they were sifting around with a long broom handle. I was standing next to my mother when someone said it looked like skin from a baby that had been missing for sometime. I suddenly had this fear, not only the thought that it could be a real person dead in there but also a powerful impression that my mother wished it was me in the hole. I suddenly felt that evil feeling I had when the lady took me in that building. This evil hatred would follow me the rest of my life. I left her side and stood where my father was. That was the first time I was really afraid of her. Where does a child run to when he needs love and protection?

La Puente Years

We moved to La Puente where my father bought a new house. It was a four bedroom so each of us had our own room. When we first moved there, my room faced the driveway so I could always see my father as he pulled in from work. There were quite a few empty houses there at the time. Soon my Aunt Juana bought a house around the corner from us, two doors down. She didn't spend a lot of time over because my mother and her were working in downtown Los Angeles. When she did visit she would stick up for me. It seems I was always in trouble. I couldn't do anything right. Mother sometimes mistreated me in front of my sisters but not too often. She would do it even more when there was no one around, and oftentimes it would be physically inflicted pain. Whatever I got in front of my sisters they always agreed that I deserved it.

Once a year she took me downtown to the garment district where she bought me six pairs of pants, six shirts and a few other things. That was it for the whole year. The clothes were previously used so the material was already worn through,

they were unlike what everyone else had. Pretty soon after wearing them it was like going to school in rags.

This house was full of memories of abuse. I remember I was whipped everyday by my father, which was far from his idea to do so. My mother would do things to me so I could get in trouble, so when father would come up the driveway I prepared myself. I could hear him come in the house and immediately he was ordered to hit me. There was never a hello honey or anything nice to him. He would just say "I just got home and would like to say hi to my children". But no, he went straight into my room and began to whip me and she would stand by the door ordering him to hit me harder. Then it was over for that day. This went on all the years we lived there. I think in all those years maybe three times I remember getting ready for bed—I would be putting on my pajamas and stop and would start to wonder, hey there's something wrong here, then it would come to me—I didn't get whipped today! I began to notice things were getting worse. She was cunning in her preparations for inflicting hurt.

I was getting older and of course I wasn't welcome on any outings whether it was to go to the store, visit relatives, or go somewhere fun. When I was young they would hire friends or relatives to babysit me. They were instructed in my presence to hit me and hit me hard. They would chase me through the house hitting me with the buckle end of the belt even on the head, it didn't matter. The more they hurt me the more she enjoyed hearing of what they did to me. I would go as far as to say, she wished she could have been there to watch. As I got older they just left me home alone. Usually in the afternoons they would leave somewhere and I would be playing outside with my friends. So I played for a while but soon it began to get dark and my friends would begin to leave so I found myself quite alone and scared. I would go into the house, turn on all the lights and then go outside to wait for them to get home. It

seemed like eternity. I was scared to wait inside because of my experiences with the dark spirits in there. This went on for years and I didn't have a clue until later when I got older that it was intentional.

We used to go to the Plunge every Saturday which was off Valley Blvd in Hacienda Heights about a quarter mile into the hills. It was surrounded by brush. They would leave Gloria in charge of the food. She and her four siblings lived with us. They were foster children. I ate my lunch almost immediately. I would eat every chance I got because I was afraid of not having anything to eat. We had a wonderful time. When it was time to go home there was no one there to pick us up. This always seemed to be the case. Everyone was gone and they closed the gates so we started down the trail 'til we hit the street. We waited for a while then started down Valley Blvd towards home which was about four miles. We walked at least a mile before they showed up. When I look back at those times I believe, now, that she wanted me to suffer even if everybody else did. By the time we were picked up we all had blisters on our feet and were very hungry.

I went to school there up to the sixth grade. The abuse never ceased. I thought that everyone my age went through that. The hunger continued in those years. I remember how she always made my lunch with bread she made only for me. It was hard as a brick with scrambled egg and mustard—that was every day. I had mush for breakfast which didn't fill me up very well so I ate my sandwich on the way to school. By lunchtime I was hungry so I would go to the cafeteria and watch people eat. Many times during recess I would sneak in the classroom and eat someone's lunch while they played outside. Those days they had tables with two chairs. Well, one time I ate a girl's lunch that sat next to me and I got caught. The teacher asked me if I ate it and I began to cry. The little girl said it was okay that I could stop crying.

Pico Rivera House

We loved Pico Rivera where they bought a small two bedroom house. My older sister Eloise got married and had moved. In the kitchen there was a small room adjoining it. They put a curtain on it and that was my room for a long time. They set up a small cot for my bed.

My Uncle Clemente lived six blocks away from us in a little town they called the Montebello Gardens. Many things happened in this house. I had felt evil before but I had never had the presence of angels. I attended Montebello Junior High. It was one of those old brick buildings that had three stories. I enjoyed art class and English class and I always got A's in both. Other than that school meant nothing to me. The only thing about a future that I knew was how to spell it. I only looked forward to eating a nutritious lunch. My life revolved around escaping my mother's wrath. When I got home from school she would be waiting for me with some accusation. Life was getting difficult.



Pico Rivera house

One of the things I remember the most was she would tell me to go to her room, have me sit down on her bed and then she would try to make me admit to something. When I told her I didn't do it she got a metal rod and hit me on my knees till I couldn't stand it anymore and I would say yes I did it. The hatred she felt for me was similar to the evil spirits I felt. In the eyes of others she had only love for me, but they could never know how she truly felt about me. The only way would be to feel an evil spirit themselves and compare that with what I told them. I often had dreams of her doing things to me. Also of her cooking me in the oven or chasing me through the house with the most wicked eyes, comparable with witches, which I have seen in downtown Los Angeles on more than one occasion. In that house I was having constant visits from evil spirits. They would swoosh by me all the time. Finally about twelve years old I felt my first visit from two angels. They came from behind me and past by me one on each side. At the time I didn't know what they were, only that it felt good.

The evil spirits seemed to torment me quite a lot, like every time the opportunity was there. One time when I was twelve years old, my little sister and our mother were in her bedroom on her bed as she was telling us stories she heard about in Texas where a lot of strange things happened in her town. They were pretty scary. I remember having to go to the restroom so I went in and started to turn around to close the door when it slammed shut before I could turn. It sent shivers up and down my spine. That was a very scary experience. Sometimes I wonder why she would tell us kids something like that.

We attended the LDS Spanish branch in East Los Angeles. It was called Belvedere ward and still is today. I don't believe many people knew about the abuse that was taking place at home. Only my friends did because I told them. Our Bishop Ray Garcia was a wonderful man with a great testimony of the gospel. Along with his responsibilities he had Joe and Ray and of course me to deal with. It seems he spent a lot of time trying to keep us in

class. Every chance we had we'd sneak out of going to Sunday School and head straight for Whittier BLVD to the malt shop. We would always make it back just before class was over. In those days I didn't know what a testimony was about. I really didn't want to be at church but at least my friends were there and it kept me from my mother for a while. I learned through the years, that we three had something in common. Ray's mother was a real mean lady and many times I got to see for myself the hate she had for him and how his younger brother was treated differently. Joe's mother was good to him but he had a step dad who looked much older than her and I was right. He was a nice guy around other people but at home he was a different person to Joe. I believe we shared much of the same problems, only one could hardly top mine. There is such a thing as a black sheep—some kids have it worse than others. I know that hundreds of thousands of children all over the world die of hunger or disease everyday but they often die in the hands of their loving mothers.

Bishop Garcia, for most of the years I knew him, he was a caring man and always tried his best to go after the lost sheep. He really cared about us. For the last couple of years of his life he began to feel something wasn't right. It turns out he had stomach cancer. I remember seeing him often holding his stomach. In those days not much was known about cancer. He soon was released and we didn't see much of him. Some time passed and one day my mother got a phone call from the bishop's wife, he wanted to see me at the hospital. I said I would, not really having time to think about it. That afternoon we got in the car and headed for the hospital which took about twenty minutes. I had time to think about it now. My first thought was why would he want to see me, one of the worst kids in church? Only Joe and Ray could be compared to me, so I figured he was going to scold me on his death bed. Or did my mother put him up to this? Neither.

We arrived at the hospital and headed up to his room. As we approached his room I began to feel quite tense as I followed my parents into where Sister Garcia was waiting for us. She had tears in her eyes but tried not to let him know. While my parents were talking to her I looked over to the bishop's bed where he seemed to be asleep. Suddenly he opened his eyes and looked to where I was standing. He was very thin and yellowish in color and looked very weak. He called to me to come to him, as I approached he raised his hand and took mine. He looked at me for a few seconds then said there were angels in the room waiting to take him home. All this time he did not let go of my hand—he seemed to have a certain strength. He stared into my eyes, and at the same time he seemed to be elsewhere in thought. Suddenly, he called me by name and said these words to me, “As long as you don’t follow the teachings of the church nothing will ever go right for you.” At about thirteen years old I didn’t really understand his meaning for me, but I never forgot those words. I could not understand for many years why he asked to see me and not any of the other kids my age. I believe just before crossing the veil he saw something in those last hours of being in mortality. I think he saw what I could become. He passed on hours later. My friends Joe and Ray, as far as I know, have not returned to the gospel. I hope I’m very wrong. I love those guys and I know Heavenly Father loves them. I look forward to seeing the bishop when I’m called home.

Leaving Home

I left home at age sixteen to go into the job corps and lived in Morganfield Kentucky. I lived in an old army barrack called Breckenridge—it was a job corps center. We used to walk about a mile or so to Morganfield. It was a small town. At the time, Main Street was about two blocks north to south and the same east to west. Everybody had guns in their cars. I remember the tall blue grass as far as I could see. I was there for a year

and graduated. I went back to live at home but was never there. I was always working or with my friends.

In 1969 I joined the Army and went to Germany for eleven months and had a blast over there. The food was delicious. After being discharged I returned home for a short time. I was about twenty two years old and my sister Eloise asked if I could stay with her because someone had broken into her house and robbed her. I was glad to go of course. One day I saw girls talking nextdoor and asked them if they wanted to go for a ride. This is when I met my future wife Maria, as she was one of the girls.

Ghosts at Fort Mac

For many years Maria and I frequented Ports O'Call and all the amusement parks and beaches from San Diego to Pismo Beach. We knew all the places to have fun and exercise. The Long Beach Pike was a favorite spot for us. The place was full of navy soldiers—I mean thousands came and went. Those were fun days. They still had the giant roller coaster.

At one point they were remodeling the fish market we used to go to, but they had a big catering truck parked nearby so we ordered three pieces of smoked fish and the man let us take a bottle of hot sauce with us to the tables they had nearby. As Maria began to unwrap the fish we noticed it was dry and full of splinters so I took it back to the man and showed it to him and he threw it in the trash and gave us four fresh pieces with an apology and no extra charge. His name is Ambrose, we became friends for many years. He's retired now but we see him on occasion at the fish market.

I was in the honor guard and stationed at Fort MacArther. I was also a driver. We had burial details all over California. When I wasn't on burial detail I would take the female soldiers to different parts of the hill where the missile sights are still

there today. They've become a major tourist attraction. So I knew my way around there. When we'd go to the beach Maria and I liked taking a drive up there. We'd always stop at the rescue stalls where they had seals that were being treated for injuries and starvation. One day we took a drive around the sites and noticed a shack about the size of a garage with windows all around it and a double door in front. Some of the windows were broken out so we decided to look around. We got out of our Volkswagen and started towards the building when we heard a loud noise coming from inside, then a bunch of pigeons flew out the windows. I told Maria to stand back while I went inside. I opened one of the doors and peeked inside and saw nothing moving so I opened the other door. I stepped inside, looked and saw no one, so I turned around to call Maria to come in and I heard the loud noise again and I felt many spirits fly by me on both sides. It was strong enough to make the doors rattle. Maria was still standing a few feet from me and saw the doors rattle. There was no wind that day—in fact it was very calm and sunny. I quickly felt they were having a meeting of some kind and I wasn't welcome. As the experience past I went back inside and saw a table with six chairs around it. The spirits seemed to be gathered around the table. I don't



know if they were stuck in-between worlds or what but I know they weren't evil. It was an interesting experience and the beginning of many spiritual events that would follow us. I took home one of the chairs that day and still have it.

I was proud to serve in the military. Today I still serve with the veterans of foreign wars.

Mike Sandvik

At one point we lived with Maria's parents on Hambledon street just east of Azusa Ave in La Puente. On the corner was a Shell station where all the locals went. The station was surrounded with hundreds of dairy cows. I met Reuben who lived across the street from Maria's. I got to know him and soon found out in conversation that he was my mother's cousin from Texas where I had quite a lot of cousins. That was mother's home state. Reuben still lives there today. He's quite a character and must be in his eighty's. We used to go to a favorite burrito stand every Saturday morning. One morning, on the way home we stopped at the Shell station for gas, that's when Reuben introduced me to Mike. He pumped gas but was also the mechanic. He started a conversation about my Volkswagen and as time passed we became very good friends. He invited me to his home where I met his father. He was a trouble-shooter on big machinery downtown and his mother was a school teacher and loved to raise papillons (small dogs) for show.

His brother David was a supervisor for a company called Moody Industries. His sister was a "party girl" but was good company. Mike used to rebuild my engine twice a year and since I was in college at Rio Hondo in Whittier California, I took a class in auto body and fender and was painting my Volkswagen, among other cars, at least twice a year. Reuben, Mike, and I were inseparable. We were always doing things together. One day Mike's father called me up and asked me

to come over. He wanted to talk. I didn't find that too unusual so I told him I would be over as soon as I could. When I arrived I asked for Mike and his dad asked me to sit down. He proceeded to tell me Mike was very sick in the hospital—that he had diabetes. I didn't know much about that so I said, "Let's go see him. He'll get better." That's when his mother walked in the room and said, "You don't understand, Mike is dying." I stood in silence for a moment and said to his father, "Let's go see him".

Mr. Sandvik and I went to the hospital in Whittier together which was near Beach Blvd where we all used to go towards the beach. We entered the room where Mike was. They had just brought his food in. The nurse told us he was too weak to feed himself so I told her we would be glad to help him. We took turns and it was a pleasure to help. We were friends for so many years. It was getting late so we told him we would come early the next morning to help him with his breakfast. The next morning I got up early to get ready when the phone rang. It was Mike's dad. He said they called him from the hospital. Mike had passed about four that morning. I spent the next few days thinking of my friend and giving time for his family to grieve. A few days later I called to ask his mother about the funeral schedule. She informed me that he was cremated the day before and his ashes were thrown in the ocean. I would have wanted to be there. I was stuck in my thoughts as to why they didn't tell me anything about their plans for Mike. But later as I pondered I came to realize that religion was never discussed in that home at all. I think back now that when you die that's the end. So, why have a funeral? I would have wanted to see him again, but it wasn't meant to be.

In those days I wasn't attending church at all. I call them the lost years because spiritual experiences ceased until Maria came into my life. Once more, visions and dreams began again

but to a greater degree. A few months had passed, I got to see Mike again after all but it was in a dream with a message for me. In my dream I was standing near a crossroads of tall blue grass so beautiful and windy, like in Kentucky. As I looked I saw a little shack made of logs standing alone with nothing else around. As I was enjoying the scene I looked to my right and saw Mike standing there dressed in white clothing. As I looked closer I noticed he was sad and his hair was black.

In later years after attending church for a time I began to realize he was sad because he never had Christ in his life and that he wanted his temple work done. Even though I hadn't started going to church prior to this, it was the beginning of many spiritual experiences through the rest of my life. I love Mike. He's my brother.

Dad's Liquor

We moved to El-Monte after living with Maria's mom for a while. We got us an apartment on Magnolia St. near Garvey Ave. My cousin Adolph lived in a little house around the corner from us. I'll share a story about him later. While living in this apartment for a couple of years we had a one-time visit from my mom and dad. I believe for once he insisted because she would never come on her own. It was a big surprise to Maria and me. We sat and talked for a while then Maria invited my mom into our little kitchen to talk while she cooked something to eat, so that left my dad and me alone which had never happened before. I was surprised to see him so happy. He asked me things he was never able to before because she would always monitor our conversations. Pop was looking at me directly as he spoke which was very unusual. He'd never done that before. He asked me about a bottle of wine that was sitting next to my turn table which was on my entertainment center. I told him it was an expensive wine called Bristol cream. I told him I would take a little shot now and then. It had a fine taste to it. At this point

I had never heard the term “the fruit of the spirit”. This would turn out to be his only and last visit to me.

This is the time that my son Ray started attending church along with his sister, so I began to go on occasion with Maria. A month or two had passed when I had a dream. In this dream I was holding a bottle of liquor the size of a half pint. I took a drink from the bottle and it was most desirable—it was so good. I wanted to read the label so badly so I could go and buy one but it remained a blur. I knew it was a dream but still I tried to read the label before waking up. But it didn’t happen. I spent the next two years buying a half pint here and there but to no avail. I soon started attending church with my family and after much learning, I heard that term “the fruit of the spirit”.

Now I know what my father was trying to show me in what little opportunity he had with me. He used the liquor bottle hoping it would help me someday. I had realized I was looking for the wrong fruit, that’s why it was a blur. The real fruit was the gospel of Jesus Christ. That’s what Pop wanted for me. With a little help from heaven the dream was what I needed to seek for the fruit of the gospel. Though my father was never allowed to spend time with me, I believe he knew he was getting ill and made that last effort to see me before he was no longer able. My father always loved me even when I caused so much pain to him. He knew the things I did were on the account of her.

My Father’s Death

It was 1990 and nothing had changed between my mother and I, in fact it got worse. Whatever I did or tried to change for the better was just not working. My mother was not aware that I returned to church and it wouldn’t have mattered anyway. She never wanted anything to do with me or my family. I always tried to figure out why she hated me so much—even

family members would ask. And then there were those who didn't believe it anyway.

My father was getting old and I wanted to see him. I had been going less and less because the arguments between my mother and I were getting worse. I didn't want to see him get hurt anymore from watching us fight. He was a quiet man and would never say anything to interfere. Besides, I really didn't want to feel that ever-present feeling of hatred I always felt since childhood.

One day my aunt Sara called me. I immediately thought she was calling from Texas because that's where she's from. She asked me how I was and told me she loved me—most of my family on my father's side did and I could feel the difference in them. She asked me if I loved my father—I found that strange. She then told me she was at his house in Pico Rivera. I assured her that I did love my Dad. Then she told me he was very sick and asked why I hadn't been there or why I didn't know about it. I then told her about the battles that would arise every time I went there and that my mother didn't want me to see my father, and even if he had died she wouldn't tell me. My aunt Sara understood. She began to see the hatred my mother had for me. I told her I would come as quickly as possible. I soon arrived at the house to find a number of ladies in the living room. Everyone said hi to me but my mother didn't say a word. I excused myself and went into his room. I was standing at my father's right side and my nephew Jesse was on his left. He looked very weak and was very thin. It turns out he had cancer and hadn't eaten for three months. It seemed he was holding on because he wanted to see me before he left this world. He took my hand and stared at me for a few minutes. I believe he was giving me a blessing. He was unable to talk. Then he looked to my nephew and took his hand while still holding onto mine. We both stood there for a while until he closed his eyes. Then we stepped into the living room and I went to sit with my Aunt Sara.

Mother's Broken Picture

I left the house as soon as I could because my mother was starting to argue with me all over again—even in front of all those people. I was so mad because I couldn't figure out why she hated me so much. I drove for home and stopped along the way to think for a while. By the time I got home it was very late and everyone was asleep. I sat on the couch thinking some more. Suddenly, I looked up right where a double-connected metal frame was with my father on one side and my mother on the other. My first reaction was I didn't want to look at her. My wife put up the pictures against my will. I guess she was hoping I would get used to it. It was too soon for me to consider especially after what happened this evening.

She was supposed to be my mother and never was. She couldn't even tell me why and no one in the family could tell me why. Someone has to have a pretty deep hurt to not even try to be a mother. Even though I knew that she would never change towards me in this life I have chosen not to be like her. Little did I know it would take practically the rest of my life to let it go. I don't seek for answers anymore, I just don't have the time. Instead, I look to help foster children. We've been successful in doing so, I guess because I have a wonderful wife who helps me and because I can look deep within their hearts and feel their pain. To date we've cared for more than sixty children. Back to the story though—

I picked up the connected pictures of my mother and father, not knowing what I was going to do. I then grabbed her part of the pictures and literally twisted it in a spiral shape. The glass busted in very pointed icicle shapes. I then dropped the whole thing to the floor. I looked at my hands expecting to see multiple cuts on them but there was not a scratch. I immediately knew there was divine intervention involved—

also because, even with all the noise I made, no one woke up that night.



The following morning I got up at four am to go to Legg Lake at the Whittier Narrows Dam for my early morning walk. It's dark out there at that time and it's quite a big lake. As I had walked nearly an hour it began to get light out there. As I pondered the events of the previous night I began to get angry and bitter wondering why she hated me so much. Since there was still no one around, I just spoke out loud. "Why does she hate me so much?" Immediately, from the heavens, I heard my Father in Heaven say, "I love you". I am very grateful for that experience.

My father died weeks later.

Sandra Torres — Aster Medical

A while after we moved to Azusa where we lived in an apartment for close to eight years, we began to get more active in the church, during which time I started working for Aster Medical Transport Company. We had fourteen trucks. I believe

I was assigned to the prettiest one. I enjoyed working there because I transported sometimes up to thirteen patients a day; from their homes, to their appointments and back again. I found the opportunity to share the gospel with many who wanted to hear it. Most of the people enjoyed listening to my stories. I had one really good friend that I helped get active again before he passed away.

Then there was Sandra Torres, she became a good friend to my wife and I. She really loved Jesus Christ. I know she did because she would always cry when I told her stories about him. And she loved my stories and would weep when I told her the things that were done to me. Most of the people I transported were dialysis patients. Eventually, the family could no longer take care of her so she was taken to a convalescent in La Habra which was by Huntington Beach. It was a thirty-five minute drive from where we lived. Maria and I would go see her twice a week. She loved spending time with us. By this time I was changing a lot. I began to have more and more desires to read the scriptures, and I really got interested in latter-day prophecy. I had the desire to learn so that I could share what I learned with others. It was very plain to me, and others around me, that I was changing. I found myself sharing the gospel every chance I could. I soon found that the adversary was well aware of me and began to make himself more known to me than ever before. We called Sandra one day and she told us not to come because her family was coming, but she asked if we could come the next morning. We said sure, that we would be there at 8:30 which was the usual time. Later that evening she called us to make sure we were coming—it seems she had forgotten.

The next morning we arrived about fifteen minutes early. As we headed for her area we ran into her in the hallway as she was being wheeled into the shower area. She saw us and was happy. She told us she was going to take a shower and asked if

we could wait for her. We told her we would go for a walk to a nearby store and that we'd be back in a half hour and she said she'd be waiting for us. She looked very happy like a child getting ready to go to a party or somewhere. When we got back she was in her room waiting for us. We shared stories and took pictures with her. We spent a couple of hours there. We told her we'd come by the next morning to bring some of my writings to read. She said thank you and was looking forward to it. We gave her a hug and left. Later that day she passed away. I've seen this numerous times. People have some kind of peace just before leaving this life. I have no doubt that she loves Christ and He loves her. The Lord judges us in different ways, especially what's in the heart. She was a special lady, and we know we'll see her when we cross the veil. May God bless her.
Bye Sandra

Multiple Spirits — Aster Medical

A short time after Sandra's death I was still taking patients and sharing the gospel. It seemed I was getting very involved in the church much more than I would ever have dreamed. One morning I was scheduled to pick up a new patient in El Monte in a convalescent facility and transport her to a hospital. As usual I arrived an hour early so I could go for a walk. I liked walking in the morning and still do today. I started down the street which was Ramona Blvd. I walked about thirty minutes when I saw a group of stores—about six little shops that were connected like a small mall. As I got near I stopped at the first store and looked inside. It was an auto parts store. Of course I couldn't go in because everything was still closed so I was just kind of window shopping. Keep in mind, it was still dark out. The next store was a water bottle filling station, not really anything to look at, so I moved on to the next establishment but as I approached it before I could see what kind of store it was I felt

multiple spirits trying to push me away from the door. I could only feel darkness and loud mumbling. I didn't hear words but I could read them. They wanted me out of there. They must have known something about me because I was not welcome. I stepped back and they withdrew from me. I looked inside and saw candles of every kind, statues of Christ with dripping blood on his face, and books everywhere. The evil I felt there was not new to me. Later, I realized the experience told me I was moving closer to my Lord Jesus Christ.

President Hatch and Bishop Hamilton

Maria and I struggled for a long time—church had not been a part of our lives, at least not a committed part. A lot of years had gone by and we had 3 children—Richard, Raymond, and Benita. I was still struggling with alcohol and drugs. Maria was not a member of the church yet. Many times in those years we both worked early hours so we would take the kids to Grandma's before work, so we had to wake up early to get them ready. Many times I would tell her to make some tuna sandwiches because we were going to the beach or to the mountains. She would ask "What about work?" I would say "What about it? Let's go have some fun." The benefit of going on the weekdays was that no one was around. We'd have the beach to ourselves or the swimming hole up in the mountains. The children would have those days to remember. The kids were getting older now.

One day I was out in the garage playing with my '62 Chevy Impala when my son Ray came out to ask me if he could go to church with his friends on Sunday. Since I always knew that the Mormon Church contained the fullness of the gospel, I quickly said okay, in fact I was pleased with him. Just because I wasn't attending that much didn't mean I didn't want to. I had too much sin in my life. Soon Ray wanted to get baptized and I

surely wasn't ready to perform the honor so my nephew David Mendez did it for Ray. My daughter Benita started going to church with my son. This went on for a while. People from church would pick them up for different activities during the week. They soon became familiar to Maria and me. Ray soon became a priest. I began to feel the priesthood through him and it was something I had missed since my early years in the church. Soon Benita wanted to be baptized and she also wanted my nephew Michael Mendez to do the baptism. My family wanted me to go but I told them I couldn't because I had no suit to wear. Well my nephew Jesse told me I could borrow his three piece suit so I said okay. After the baptism he told me I could keep the suit if I would start going to church. The suit was nice and expensive so I told him I would give it a shot.

I started going to church first occasionally and slowly I met people and they really encouraged me along the way. I began to feel less inadequate than before. Maria started going with me and that helped a lot. When Maria told me she wanted to get baptized I was pleased to hear it. Ray did the baptism because I was still struggling with old habits I had. While I tried getting used to the idea of changing my life I found great support from people that were once like me. One particular man was Sam Kaai. He served in the military as I did but he was a paratrooper. He had his share of tattoos like I do, maybe even more than I. We started going to church more regularly. I made sure we'd get there early to get the seat at the very back by the door because I was claustrophobic. I used to tell Maria, isn't this grand I just sit here with my striped shirt with no tie or coat and watch everybody do all the things that are done during sacrament. I used to tell her I would never wear a suit and tie, but what did I know.

While I continued my journey in the gospel I began to notice Satan did not want me to change. He seemed to make it easier for me to acquire money to buy drugs and alcohol. Our bishop at the time was Bishop Hamilton. He knew of my troubles with

alcohol and drugs among other things and he was always watching our progress. He was a principal of a nearby school. I used to help him when I could. He counseled me often but always in a loving way. He didn't know much about my abuse, only little things that I would mention from time to time. He was a great bishop and he still is a good friend of mine. Last I heard he lives in Cedar City and his current calling is washing cars for the missionaries. In California during his time being a bishop he cared about his flock very much and in school he always made sure the less fortunate kids had a backpack and all their needs for school. He would pay for them himself. He would ask me on occasion if I drank for pleasure or to get drunk. I don't think I ever answered him directly because it would bring up my past.

President Hatch called me up one day to ask us to come to his house for a movie and refreshments—sort of a young married couple's night. I tried to weasel out of it by telling him I was too intoxicated, which I was. His response was "I'll pick you guys up in a half hour." And hung up. I told Maria so we both got ready. Sure enough he was there on time. I knew I smelled like the local bar but he didn't say anything. His wife said hello and talked to my wife on the way to their home which, by the way, looked like a small palace with a big long swimming pool. There were many couples there. We sat among them and they said hello and treated us no different than anyone else. I knew they smelled the alcohol but acted like nothing was different about me.

That evening we learned a lot about the members of the church and how they made us feel. They talked about their lives and many bore their testimonies which I have always enjoyed. They spoke of Joseph Smith even though I always knew he was the prophet of the restoration. We had a meaningful evening. It almost felt like how it was in the pre-existence as we prepared to come to this earth. Maybe we promised each other that when we heard the gospel, we would

share it with everyone, hoping to help each other make it back to our Savior Jesus Christ.

I really began to thirst for knowledge of the gospel but being somewhat different in many ways I found myself wanting to know about latter-day prophecy. Again I had never read a book in my life but from this time forward I found I could not stop—I decided I wanted to know things fast so I turned to books of latter-day prophecy from great men of the church. Also I have read the book of Revelations many times.

At this point we had been attending church for about seven months. Without asking anyone about taking the sacrament, I thought it would be okay to take it. So we went to church the next Sunday and I don't know why to this day, but we sat in the middle of the chapel. It was something I never did before. As the sacrament service began I took the bread and quickly realized that I made a big mistake. I began to sweat like Niagara Falls and as I looked up I saw the Bishop and his counselors looking at me. I realized it wasn't going to stop so I quickly got up and started for the door, all the while thinking the whole world was watching me. The bishop never said anything to me about it. I learned the hard way—that the sacrament is a sacred thing and nothing to play with. When I eventually did take the sacrament I knew God loved me. I thank Him for the hard lesson.

We began to attend gospel principles class on Sundays. As we observed the lessons, they slowly began to make sense. President Fonoimoana used to sit in the class and share stories and testimonies of other people and also his personal experiences. I quickly learned that I enjoyed very much to hear people bear testimonies of their lives that brought them to the gospel, or back to it. All these years later I find myself doing the same thing.

During the next two years I would still abuse drugs and alcohol. My nephew Jesse who was the oldest of my sister Eloise's

sons was closer to me than the rest of them but I loved them all. He asked me one day "Why are you going to church if you're still doing those things?" My answer was, "Should I go backwards?" I knew it couldn't happen overnight but in my mind I always believed the Lord would show me the way someday.

One evening Bishop Hamilton called me up and asked if he could send President Hatch over to see me. I told him it wasn't a good idea because I was loaded and we said goodbye. I went back to my drinking and just that quick the phone rang. It was the bishop again. He said he really wanted to send the stake president over. I informed the bishop that I had enough liquor in me for three drunk drivers and hung up. Maria heard the telephone from the stairs and came down to ask who called. I told her it was the bishop, and just then it rang again. I answered it and sure enough it was him. He said Joe I really want you to see him. I finally said to myself "Why not? He'll come and it will be done and I can get back to my business." I said "Okay Bishop." and we hung up. Not even two minutes passed and there was a knock on the door. I said to myself, "It can't be, they live at least fifteen minutes away." I opened the door and there they were. I believe this was pre-planned. So I asked them to come in, we shook hands and I asked them to sit down. President Hatch sat in front of me and Bishop Hamilton sat next to me. President Hatch began to ask me how I was and the family. I said that we were doing fine. Then he asked how I felt about going to church and I said we were enjoying it more and more. I then reminded him of how I was quite drunk and he just ignored that and then asked if they could give me a blessing. I agreed thinking, let's get it over with then they'll leave. But what happened next I was not prepared for. They put their hands on me and the President gave the blessing, at which time I had no feelings of anything that was being said. Then about the middle of the blessing I began to listen to his words. Then the Holy Spirit came upon me and I began to weep

throughout the rest of the blessing. When he finished I stood up and looked at him for a few seconds then we embraced. I'll forever be grateful for the efforts of Bishop Hamilton and President Hatch. My life really began to change and the spiritual gifts began to return to me in a powerful way but so did the adversary as will be manifested in the following pages.

Quitting Drugs Overnight

As I became more involved in the church I became more aware that drugs didn't fit in my life like before and I knew that if I continued with the drugs that I wasn't going to live that long. I knew I needed help because I could not do it alone. Going to church showed me that prayer was used for many things like before sacrament meeting started and when it ended and each class started and ended with prayer too. I had no prayer in my life so I thought I could talk to the Father in my mind and tell him the desires of my heart that way. I did that from time to time. Then they began to ask me to say the prayer in class. Basically I would say what I heard others say. Then one day President Fonoimoana asked to see Maria and myself in his office. He asked us about a problem we were having and at the end he told us we needed to get down on our knees at home and pray together. I remember thinking how weird that sounded and that there was no way I could ever do that.

Time went on, we continued to go to church and the drugs were still there but I was becoming more and more aware that I wanted to leave that life. I prayed to God and talked with him as if He were there with me and I began to feel his embrace and that He loved me. I began to pray with more intent and desire to know Him. One day I awoke and did the normal things like always. The day ended and I thought nothing of it. In the next several days I suddenly realized the drugs were gone. To this day and forever I don't remember the day I quit

and it doesn't matter because I know Heavenly Father made it happen His way.

I was walking in the Whittier Narrows Recreational Park one morning as I was pondering my life. I looked up to the sky and said out loud to my Heavenly Father that from this day forward I would walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Ever since then I have pressed forward and, on occasion, have fallen backwards but continue to move forward with the desire to serve God's children.

One day Sam Kaai came over to me and asked if I would like to attend the High Priest class then walked away. Well I thought he was kidding so I just forgot about it. About two weeks past and he approached me again and said Bishop Hamilton wants to know if you want to attend High Priest, I said sure I do. So that day I began attending the class and I felt so much at home and comfortable with them. Someone said once, "Surround yourself with knowledgeable men so you can become knowledgeable." I've always looked forward to being with them and always will. This church has the spirit of Jesus Christ and the fullness of the gospel. As I mingled among the saints I often heard about patriarchal blessings so I decided it was time for mine since I never got it because of all the circumstances of my life. I believe it was time to learn what Heavenly Father had in store for me to do, if I would follow the Savior. I went to see my bishop to make an appointment to see the patriarch who, at the time, was Roger Jones. He was from England as I recall and was a powerful speaker. As for many people like me, we don't really understand the blessing at first, we need to read it and re-read it over and over and in the meantime we grow spiritually with it. I must admit when I got mine it sounded so plain to me.

Since my father had passed he didn't see my progress in my walk with the Lord. To me, he was a great example of everything good. And of course to all who knew him. In later years I found out that he was not allowed to pay his tithing. He didn't

argue about it, he simply started taking tacos to work and selling them for a fair price then he paid his tithes. Everyone knew of my father's cooking.

The Vision of My Father

One night as I slept, my eyes were opened to a vision. At first I thought it was a dream—I saw a small room come into view. As I looked, there was a door opposite from me and in my mind I was told that my father would be entering through it. That quick my Dad entered the room. He was young and handsome wearing his favorite blue suit. He didn't speak to me in words, the love we shared was beyond the need. I began to weep from his mere presence. His suit was a beautiful color not of this world. In my mind I said to him "Father I know this is a dream but please don't leave me so fast." He then approached me and held me in his arms. I felt the love he had for me. Though those times he held me when I was little were few, I could never forget them. I began to weep. As a heavy stream rolled down my face, I realized that the love I was feeling would be eternal. I suddenly became his little boy in his arms as he poured out the love. I became myself again. Then the vision shifted to a small table with two chairs. We sat across from each other as if to spend time together. As he left the room the tears remained flowing down my face. The vision ended and I opened my eyes and looked into the night pondering the vision as the tears were still flowing as a heavy stream. My father came to help me to let me know he loved me even though the circumstances did not permit him to show me. He came to tell me how proud he was at what I'd become. We don't always see our kids do well in the church while we're here on earth but I truly believe that if I keep my garments clean my children can be mine forever.

Maria's Vision

As my wife and I continued our walk with the Lord we made a lot of friends. It was fun growing with people who wanted to do the Lord's work—it was something we never had in our marriage. Maria got her first calling working in the library. She loved working there and serving others, it was a great joy to her. I was later called to teach the eleven and twelve year-olds. While teaching them I had a spiritual experience which I'll share later in the story. One Sunday I went to the library to get some scriptures for my children before class started so I could be ready for them. I walked in and saw two boxes full of old Ensigns and Friends magazines and I asked what they were for. Maria told me they were going to discard them. "Well", I said, "Why don't I take them home." Since I was still driving medical transport, I could take a few at a time to each doctor's office that I went to on a daily basis. That's when sharing the gospel started to mean a lot to me.

We finally got the opportunity to go to the temple and be sealed for time and eternity. We really got involved with seeking eternal happiness. I'll tell you, it's been a rough journey but I know it will be worth it. It's a continuous journey in this life. While enjoying our church life we still went to the beach often. We knew all the good spots as we spent many years going from San Diego to Santa Barbara. One morning we got up at 4:00 to leave by 5:00 to beat the traffic and get to Bolsa Chica State Beach before 6:00—that way we got in free. We had left the kids with her mom the night before so we could go alone. We parked and walked across the highway to the Bolsa Chica Wildlife Preservation. That day there was a no trespassing sign we'd never seen before so we walked further down the road and saw a hole in the fence. We walked through it and that day we went in a big circle, covering more ground than we had in previous times. This is where the vision took place.

These are Maria's words:

As we walked farther into this unfamiliar ground, we began to see many trees where there was a big clearing with rows of steps like there must have been little cottages of some kind. There were old machinery parts for plowing and also there were remnants of an old worn out barn. Then we came across more trees without leaves and were discolored as if they caught fire sometime before. It looked like a scary movie could have been filmed there at one time. As Joe and I continued walking we were talking about church things and our callings and spiritual things. We talked about our ancestors that came before us and the things they might have gone through. We wondered about how many didn't follow Christ and wished they had another chance. Suddenly I saw someone walking beside me on my left side. Joe was walking on my right side. I continued walking, too amazed to tell Joe just yet, and I was still trying to figure out if this was really happening.

He continued walking alongside of me just looking straight ahead. As we continued walking I was dumbfounded when all of a sudden Joe looked at me and noticed there was something wrong. He later told me I looked like I saw a ghost. He asked me what the matter was. I said "Joe I saw someone." As I'm writing this I can see the image in my mind. He was a big tall Indian walking alongside of me looking straight ahead. He was wearing brown Indian clothes with moccasins as in days of old. He wore a full feathered head band suggesting to me he was a chief. He walked tall and proud then the vision closed. We went home and pondered it for days. About a week or so passed and then one day I was looking at the newspaper when I came across an article on the wetlands. Apparently a group of Indian tribes were fighting for years to prevent builders from building apartments. My husband and I have no doubt about this sacred ground and we are grateful we were chosen to share this experience.

Primary Children

Over the years I've had the privilege of teaching several groups of eleven and twelve year-olds. It's always a blessing to teach the children and share stories and the gospel with them—always hoping to share something they may use or remember as they grow up. I've watched many grow up and go on missions and be married in the temple. I still teach today, but while in California with the eleven and twelve year-olds I had a wonderful experience and would like to share that story. One day when the children left to young womens and young mens I was left with three little boys. I finished the lesson and still had a good ten minutes left, so I kind of went off the record and asked the boys if they ever read the Book of Revelations or had it read to them at home. Their response was "No." So, I asked them if I could read them something from the book. They didn't hesitate to say yes so I read them something of interest to me and found they too wanted to hear it so I began to read and quickly saw that they were listening like I never saw before. I was happy to see their enthusiasm. Suddenly they left their chairs and gathered around the table with their elbows up holding their heads. It made me feel very happy as the spirit filled the room. They listened without a blink. Suddenly the room was filled with multitudes of angels. They appeared to be in countless numbers as tiny people—I believe so I would know there were many. I didn't tell the boys about the experience that day, I was too overwhelmed. But I told them later. At the time this experience happened I was reading a book by Henry B. Eyring called "To Draw Closer to God" and was about half way through it. During the following week I picked up the book and read the following...

"the youth of the church are hungry for the things of the spirit. They are eager to learn the gospel and they want it straight and undiluted. They want to know about the fundamentals of

our beliefs. They want to gain testimonies of the truth. They are not now doubters but inquirers, seekers after truth.

Doubt must not be planted in their hearts. Great is the burden and the condemnation of any teacher who sows doubt in a trusting soul. These students crave the faith their fathers and mothers have. They want it in its simplicity and purity. There are few indeed who have not seen the manifestations of its divine power. They wish to be not only the beneficiaries of this faith, but they want to be themselves able to call it forth to work.

Henry B. Eyring

Our Latter-day children need our help to prepare them for the coming events. I'm grateful for the experiences that I've had with God's precious children.

Jose Bonilla Flores

Danielle's Baptism

Maria and I have been foster parents for many years. We had about thirty-eight children and two blind ladies, Patty and Deedee, which we had for seven years. They passed away a year apart. I'll share their story later in this book. At one point we had two sixteen year old girls not related. One was Eunice and the other was Danielle. I was honored to be asked by both of them to baptize them maybe six months apart. I believe Danielle was first. She was brought to us with old clothes like she was on the streets for some time. She had a story to tell us about her life—it's one we've heard so many times. Unfortunately there are many broken homes in this world. We took her in, gave her some new clothes and other things she needed. We never have asked for anyone to come to church with us, but we've been lucky to have them all come. The children have always come into our home with plenty of

food, stability and love. Danielle came to us quiet and uncertain but quickly realized that we wanted her to be as happy as possible. I believe she enjoyed the laughter in our home and our daughter Benita who invited her to share her room with her. They became friends. They went to church together and met the girls in her class. She began to see how different it was to walk with Christ and learn the plan of salvation. She began to shine. She had memories of her past but was now looking at a different kind of life and was enjoying it. During this time we took Danielle to see her mother and siblings every month and got to know them very well. One particular day she told her mother of her intention to be baptized. Her response was that she was glad to hear it and gave her blessing and congratulated her. Danielle asked me if I would baptize her. Of course I said yes— that I would be honored. As she prepared for that day, I could see she was happy and looking forward to it. The day came for her and we were off to the stake center. We were all excited for her. She had changed so much and her face told a story—one so familiar to those who have the love of Christ. The program began and we had the introductions and there were a lot of people there to support her.

We headed to the dressing rooms to change for the baptism and the people were waiting anxiously. We entered the font and proceeded with the witnesses and all who attended. When it was over we changed and sat down with all the people who came. Some had to stand because there were so many. The bishop gave closing remarks and a prayer was said. Then a lot of people lined up to congratulate her. At one point there were five girls around her at the same time. That's when I saw, again, multitudes of angels around Danielle and the girls (in small form again so I could see there were many, just like the experience I had with my primary children.) I'm grateful for the gifts Heavenly Father has given to me.

Aunt Manuela

When we lived in Pico Rivera, my Uncle Chito (one of my favorite uncles), lived five blocks from us. We spent many years growing up with our cousins. My aunt Manuela was a sweet lady. Us kids spent many years doing things together and learning about life. As we got older, things began to change—some for good and some not. Through those years, family and some friends talked about some peculiar things my aunt did. I know her house was always dark with the shades closed and she slept a lot, but I came to realize we all have a past. I happened to know her early life had some demonic encounters. My sister Cindy was always with the girls so she saw a lot more than I did. My mother respected my uncle very much so she would whisper among the family things my aunt did. I sometimes overheard the conversations. I'll tell what I saw in her. She was kind and simple in many ways. She used to ask me a lot of questions wanting to find out what I was thinking, so I would make up things just to get her reaction. She would always respond with "you better stop that Joe." Maybe I liked the innocence in her that no one else seemed to see.

I liked her a lot because she treated me differently. She had no hatred in her. She didn't know how to hate. I loved going to Chito's. He was always in his garage making tool bits for the company he worked for. One day my uncle found out his boss was getting rid of several of the machines and buying new ones so he bought them real cheap and rebuilt them all. Then his boss let him work from home. I knew about it so I was always over to his house listening to his old stories from World War II and growing up in Texas. He would tell me stories I heard before but I would laugh with him. I loved him very much and I knew he was a good man and never judgmental. Even as an adult I went to see him often up until his death. But back to my Aunt Manuela. Some people used to say bad things about her, but many didn't know about her past. When I heard

things people said I just left it alone; I wanted to know her for myself. My uncle didn't go to church but he always did the right things for his family and was faithful to my aunt.

As I continued my never ending growth in the gospel I saw things in greater perspective. I shall tell you of my experience with Manuela at this time. One Saturday we were invited to my little sister Cindy's home for a kind of get together for family and friends. I arrived a little late because we lived so far from Cindy. We entered the home and all the couches and chairs were already taken. Well I looked at the big couch by the door and saw a little space by the corner of the couch where I could squeeze Maria and myself. All I had to do was ask the lady that was sitting there if she could move over a little and she did. I didn't know who she was because her hair was covering her face. So I asked Maria, "who's that lady?" and she said "it's Manuela" so I began to talk to her and, of course, I had one of my one inch binders with me in which I carry writings of books that I've read—actually they were short writings from the stories I read from great authors of the church.



By this time my uncle had been gone for about five years so I hadn't seen her for quite some time. I asked her if she wanted to look at my binder and she said yes. As she began turning the pages I suddenly felt an innocence about her. I realized I was given a glimpse of how the Savior looks at her. I saw a special spirit, a child of God. It made me feel as Christ does of all His children that love Him. As I sat there looking at her and pondering these feelings, I saw her looking at the pictures of Christ like a little girl with her first doll. I don't think she was ever exposed to pictures of Christ before. This reminds me of the Savior sitting on a hill overlooking Jerusalem and saying, "How oft I would have taken you under my wing." He knew of the trials we would have to pass through. I know he loves us and prays for us.

Elder Newell of "The Spoken Word"

Time went on for me, enjoying my wife and her progress in the church. Being a convert, she was more excited about doing things right. She loved her new-found family in Christ as well as me. I personally had no problem telling my old friends I was back to activity in the church and slowly they stopped trying to influence me in the old ways. Besides, I was enjoying the new life that had meaning and purpose for us. Around that time I had been called to be first counselor in the Sunday School Presidency. I enjoyed working with all the children. When I had the opportunity, I would attend the high priest group. I always have and always will be happy being with the older guys like me. There are so many stories and experiences to share. Later I was called to be Sunday School President. It was rewarding to be of service, as always, to the children of the church. On one occasion we were told we'd be having a meeting at the stake center for all the Sunday School Presidencies so I got my counselors on the phone and asked them to meet me

at the meeting. They came and so did all the other groups and it was a great turnout. As I was looking for the best seat towards the rear of the building someone approached me. I forget who it was but I was asked if I would say the closing prayer. I said I would and was happy that I had time to prepare it. I always like to prepare when possible. We sat down and had about ten minutes before starting the program so I sat with my counselors and was writing down my prayer when one of them said that Elder Newell of "The Spoken Word" was on his way up to the stand with the stake presidency. I got excited about that and I wanted to meet him, at least I was hoping to. The presentation of all those who spoke was very informative but of course we enjoyed Elder Newell a whole lot. As the last song was near the end I started towards the stand. We were taught years ago that we should be ready to give a prayer on time. When I got to the pulpit I thought I was ready, having pretty much my prayer memorized.

**GLENDORA STAKE FIRESIDE
FOR ALL MEMBERS AND GUESTS**

Sunday, November 24th 2002

7:00 p.m.

**Glendora Stake Center Chapel
2121 East Route 66
Glendora, CA**

Lloyd D. Newell speaks on:

**"President Hinckley, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and the Music and the Spoken Word...
How They Make a Difference Around the World and in Individual Hearts"**



I began my prayer and was doing very well. The things I was saying were more from the heart than the words I had written. As I continued my prayer I was about half done when suddenly I froze up. I had nothing coming from my being. I felt like it would last forever when suddenly the Holy Ghost spoke through me with the voice of thunder coming from within me. I finished my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ and my hands were still on the pulpit. I could not move away from it. I was filled with the Holy Ghost and all who were present knew it. Finally I was released to turn to and shake Brother Newell's hand. He was already waiting for me when I turned around. I told him I was happy to meet him and he immediately responded that he was glad to meet me too. I was so humbled by his words.

Wolf in Marengo

About this time I worked in Arcadia California for Jerry and Carroll. They worked out of their home and had a storage space they rented to keep a supply of hospital beds and breathing supplies etc. They had a store in Henderson, Nevada and one in El Centro, California—right by the Mexican border. We also had patients in Los Angeles, Yucca Valley, Palm Springs, and Twenty Nine Palms. When I started working for them, I quickly found them to be pleasant people. We didn't have deliveries every day so they would call me at home to let me know I had a delivery the next day. So I would go to their home to pick up the van and the equipment I would be delivering. I always left about 1:00 in the morning to beat the traffic in Las Vegas or El Centro. When I went to Las Vegas, Jerry would have a room for me so I could stay overnight and drive home the next day. So I would take my wife and kids on occasion when I went to El Centro. I would bring my guns and go shooting in the desert for a few hours. It was great working for them.

One particular day I was to go to El Centro. I prepared to leave at midnight. As I drove at my usual speed of 80 miles per hour and came around the bend just before the Marengo exit, I saw from the corner of my left eye, an animal running towards me. You see, the freeway had about twenty feet of dirt in-between the north and south lanes. Then, quickly I saw a wolf jump in front of my windshield. Somehow I knew I wasn't going to hit it though. As it passed, it seemed to be in slow motion. I could see the grayish blue coat and I saw every fiber of hair. He was magnificent. It was like watching a motion picture in slow motion. It ended as I saw the wolf complete the car and run into the night. As I pondered what happened, I realized that it had no effect on my driving.

From this experience I learned that there are different dimensions of time that co-exist. I'm grateful for this experience. I felt no evil in it.

Al's Pigeon Encounter

A short story of a cousin of mine, his name is Al. We've been good friends for many years and still are. We both served in the military in April of 1969. He was in the Marine Corps and I in the Army. After our service to our country was over we got together again and after telling our war stories we decided to go to Rio Hondo college and take classes on the GI Bill. We were there about two and a half years. We enjoyed working on cars and meeting other veterans. We completed our courses and started painting cars on the side. We started going out to the desert a lot and soon learned many of the good spots. In the early days Fontana was the place to go and the nearest. We'd shoot rabbits and coyotes. Soon they filled that area with homes so we'd go further out to yucca valley where the story occurred.

One Saturday morning we left the house at 3:30 in the morning as was custom for us, we liked getting there while it was still dark so we could surprise the rabbits and coyotes. There were quite a lot of pigeons there. We'd have some homemade burritos and jerkey to go with our cantines. We'd leave the vehicle with pistols in holster and our rifles and on this day I took a single shot shotgun that I bought from my cousin David, it's a bolt action. I also took a 357 that belonged to my Uncle Charles. We started out from my Volkswagon which we always parked alongside the railroad tracks by the Morengo Casino exit. This day we walked west along the tracks. We were having so much fun with my newly acquired shotgun that we lost track of the time. We finally stopped to drink water and eat some jerky when Al turned around to look at the Volkswagon and said "Look!" I turned to look and the car appeared to be the size of a pin head. So we sat for a few minutes then proceeded to walk back on a different trail that would take us a little southeast back to the car. We started towards the telephone lines where there were several pigeons perched along the wire. Al quickly took a shot at them and one fell to the earth. I yelled out "You got one!" He quickly ran to where the pigeon fell. He kept telling it to get up and fly away. He kept repeating it. I could tell he felt really bad that he acutally hit one of them. I looked at him and really saw for the first time a son of God, a humble man.

Though he does not attend church, he's a caring man who everyone loves especially his wife Linda whom he remained loyal to and took care of her all their married life. She passed away while I was writing this book. She was a sweet spirit and reminded me of Al's mother. I believe Heavenly Father has plans for ones such as these. I'd like to dedicate this little story to Adolph (Al) and Linda De La Cerda.

Rosie's Blessing

In the year 2000, Maria's sister, Rosie (the youngest of the four girls), went to Mexico with her husband Jose and two children by airplane. On their way home, she, along with five others contracted the SARS disease. She got home quite ill and was put in the hospital. She became very critical. Her daughter called everyone in the family to let us know. The next day we went to see her. Rosie was so bloated that she didn't look real. The medications had something to do with that along with the disease. We went home and the next morning my wife asked me if I could get another elder and give Rosie a blessing. I called Sam Kaai and he agreed to meet me at the hospital later that day. Sam administered the oil and I gave her a blessing of healing and expressed our love for her. She was in an induced coma so during the prayer, I expressed hope that she would hear the words of my prayer even in her sleep. She spent three months in the hospital. Sam and I went to see her in the ICU and when she came out of her coma Maria and I went to see her. Maria brought her a Book of Mormon. A week later we went to see her again. She told Maria that she began to read the book and knew it was true and expressed that she wanted to get baptized. She also described the blessing I gave her in detail. It's interesting because after she got home from the hospital she had no recollection of the things that were said. She was with us fourteen years, being a delight to all who knew her. She started attending a Christian church and loved Jesus Christ and shared stories with us all. We love her and soon we'll be together again.

Wajeah

I frequently went to a liquor store in Azusa where we lived. I got to know the clerk very well. His name was Wajeah and he was from the Middle East. Many times he worked eighteen-hour days. We had many good conversations about him and where

he lived. He was a humble man and was quite simple in his ways but a great brother. In those days I used to drink those little liquor bottles like the ones they sell on airplanes. I was introduced to them when I went overseas to Germany while serving in the Armed Forces.

One day I asked Wajeah for my usual two little shooters, as we called them. They were directly behind him so he had to turn around to reach them. While he grabbed them in his hand they suddenly flew from his hand to his right about fifteen feet away. As I witnessed it, I immediately knew what had happened. There was a strong message for me to leave those liquor bottles alone. As for Wajeah he yelled out "It's magic!" I laughed at his reaction and later told him what the meaning was. I never bought liquor again.

The Lord will use whatever means to get a message across to us. I'm grateful for the help I've so often received from above. I love my brother Wajeah.

Maria's Dream

Sometime later Maria had a dream. When she related the dream to me, I told her she must put it in writing. These are her words: The world as we know it was coming to an end. It was a beautiful day. We were in our backyard drying our car. We heard voices and a loud trumpet. It was coming from the sky. I saw the moon or sun, I don't know which, but I could see it—it didn't burn my eyes. I was looking up but Joe wouldn't look and I kept telling him how beautiful it was. But he couldn't look, he kept his head face down. I stared and marveled at the wonderful visions coming out. It was Moroni sounding the trumpet. I saw all the prophets of old from the Bible and the Book of Mormon. I saw Heavenly Father and he was angry. He swooshed down and stared into our hearts and faces to see if we were wearing our garments and to see what was in our hearts. As I looked over to Joe he was looking at Heavenly

Father not at the ground like before, Joe looked different. Heavenly Father gave him something: Knowledge, strength and wisdom. The words were, "My son of whom I am well pleased, I look upon your garments and commence you to take upon thee the journey that thy Father has for thee at this time. Thou must go forward leaving everything behind. Thou will be blessed with all the blessings Heavenly Father has for thee, now go and I will be with thee.

Heavenly Father's wrath was going to be upon the earth, he sent a plague of fleas—they were biting everyone around us, but not us because of our faithfulness and obedience he has blessed us. As I looked over to Joe he said we must go now... my first thought was, "What shall I take?" Joe said the Lord said to leave everything behind. "But what shall we take? I must take something." I ran into the house—my scriptures! As I saw them sitting by my radio, it brought great comfort to me. I grabbed them and as I was rushing out I saw another family settling in our home. My first thought was Joe is going to be angry. They were less fortunate people and making themselves at home. The Lord quickly said to me, leave everything behind except your scriptures which I am pleased at your choice. Show these my children where you keep all your food storage for they have children and will not journey with you. So I did and also gave them scriptures and ensigns so they could learn the gospel. I went out to the garage to tell Joe. To my surprise he was burning all the money we had. I said, "What are you doing? We need that." It hurt me to see it burning. Joe said the Lord will take care of us in our journey. "But we will need some of it, won't we?" "No, because if we take it someone will kill us and if we leave it they will kill the people left behind." So, we burned it and left walking with others going to build the New Jerusalem. We looked back and saw fires, earthquakes, fleas and winds, and then I awoke.

Wow! I thought what did I learn? Keep the commandments and covenants, be obedient, be faithful, be humble, read the

scriptures, be grateful, walk with Christ and He will walk with me. The Lord promised that in the latter-days children and adults alike would have dreams and visions and would be showered with the spirit. May we build our testimonies that we may be found worthy to meet the Savior.

Maria Flores

Brother Gomm

In 1995 we had been in our new ward in Azusa for a year, that's when I met Mr. Gomm. He was a door greeter at the time, whether by assignment or because he liked meeting people. We talked from time to time but I really got to know him when I was invited to the High Priest Group. That's when we sat together quite often and learned that we had a lot in common. Even though he was an educated man, a teacher who taught all grades in his career, and was a wise man. He took me under his wing and became my mentor, he taught me many things about eternal truths and about celestial marriage. We spent many years together many times in his home. We'd talk for hours out on the patio. I remember Mrs. Gomm would bring us lemonade and some goodies because in California it gets hot outside. He liked health foods and vitamins and exercising, the same things I liked and still do. In 2006 we took a trip to Utah to visit our son Ray and his wife Mona and our three grandchildren. We were there for about seven days. During which time we spent a day with Mona's parents who were also in town from Hawaii where they live.

We all went to the health food stores in Orem, Utah where I found all the herbs that I could not find in California at the time. I had mentioned my intent to Merrill Gomm to bring home these remedies, for we both used them. After I found everything on my list, I couldn't wait to get home and share them with him. I didn't know that the Gomm's were also visiting Utah at the same time we were there. We returned home, got

settled and then I called him and there was no answer, so I went about my business and I called him later that morning. Still no answer. I thought it was unusual so again later that afternoon I called and still no answer. I began to think something wasn't right. Later that evening I was in the backyard listening to music in my car when my daughter Benita came out and told me he was killed along with his son in an automobile accident in Lehi, Utah. We learned of the funeral arrangements and my wife and I drove back to Utah. For a while after his death I had time to think of all I learned from this man, who loved and showed concern for all people.

Brother Gomm always carried a briefcase, he always carried things to share. All the things I learned from him I do and live by. I too will hardly be seen in church without my briefcase, ready to share the gospel with any and whoever will listen. I thank all those who took time to teach me the way back to the Father.



In loving memory of E. Merrill Gomm, 1929-2006

Sister Yonker

Over the twenty four years in the Azusa first ward we met a lot of families and made lasting friendships. We experienced many miracles in that ward. I will share some of them as I go along this journey. From following the gospel of Jesus Christ, attending classes, and reading my priesthood manual, I realized that in all my years growing up I had never actually read a book until returning to church in 1994. And I hadn't noticed that my spiritual growth was expanding to a greater degree till one day I entered a beverage store and someone called to me. I turned to him and said hello. He was an old acquaintance from church that I hadn't seen for a number of years. We talked briefly and said our goodbyes. As I finished my business there I returned to my vehicle and sat for a moment then realized his countenance was no longer shining as I remembered from before. He told me he had fallen away from the gospel and divorced his family. This was something I wouldn't have noticed in earlier years because I wasn't spiritually ready.

Through the years, my wife Maria met a lot of women in Relief Society. Every Sunday, on the way home from church we would share our experiences we had in class. One Sunday she told me about a Sister Yonker—a name I hadn't heard before. As time went on I began to hear more and more about her, but still hadn't met her. I asked Maria to show her to me the following Sunday. When Sunday came I was sitting in the hall reading my priesthood manual for the lesson I would be giving that day. I always enjoy teaching, I even look forward to it. As I continued reading I could see people walking towards me, then I heard Maria say, "this is Sister Yonker." I looked up at her and before I could say hi I quickly looked into her eyes and knew that we met before in the pre-existence. The experiences I have are sure in their messages to me.

We became very good friends with her and spent many years learning from her and enjoying her company. She truly was a big sister to us, helping us on our continued journey through this life. In later years I was assigned to be her home teacher along with Mr. Santos who was in the bishopric at the time. Tony was a wonderful counselor. Sister Yonker's husband wasn't a member of our church but was a nice guy who often sat with us on our visits. One evening, while sleeping, I received a phone call from Tony. He told me Sister Yonker was in the hospital and needed a blessing. I looked at the clock and it was eleven o' clock. I said, "Tony I was sleeping." He said, "I'll pick you up in twenty minutes." So I got up and put on my suit. Tony was on time and I was half asleep but off we went. The hospital was only ten minutes away. We got there and went up to her room and talked with her for a while. We didn't know how sick she really was but Tony put the oil on her head then asked me to give the blessing. I was not prepared for this but went ahead with it.

I gave her a long blessing even though I wept through the whole thing. I had a strong impression that once again she was leaving me behind. I told her of the love we had for her and thanked her for being a big sister here on earth to help guide us through this life. When the blessing was over we talked for a few moments and then we said goodbye to her and told her we'd come in the morning. Tony proceeded to walk out of the room first then I began to follow him but suddenly I had the impression to stop. I turned to her and said, "Sister Yonker, will you pray for me?" She turned to me and asked, "Right now?" I said no and left the room. She died that morning. I know she prays for me even now along with all those who are dear to me. I am grateful to have spent many years on earth with this special sister. I believe she will be among those that greet me as I pass through the veil.

Maria's Mom

Shortly after Sister Yonker's death, Maria's mother was diagnosed with cancer. It was advanced when they found out. We got a call that she was at the hospital with not long to live, so we planned to go see her at our earliest possible time which was later that afternoon. But first a little background on her. I met Consuelo when I met Maria. She was a house wife, and a loving and caring mother. She loved her children and grandchildren very much. She had a certain calmness about her when things went wrong. Maria is the same way. She never drove a car so she was limited from going to church and to stores. I know if she could drive she would have went to church. She would walk about a country mile to the local market with her kids to go shopping for groceries. Then they would borrow a shopping cart to go home. On many occasions I walked past her room and could see her reading the bible. I know she loved Jesus Christ. Back to the hospital visit—

For being as sick as she was she didn't look it. I've seen this in so many faithful people—they just seem to pass over so wonderfully.

We talked with her for a while then Maria started to talk to her about our faith so I kind of stepped away but not too far. I was sitting nearby, kind of listening and watching her reactions. Maria started showing her pictures of the Savior and she began to look like a little girl enjoying the pictures and the explanations Maria was giving her of each picture. When she showed her Christ coming in the clouds of heaven with all the angels with trumpets, she looked happy as can be. She was even giggling. I got a strong sense that she now knew she was going home. She passed away later that night. There are many that live a simple life here on earth and just don't have the opportunity to get to know the Savior, but He loves them just the same. "The meek and the simple shall inherit the Earth".

The Heated Argument

Throughout my life I had visits from evil spirits as I have shared in previous testimonies. At this time in our lives as Maria was getting more involved in the gospel and growing a testimony of her own, she began to have experiences. I noticed the transformation in her. She began to be an inspiration to me at a time when I needed it. For what kind of people we were before no one would believe the change that was happening to us. It would not be an easy transformation. The powers of darkness were well aware of my intentions, else why would they come after us with such force? The heavens are also aware of all who seek the Celestial glory and as you will see the help we received from the heavens, not only from angels but from family and great men and woman of the church. Before I share “The Heated Argument” I will share this experience as well as I can without going into detail. One night as I was preparing to become one with Maria, I gazed upon her and for a second or two I was shown a glimpse of her in her eternal state. Her countenance was of total purity. She glowed as a picture in heaven. This happened days before the experience I will now share.

One Saturday afternoon while the children were playing outside, I was studying my lesson for the next day. I was always reading one book or another. Things seemed to be going well. At this point we weren’t being careful to watch for telltale signs of the Adversary who was constantly trying to destroy our walk with the Lord. This should have been one of those days because what happened next I wish on no man. As I said... things seemed to be going well... Maria was doing some chores and I went into the room where she was to ask her a question. All of a sudden it turned into a heated argument that went from room to room. We had never had an experience of this magnitude. It went on all the way to the kitchen where she

started washing dishes, hoping I would go away. I stopped at the threshold from the living room to where she was and kept it up from there. It seemed it would never end. Suddenly I stopped dead in my tracks. There was complete silence for a few seconds. She turned to look at me, wondering why I would stop arguing so suddenly. I began to see a cloud forming to my left. Maria could not see it or maybe she didn't have to. The cloud that was forming around me quickly turned very dark at which time I asked Maria, "Do you see what's happening here?" She just stared at me as if she knew. Then I began to feel such a force of evil overtaking me. The power was so great I felt it would literally rip me to pieces. I was so desperate that it was consuming me. I cried out in my heart for it to depart from me in the name of Jesus Christ, but it did not. I quickly repeated those words and it was gone before I finished saying it again. If this wasn't Satan himself it would have to be one of his top servants. But I can't believe that. I know Maria felt it to a certain degree. This is an experience I wish on no man.

The Final Days of My Mother

Mother did a good job of making me. With Heavenly Father's perfect plan in every way, he made it so that in our later years we'd get soft and see things differently. Like when I'd go visit her in dialysis, which I often did, I could see her pondering all the years of abuse and feeling some regret. Once I was leaving her to go home and she called to me, so I turned around and she said, "the worst one turned out to be the best".

President Garcia (Area Seventy)

Carlos Garcia was a friend of the family since I could remember. I believe my parents knew him and his family when we lived behind the Ditman Branch. When we moved to the Belvedere

ward, they also were there. We were in the Eastmont Stake. His father was a kind and humble man. Sister Garcia was more outspoken and always quick to smile. Carlos and his brother were always involved in plays at the church. They would do skits like Broadway dancers. They knew my family well and kept in touch over the years. When my mother died he presided over the services at the Whittier Second Ward in Pico Rivera. He and I sat together and we both spoke. I hadn't seen him in person for a number of years. He had become a humble servant of the Lord. He was also a lawyer, judge, and an Area Seventy. He was also involved in community efforts for the Hispanic population in East Los Angeles. Years before his death, I would talk to him often by telephone. He knew of the troubles between my mother and I. He counseled me often even in his busy life. He always made time for me. I shared with him a binder of my writings and my visit from the prophet. He was so happy when I told him, he looked into my eyes and hugged me three times with a pure love of Christ.

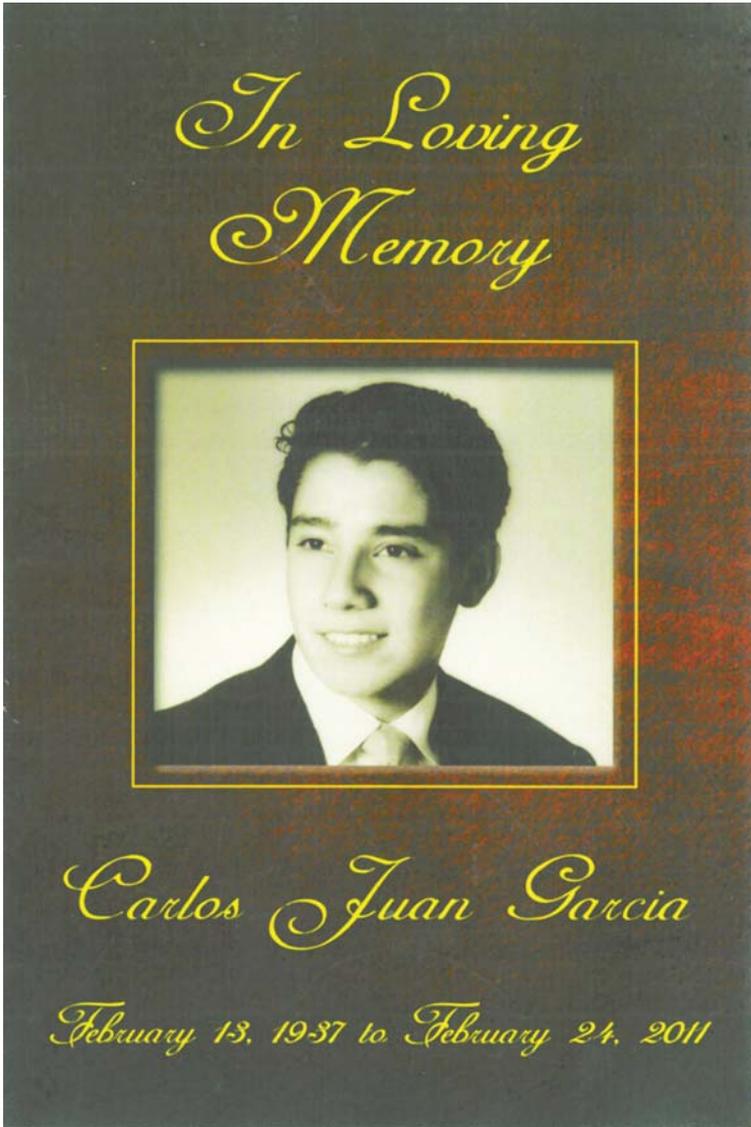
A number of years went by and we still kept contact on the phone until one day I received a call that he passed away after a short illness. My sister Eloise was very close to all those in his family and the old friends from the Belvedere Ward. I was quite saddened by his passing. He did so much for the human family. My wife Maria and my two sisters went to the funeral services in Chino Hills. We arrived early as I always do so I could secure a seat by the exit door. I'm known to do that even today. I was first to sit, then my sister Cindy, then Eloise and Maria sat next to Eloise because they were sharing stories of Mr. Garcia. As we sat talking, his brother Bobby came in, and I believe he was a bishop. He also liked joking around with people and I don't believe he ever lost that humor in his life. At one point while talking to Cindy someone tapped me on my right arm, I quickly turned to find no one around. I suddenly knew it was Mr. Garcia. I didn't know the meaning right away but kept thinking

about it through the whole service. When it happened I quickly told Maria and my sisters. The services began after talking to many members of his family and many members of the old wards that were there.

Elder Cordova of the seventy presided over the services. During the service someone spoke of the many accomplishments. As I sat listening I wondered how he found time for me. I didn't tell anyone there of my visit only my sisters and my wife. We said our goodbyes and headed for home on the 605 freeway which would bring us close to home. We talked about the funeral and old times, when about half way home, suddenly I was impressed to get off the rose hills exit to the cemetery. Then it hit me with such force. That's it! Brother Garcia wanted me to stop and visit my mother's grave site. I hadn't been there since she died, even though I insisted on dedicating her grave at the time. I didn't want anyone else to do it. Now I know why. I was still bitter for many things and had not forgiven her at that point. Now I was sure why Brother Garcia touched me. Even from beyond the veil, he, along with many others, are concerned for our happiness. I know now that his message was that we need to forgive, and it is an essential part of eternal happiness.

Brother Garcia knew more deeply from beyond the veil of my troubles with my mother. After that day I realized that it wasn't good for me or anyone not to forgive. No matter how long it takes we need to do it. Even though it took a while longer, I knew I had to start sometime. One day I got on my knees to pray, in that prayer I asked God to help me forgive her because I could not do it alone. It did not happen on the first try, but as time went on I repeated my effort. Not until the third try did it happen and I knew it because it felt like a heavy burden had been lifted from me. Without the many years of learning the gospel I might have never taken the necessary steps to find meaning and peace in the power of forgiveness. I thank those

who brought me back to church and those that taught me the way to eternal happiness.



A Visit From the Prophet

Since my mother's death I visited the graves of my mother and father, Uncle Charles—who would later visit me in a vision, and his lovely wife Beatrice. They also were our mentors whom Maria and I loved very much in life and forever. I wrote the story of my visit from Joseph Smith sometime after the death of Elder Garcia and my mother. The visit took place in the Azusa mountains in California where Maria and I would often go for exercise. We went thirty miles up the canyon to the ranger station where there was parking in the turnaround. You could see everything from there. During the week there were very few people around. It was so quiet and serene. We would get our water bottles and start down the mountain. It was a two hour walk to the little restaurant where we'd stop to rest and maybe get a soda, then we'd start back up the mountain which took about two and a half hours. We loved the quiet streams that flowed along the trails. We always saw deer drinking water and there was no shortage of coyotes and an occasional bobcat. I carried a bear repellent on my holster because the bears were quite big.

When we arrived at the ranger station we'd have some water and our tuna sandwiches with potato chips. Somehow they always taste better at the beach or the mountains. From the ranger station we could look way down to the river and see bears looking for food. Many times I would go alone. I had a favorite rest stop which was twenty miles up the canyon. I would park and read my priesthood manual in the quiet beautiful scenery. In 2008 I went for my usual four month check-up at the veteran's hospital in Long Beach California and the doctor wanted me to take some tests. After the tests he told me what he already knew, I had cancer. I did some follow-ups with him and he sent me to see the doctors that would be performing the operation. By then I was losing weight quite noticeably.

In between schedules I was still going up the canyon to read. This is where my visit from the prophet happened. As I was reading chapter four of the priesthood manual I began to read the last page—the message is powerful, it goes as follows—

“Oh ye twelve! And all saints! Profit by this important key that in all your trials, troubles, temptations, afflictions, bonds, imprisonments, and death, see to it that you do not betray heaven, that you do not betray Jesus Christ, that you do not betray the Brethren, that you do not betray the revelations of God. Whether in the Bible, Book of Mormon or Doctrine and Covenants or any other that ever was or even will be given and revealed unto man in this world or that which is to come.”

As I concluded this passage, marveling at the power of those words, the Prophet of the Restoration spoke to me. As clear as a crystal stream, I immediately knew it was him. Joseph Smith said to me: “The brethren would be lost for lack of reading this text and taking heed to its warnings. This is the last time I will be able to visit you.”

Though I knew this was for me, I also knew it was to be shared. I pondered the experience for several days. On the fifth day I was reading the passage in the priesthood manual again. Upon completion of this passage, the Holy Spirit covered my whole being with such love and power confirming the things that happened to me were true. I bare testimony that it happened this way. I thank God for the gift he has given me of love for his children. I bare you my witness that in the day of my judgement I will give an account of this testimony. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

A few weeks had passed since my visit. I went to the doctor regularly but then I began to lose a pound and a half a day. The doctor had scheduled me for an operation in two weeks but when I informed him of my weight loss he said that in three days they would do the operation. I went home and informed my wife of the change. So she called the bishop and he said he

would be over later that evening. The bishop came and I found the stake president and a room full of elders from my ward. I was given a blessing of healing and comfort. The bishop then asked my family if they wanted a blessing. I thought that was nice until he asked me to give the blessings. I could hardly stand in my weakened condition but I could not say no. I got up and successfully completed what the bishop asked. As I felt the power of the priesthood in my home I thanked them and they left. As I sat pondering what was happening to me I said to my wife “Why would a prophet of God visit me if I was leaving this world?” She had no answer. The next day before the operation, I was very weak and informed my wife that she should not come to the hospital because I was going home. I told her I didn’t belong here anymore. I had no fear and I wanted to go home to the Father. The day of the operation which was scheduled for 8:00 in the morning, my cousin Adolph and best friend drove me there. We arrived at six in the morning. He walked with me to the operation area. I thanked him and told him he could leave. I know he didn’t have words to say but his heart said it all. My time came and I was wheeled in a gurney to a room and a doctor came and gave me a shot. We talked for a few minutes then I was out. The next morning I woke up—to my surprise. I was very weak and a little dazed. Then I realized I was still here. The third morning, after I ate breakfast, the nurse came in and took my plate. I thanked her and she left. I was watching television when a man in a suit walked in. I knew he was an Elder. He shook my hand and asked me if I was Mr. Flores. I told him I was and then he asked me how my eyes were. I told him they were fine. Kind of surprised, he asked if I was Richard Flores. I said, “No!” It turned out he was in the wrong building but I know it wasn’t an accident that he came into my room that day. I kept him there for at least 45 minutes sharing my stories. He left thanking me for sharing stories with him. I told him I would send him a binder of my writings. I never

heard from him again. On the fourth day, I was watching television when three doctors came in and talked with me and asked how I was doing. One of them was the doctor who operated on me. I noticed the other two were looking at me like they saw a miracle happen. That's just a thought I had, I never required chemotherapy or anything.

Mother—Three Days in a Row

In 2012 I had a dream of our old house in Pico Rivera on Oak St. It was the house where I remember much abuse. It's funny that many years later something good could come out of the same house. It was a dream of my mother who had passed away some years previous. As I share the dream many bad memories come to mind, but I will try to set them aside. The dream takes place in the bedroom where they slept and also my father died. Many times, in the evening when my father was home from work, they shared a lot of stories of the old days in Mexico. Some of them were scary and it was like being around a campfire. I was sleeping one night when I found myself entering her bedroom. She was lying on her bed as I've seen her many times before. She seemed to pat the bed saying come lay next to me. Even though I remember all the things she did to me I still wanted to be loved by her. I began to lie next to her and I quickly felt the evil like I always did when I was near her, so I lifted myself off the bed and the dream ended.

The following day I was thinking it was just a dream letting me know she still hates me wherever she is. Then, I said to myself, "Why would she remind me of what I already knew?" I told Maria of the dream and she said it was probably just that—a dream. The next day I began my early walk up the Azusa canyon watching the birds. That day I saw a couple of opossums running across the street; it was still dark outside

and very quiet. It must have been five o'clock in the morning and still quiet in the streets. I was having a peaceful walk. I pondered the dream for a while then let it go for the rest of the day. That evening I went to bed and late into the night I found myself in the same dream in her room. Again as she lay in her bed and called me over (telepathically) asking me to lie next to her, I found myself still wanting to be loved by her. As I attempted to do so I found the hatred was still there so I removed myself from her bed and the dream ended. The next morning, as I pondered the dream I realized there was less hatred than the night before. I guess I felt a little comfort in that but still had no meaning that I could understand.

Before I share the third day I'd like to say this, that everyone wants to be loved by their mother. Throughout the years (lost years) I spent a lot of time in East Los Angeles and I met a lot of people that spent time incarcerated for major crimes, many of which I befriended and learned a lot from them. I never met a man who didn't want to be loved by his mother. Sometimes one has to be tough but once you get to know them they have feelings like anyone. Now... the third day same dream. I was thinking of the second dream and still trying to make sense of it. The thought of having a third dream in a row was the farthest thing from my mind. I went to sleep only to have the same dream again but this time I did feel even less hatred than before. I soon came to realize that she wanted me to know that she was making amends for all that happened to me. We all have to forgive—preferably in this life, that we can have joy. I believe now she could move on so she can be with Pop. I believe she'll be among the first to greet me to my heavenly home. There is no time for procrastination, there is so much to do.

DeeDee at the Morgue

We met a couple of blind ladies that were in their early fifties through the employment office. Actually it was a state run

facility. Their names were Patty and DeeDee for short. Maria's job was to go to their apartment to make them breakfast and clean up, do their laundry, and make their lunch. She would then make their dinner and put it in the refrigerator so they could warm it later in their microwave. One day Maria asked me if I could take them to a doctor's appointment. I agreed so we loaded them in the car and off we went. I enjoyed all kinds of music and I like it quite loud. I quickly noticed they were singing to the music, they knew all the songs and DeeDee had quite a voice. In fact she sang in church. We became fond of them and began taking them everywhere. One day Maria came home and told me they wanted to move in with us, that they wanted to be a part of our family. We were foster parents at the time but had no children placed in our home. So we made arrangements and brought them home. Patty weighed about three hundred and fifty pounds and DeeDee weighed about three hundred. One day, after they had been with us a while, we were eating a meal and I overheard Patty asking for their dinner pills. Later that day I asked Maria what a dinner pill was. She said it was for heartburn, so we decided to have a talk with them because I know exercise would eliminate that problem. We talked with them and they agreed to start walking with our help. We took them to the church parking lot during the week. We had the whole parking lot to ourselves. We started with one lap around the church and gradually went up to twelve times around. DeeDee didn't like it as much as Patty and began falling down in protest. They both lost a lot of weight though and admitted they felt better.

We had a lot of fun with them, while learning from them too. They enjoyed singing and learned a lot with their ears. They knew all the old songs and who sang them and what year they were recorded. We had them for seven years. They died a year apart. I'll share that further into the story. They met in a home for the blind when they were in their teens and stayed friends

for a number of years. Later DeeDee got married and they were separated for many years.

During the time DeeDee was married, Patty decided to break off and find a place of her own. She found an apartment in the middle of downtown Los Angeles where she began to learn to cook by herself. One day she decided she wanted some bacon. By this time she could get along with her stick so she went and got some food and some bacon. She had never used a frying pan on her own before but was determined and began with the oil then put the bacon in and began to play it by ear, or nose or both. All of a sudden her hair was on fire but she put it out and kept trying until she finally got it. I believe her guardian angels were watching out for her. She left Los Angeles in one piece. During the time DeeDee was married, Patty got married. They both got divorced and met again in a home. Soon, they decided to leave the home and get a place of their own. They found an apartment in Glendora and that's where we met them.

While living with us they traveled to Utah a couple of times with us. They were both baptized in the church, paid their tithing and participated in callings. About five years into having them with us Patty began to act strange and progressively got worse. She became a real problem—so bad she was driving us crazy. We got to the point where I had to sleep in the living room totally dressed because she would come flying out of her room at all hours of the night and head straight for the front door and even open it. Sometimes she would make it outside. We had to bring her in on a bed sheet. By this time she was losing weight but still weighed a ton. The sheet acted as a gurney. Finally the doctor admitted her to a hospital in San Diego where she stayed for about three weeks. Then she was released to us. She was on medication that kept her calm and she wouldn't eat much. One morning Maria went to wake them up and Patty was dead. DeeDee said she didn't hear anything that night. DeeDee lived another year then started acting strange and we knew something was wrong. We were later told that the medications they

took all their lives played a big role in what happened to them.

Here's DeeDee's story—

One night DeeDee was going to the restroom quite a bit— she seemed to have an upset stomach. Well we all went to bed about nine o'clock, and at about one o'clock in the morning she got up to go to the bathroom and then returned to her room and closed the door behind her, as usual. But then we heard a loud bang and my daughter rushed to see what had happened but she could only open the door about 6 inches. She saw DeeDee's head by it so she lifted her head enough so we could push the door open. We saw she was in bad shape so we called the paramedics. They took her to the emergency room at about 2 o'clock in the morning. At about 4:30 they called to say she had passed. The next morning we went to see the doctor. He said there was nothing they could do. But he said he sat with her for about an hour and she was talking like a happy little girl even with all those tubes down her throat then she just went home. We'd like to think that at those last moments she got a glimpse of the world beyond. We stayed at the hospital until the offices were open. We talked to the administrator and she offered to take us down to the morgue to see DeeDee.

As we walked down the hall I started sharing my writings that I always carry in my one-inch binder. She enjoyed what I was sharing with her so I asked her if she wanted one. She gracefully said yes. I told her I would bring it the next morning. She said she would be waiting for me. I went home and prepared it for her. In the morning I went looking and could not find her anywhere so I went home and returned the next day and no luck. I went home disappointed and thought I would try one more time. I went back the third time and I mean I looked everywhere. I was really puzzled so I started for the main exit when I looked up and saw a picture on the wall of three doctors and two ladies. I got a closer look and there she was. I went to the office and asked one of the ladies if she would step out to see the picture. I pointed her out and the lady looked at me and said

she hadn't been there in ten years. I submit that maybe she came from beyond to escort DeeDee, a lovely spirit.

The Dove's Message

In 2012 we were informed by our landlady that in a few months—around December we would have to move because her granddaughter and her family would be moving in. We knew Dora didn't want Maria to leave. We'd been there fourteen years and we loved her, still do, and are good friends. When we go to California, Maria spends at least one day with Dora. I had thought a lot about moving to Utah before telling my wife. I wanted to move there because I heard there was a need for foster care (in the church as well). I also thought of Los Angeles, the cost of living, the millions of people, the smog and the traffic. Later I sat with my family and told them of my plan and they weren't too happy with the idea, so we let it alone for a while longer. As I thought about the open space, the animals, farms, and mountains all around, I felt it was time to make the change. We talked once more and then let it go for a while longer. Then I had a spiritual experience that helped make the decision to move to Utah.

One afternoon, I was watering the front yard while standing near the shutoff valve which was at the center of the porch. I had finished most of the front yard so I was watering all the plants along the porch and enjoying the view of the Azusa Mountains. Suddenly a dove landed before me—about 1 foot away, near the dripping faucet where a small puddle was forming. My first thought was that he was thirsty but he didn't drink. He just looked at me. All the while, I thought he was really close to me. At that point my daughter had been watching from her window and came out and approached the dove. As she tried to pick him up he would move just enough to be out of her reach. He just walked inches from her hands but wouldn't fly away. Now I knew there was something to this, I just hadn't figured it out yet. I shut the water off and went in through the house, to the back

yard to water. My daughter stayed behind and I simply thought it would fly away. I turned the valve on which is next to the side door of the garage and began to water. As I got close to the gate which was made of iron so it was easily seen through, I could see the dove at the other side of the gate, on the black top. Now it had really caught my attention so I slowly moved towards the gate while still watering the grass. As I got close to the gate, I called to the dove in a soft voice and put my arm out-stretched with my hand out. He flew up to the top of the gate; I actually thought it was going to land on my hand but I was satisfied with that. I finished watering and headed back to the shut-off valve. As I turned off the water faucet I saw it fly into the big door of the garage—now I knew there was a message here. I quickly closed the garage door and walked to the side door and saw it on the rafter. I called to my daughter and she came out of the house and I asked her to bring me one of the cages we had while I kept my eyes on the dove. My daughter put the cage down next to me and looked up to see the dove. In amazement, she asked how I would get it into the cage. At that point I looked up to see it wasn't there. The messenger was gone.

From this experience I felt impressed and it was very clear to me that we should go to Utah.

The Hawk

The prophets and great leaders of the church have counseled the members of the church that Zion is where we are. We were in the Azusa first ward for twenty four years and have seen many couples or families move to Utah. Many people believe there is more safety being close to the Prophet or being close to the leaders in general. I suppose there is some comfort in that, but the powers of darkness also are concentrated here as well—seeking to destroy the human family. After being in Utah about two weeks I was walking from my vehicle towards the entrance to Wal-Mart in Payson when I felt a strong impression of the evil

that's here. In the weeks and months that followed I could see many reasons for those thoughts I had. Ever since we moved to Payson I would walk early in the morning at the cemetery since we lived in the nearby apartments behind the post office for the first two years. One morning, I started my walk at 4:30. It was still dark outside but it was so warm. I had been walking for about forty five minutes and it was light by then. As I walked, hearing the birds chirping and enjoying the cool breeze from the trees, I suddenly heard heavy flapping coming from above me. Before I could react I was feeling two claws grabbing my scalp and penetrating me with violent shaking of my head. Just before I could remove the hawk, it quickly jumped a little above me on a broken branch about three feet from me and stared into my eyes with evil eyes for about four seconds then flew east as far as I could see him. The thought briefly came to me that he was protecting a fallen chick but that was not the case. I was being told I was not welcome here. My desires to share the gospel are known among many. Satan was also aware of my spiritual gifts. I still walk in the cemetery and talk to the birds when I call to them. Some will play and follow me but not all. What really began this journey was when I heard of the great need for foster care. My wife and I have had, to this date, over forty-one children. We are here to serve God's children—all his children.



Payson Cemetary

The Vision of Uncle Charles

My Uncle Charles became a great man in the church and there are many who would agree. In earlier years when Maria joined the church and I slowly made my comeback to it, Uncle Charles and my aunt became our mentors. When we were struggling like most people do that want to follow Christ, he said to me “Somebody must be pulling strings for you upstairs.” At the time I really didn’t understand it, but I figured it was something good. When my uncle got sick we went to see him often but the day before he died he looked very spiritual, his countenance was heavenly. Little did he or I know that later in life he would come from the spirit world to save our marriage. The vision took place in the apartment we lived in when we first came to Utah. We were struggling to find a home, but we couldn’t get one because we were new here which is understandable. We got to a point in our lives where we had constant arguments over our living conditions and other things. It seemed we were trapped in the upstairs apartment and it would be almost two years before we found a rental house in Santaquin. I had a vision I will relate at this time. One night as I slept, my mind was opened to a cluster of clouds that seemed to be moving away from me even though I was walking through them. I suddenly saw a clearing and then I was in a temple. I knew it wasn’t a temple from this world. First I saw the beautiful chandeliers then I saw a long table as in days of the knights. There were lots of people all around it and their faces were covered with what looked like a haze just enough so I couldn’t make out their faces but I knew them all. They seemed to be having a meeting—I later thought it was about me. They all had temple clothing of course. Suddenly a chair moved away from the table and a big man stood up and turned to face me. It was Uncle Charles and he walked towards me while I looked at him. He embraced me with much love and I did not want him to let

go. Though I knew all the people there, I didn't know if I knew them from here or the pre-existence. No words were spoken—there was no need, it was all mind to mind communication. I only knew that I didn't want it to end. I awoke the next morning with a clear mind of the experience. I know loved ones pray for us continuously and have a great concern for us. I believe they have foreknowledge—even more than we might have of the trials to come. The first thing I thought of the vision was to share it with family and all who would listen.

I soon found our marriage in jeopardy. Divorce was discussed and I found that very scary. This went on for weeks, suddenly I realized that Uncle Charles was here to help us. I knew a decision like divorce would destroy my family even for generations. I kept reminding Maria of the visit from Uncle Charles and that helped us a lot. I love him.

I know that eternal marriage is timeless and the love I have for her will be forever unchanged and the love I will share with her will always be as the first time I met her. I bare you my witness that it will all be worth the fight in the end.

Patty & DeeDee (Payson Ward)

The apartment we lived in for two years was behind the post office and we rented seven stalls at U-Haul for quite some time. Slowly, we reduced them down to two spaces. We belonged to the Payson sixth ward. In a previous story I shared our experience with Patty and DeeDee, and after being here a few months they came to visit for a third time, but this time it was from beyond the veil. First, my wife and I taught the eleven and twelve year-olds. It's always a joy to teach young minds and hear some of their stories (kids say the darndest things). We were in sacrament meeting one Sunday morning and were singing the opening song when I just happened to glance over at Maria, as I often do, and saw tears rolling down her face. When the hymn was

over I asked her why she was weeping and she turned to me and said that she saw Patty and DeeDee singing with her and reminded me it was one of their favorite songs. It's a joy to know that friends and family can visit us from time to time. I know they're happy and can see as I told them they would.

Two Witnesses

In 2014 we moved to Santaquin on Canyon Road right by the mountains. It was a great change from an apartment—we finally had a house. And though it was a rental, we were so glad to be there. On September 7th of that year I had a most peculiar dream—an important message for my family. It was for those who refused to believe the things that were done to me all my life. There are a few that refuse to believe truth when they hear it.

I dreamed I was standing on beautiful grass looking at a scenery of beautiful trees, roses, and water running along paths and bridges. I remember the atmosphere was of perfection. Suddenly, I saw to my right side, mother looking in the same direction as I was. I immediately recognized no ill feelings towards her. I was enjoying her presence. Then, I saw my sister Cindy to my left side looking in the same direction as well. As I enjoyed their company I was suddenly looking down at a little girl with pony-tails and she was crying. I focused in on her and saw that it was Cindy when she was little—she always had pony-tails. The dream ended. The next morning I went on my normal day pondering the dream. Though I enjoyed the dream, I could find no meaning for me or message from it. Later that afternoon, I sat with my wife and daughter and began to relate the dream to them. As I came to the end of the story, my daughter Benita started to weep. I asked her what the matter was and these were her words... “As my dad was telling us the dream he had, I had the impression to figure out what the dream meant. A few seconds later, it came to me—I felt my spirit rush with excitement and a piercing in my heart. The knowledge of what the

dream meant came to me and I could feel my aunt Cindy pressing me to tell them quickly while it was still fresh in my mind. The meaning of the dream was for my dad to know his sister Cindy now knows of the troubles he had with their mother. And she was crying happily to know that they've made peace."

My mother and my sister Cindy (she died in 2013) must have known that my sister Eloise would be coming for general conference in a week and needed two witnesses to believe how my mother treated me. Even though we share the experience with some, they don't always believe. So sometimes two witnesses are better than one.



Cindy

Two Benitas

As previously mentioned, we've been foster parents for many years and around this time we had a little girl about five years of age that we were caring for. One afternoon while I was out doing yard work, I had come in for a drink of water to hear an experience my wife and daughter just had with the little girl. My daughter was sitting on the recliner by the front door of the living room and my wife was on the couch by the kitchen and they were watching television. The little girl was standing at the threshold to the bedroom when suddenly she called to my daughter, pointing to the door into the bedroom, and said, "One Benita" then pointed to my daughter and said, "Two Benitas" As I listened to this experience, the little girl said she had a headache but I asked her what she saw and she said the lady was dressed in white and looked like Benita. Again my mother wants me to know she wants to be involved in my life. I'm grateful for the help I receive from beyond the veil and for wonderful people in this world.

Voices In Santaquin

We loved it there in Santaquin. We had plenty of visitors, deer, some coyotes, and plenty of wild turkeys. Compared to Los Angeles this was paradise.

In our ward we had a lot of good friends, we still see many of them. About a year being there, I was called to the high priest group leadership, being the secretary I had work to do on the computer, but during church it was difficult to get on. Since I was given a key I decided to go on Tuesday mornings, when I would be the only one around—so I thought. Everytime I entered the building I would hear many voices, so before going in the office I would walk around the building to see if anyone was there, I saw no one. Though I heard people talking I didn't know what they were saying.

We moved back to Payson a year later where we bought a house. I still frequently go to the Old Pioneer Press print shop in Santaquin, this is where I saw a copy of a book called “Taught By Christ” by Ralph V. Jensen. I was on page forty-two when I read this: “Righteous spirits use our chapels to have meetings.” My testimony is that in the spirit world the work of the Lord goes on.

Ralph Jensen’s Vision

“I will simply make the next statement without explaining it – letting you wonder what you may. “God our Father does not break, circumvent, or change eternal laws. Rather, He obeys them perfectly. I wish I could share all that I observed and adequately convey the joy that filled my soul as I watched our Heavenly Father bring Adam and Eve onto this earth, thus completing the creation of the planet. As I learned more about our first parents, I found the source of their created origin astonishingly simple, and at the same time, transcendently spiritual.

In my weakness, I can only explain this universal warm blanketing with this example: I have been in the 21,000-seat Conference Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints just before a General Conference session began. The Conference Center was initially filled with the hum of thousands of people speaking and waiting. Then the prophet entered the Conference Center stage.

As the prophet walked to his seat the audience respectfully stood and the room filled with a quiet reverence as everyone in the audience waited for the prophet to be seated before they sat down. This blanketing feeling of reverence and respect that pervaded the Conference Center is slightly akin to that which I experienced in the Spirit World.

Unlike the example from the Conference Center, the reverence I share here was not reserved for a prophet, but rather for

a woman. This universal expression of reverential respect came from all the hosts of Heaven, both mighty and small, along with all the children of God who would eventually come to earth. As our Father in Heaven escorted Eve, “The Mother of all Living,” to join Adam in the Garden of Eden, the animals, the plants and even earth itself became still – all standing quietly in respect.

What a marvelous event to witness as in the crowning of a queen, but surrounded by the absence of sound. Having life placed on this earth was a wonder to behold, but even so, this uninterrupted show of respect toward Eve was greater than the placing of the plant or animal life. Even greater than when our Father in Heaven escorted Adam into the Garden.

I would love to tell you more, but I am constrained to make this simple:

Through this experience, I began to understand the deep and abiding love and respect our Father in Heaven has for His daughters. I also came to know that taking a rib from Adam to create Eve was pure symbolism, meant to express how important Eve and Adam are to each other. How better for the Gods to emphasize that Adam and Eve were to be “one flesh”.

From his book “Taught by Christ”, Ralph V. Jensen

Jane Johnson

We belonged to the Eighth ward in Payson and as with all new wards we had to start over meeting new people and try to find our place in our new meeting house. In Santaquin we had attended the Gospel Essentials class because you get to meet new investigators and some who are looking for answers and many wanting to hear something that may help them return to activity. I really enjoy helping someone to return to the church. On one of our first meetings in the Payson Eighth Ward we walked in to what we thought was Gospel Essentials and sat down and were looking around and noticed the teacher talking

to the people. As I looked to my neighbor's book it was the Gospel Doctrine book and here I had my Gospel Essentials book. By this time the teacher began to call on someone to pray. So we bowed our heads. When the prayer was over she began to speak on the subject that would be taught. I turned to my wife and told her I was leaving to the other class, so I stood up to leave. As I looked towards the exit she said something that made me turn and sit down. After that day I could not miss one of her classes for anything. She taught class with love and determination to let us know this gospel is true and she knew it. I felt as if she was pleading for us to take heed of the warnings of these latter-days. For years now since being in Utah I've come to feel close to people of pioneer heritage. I look upon them and feel their spirit. I can surely say that Jane Johnson was a true pioneer teacher.



Vicki's Experience

I met Vicki while working for a transport company in Springville, Utah in 2017. Vicki was born in Oklahoma in 1934. She was eighty-three years old. She has told me a number of stories about her life. I can easily say she was a bold little rascal. She left her home at twelve years old and didn't come back to see her parents except for only briefly at the age of seventeen and then went off to Hollywood, among other places. About the age of seventy, her doctor told her to get her life in order because she had terminal cancer. I shall share a story of Vicki that happened when she was 4 years old.

Her family and extended family went to Spring Lake in Carthage Missouri for a family reunion. These are her words:

My Uncle carried me into the lake which was up to his chest when he asked me if I could swim, (by the way he was a little tipsy at the time), when I told him I couldn't he threw me in the water, turned around and left. As I sunk into the moving water I found myself tumbling away in what seemed to be fast moving water. I was suddenly lifted to a man's lap. Everything became still. He was dressed in white. I asked him if I was drowning. He said to me "Hush child, you will live ninety more years." He then touched me on the forehead and sat me on the shore. When I told my mother the story I was told to hush and not speak of it again. Years later I saw him in a picture. He was the Christ I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ.

A Journey to Heaven

Returning to my religion has taught me many things about life and how to live it better with Christ involved in all my decisions. I've learned "to look to the past" is only good if it can help someone today. I've spent decades learning the way back to my Heavenly Father's house, but the most important thing I learned was to take my wife to the temple and be sealed

together forever along with our children. I know that someone like myself who has embraced temple marriage, and later on turn away from it would not get a second chance. I would be a fool to give up the teachings of the word of God which I know to be true. But there is hope for those who have not had the opportunity in this life, for whatever reason, that kept them from hearing the gospel. I will give you an example of a couple that didn't have the opportunity to embrace the gospel but would have if they knew, and I say this because of the life they lived here on the earth.

The man is my cousin and one of my best friends. I've known Al since we were boys. His wife Linda I would meet twenty-five years later. From that time we stayed very close. Linda passed away over two years ago. He and I are different in that he's always been very patient in all things. I've always been the opposite and really am still the same, but I'm trying. After meeting Linda, my wife and I would double-date a lot together, we'd spend a lot of time at the long beach pike or pacific ocean park. Once we got tattoos in a biker shop. I had a tattoo that read "Live for Today" on my arm. For me it was true in my early life and holds true today in my religious life. When I told the tattoo guy what I wanted he said he had never done that for anyone so he charged me half price. As time went on I could see my cousin's patience at work. Al is a great example of how a husband should treat his wife. It's no wonder why she was always happy. They lived life true to one another. I'd like to think that Heavenly Father has prepared a place for them to be together for all eternity.

In the early 90's my wife was baptized and soon I decided it was time for me to return to my church which I always had a testimony of. In doing so the powers of Satan came upon us with such power that we struggled much for our efforts. Bishop Fonoimoana caught wind of it and called us to his office. When we met with him I didn't have a clue of why we

were called in, but we sat down and he began to ask us questions about our life. Then all of a sudden he turned to me and said, “Joe, you’ve got to get on your knees with Maria and pray together.” My first thought was, Are you kidding me? Then he followed by saying “You’ve got to love your wife first next to Christ!” Again in my mind I thought, Are you for real? I told him I had never heard that before.

The Bookstore

Maria and I would go to the LDS bookstore in California with my sister Eloise on several occasions to look at books and some garments and I never felt anything unusual—to me it was like any other store except for the smell. It was like being in church, you feel the spirit present. When we moved to Utah, I hadn’t gone to the bookstore till we moved to Santaquin and that would be the first time I felt differently. We went to the one in Spanish Fork, my wife went to the garment area while I was looking through some of the books and pass-along cards. I was there for a while and noticed Maria was nowhere to be seen so I walked over to the garment area. As I walked in I felt a strong impression that I wasn’t welcome there. I looked for Maria briefly and couldn’t see her so I quickly stepped out of there. I knew I wasn’t welcome there but I didn’t know why. This would happen again a few more times before I would realize why. I hadn’t told Maria about it because what would I say? I needed to find out for myself to be sure what it was before telling her. I continued studying and reading many books and learning in the gospel till one day in class I heard the teacher say “Love your wife as Christ loved the Church” and then followed with “Love your wife first next to Christ.” I remembered the experience with Bishop Fonoimoana and how he said the same thing. It was then that I realized the reason why I felt unwelcome in the garment area was because I was mean to my wife

or I wasn't very respectful at times. After pondering on this I found it all began to make sense. Of course the Bishop was right but I could now see for myself that it was the way it needs to be. I no longer feel any unwelcome feelings in the bookstore garment area.

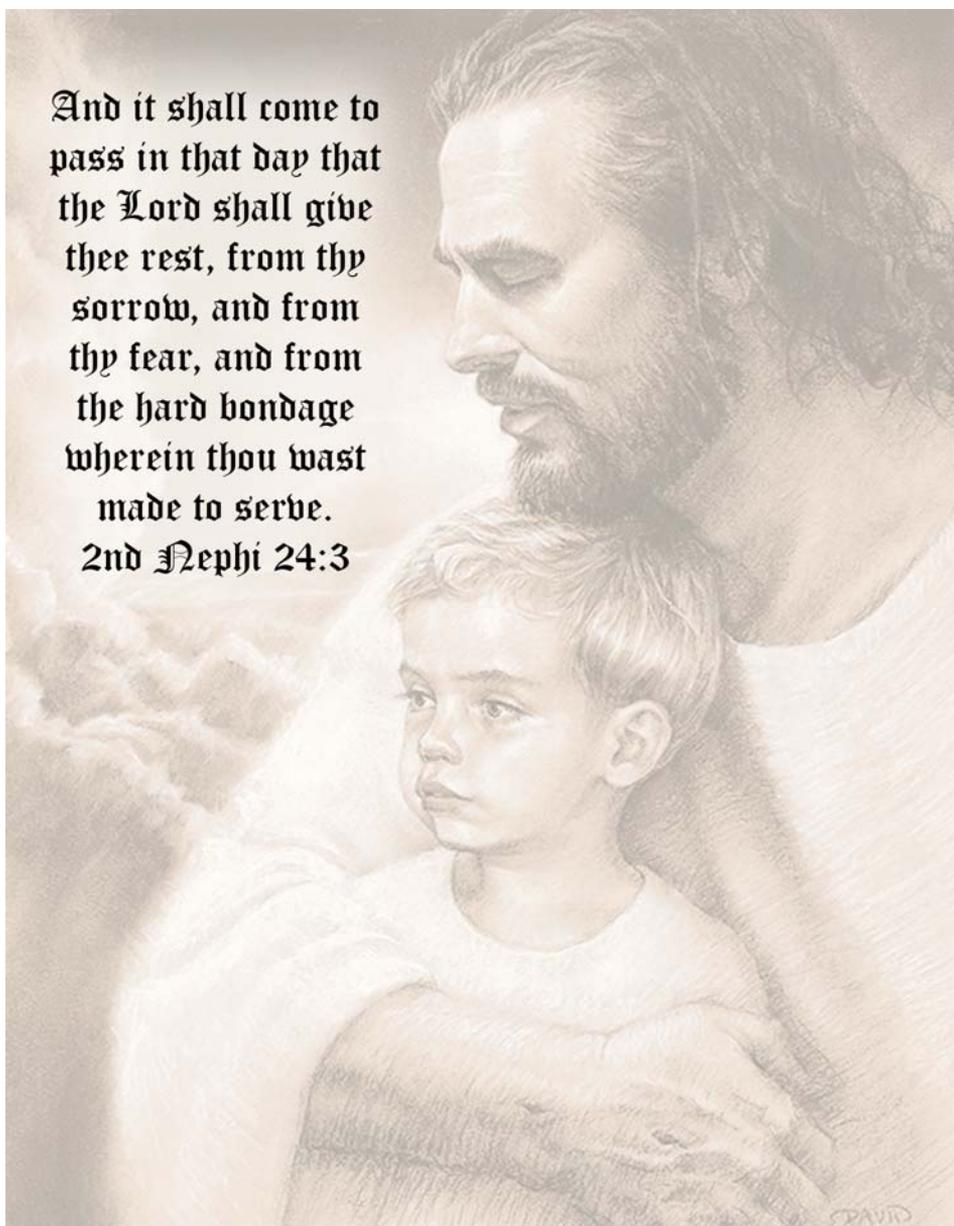
My returning to church taught me how important my wife is to me, and how special she is in the eyes of God. I've learned to put her first next to my Savior Jesus Christ. Without her I cannot enter into the Celestial Kingdom of God. There is nothing like living the gospel—I could not live any other way. I know that Christ is pleased at those who love Him. These things are sought for, then learned.

My Testimony

During these years of learning we always sat in the rear of the chapel and I remember telling my wife how easy it was sitting there with my stripe shirt, no tie, no responsibility—I even said to her how I'd never give a prayer, speak or even wear a suit, but all that has changed. I've learned that participating is essential in my walk with Christ. Now I look forward to being at the pulpit, doing whatever the Lord asks of me through his appointed servants. My desire is to share what I know. I know I can't save the world, but maybe I can help someone. I don't claim to know everything but I know enough to get me back to the presence of my Heavenly Father.

I knew the gospel was true since the first time I stepped into the Church at five years old. I never knew to what degree my involvement in the Church would be or the love I would have for it and God's children. I had no idea that it would be a lifetime pursuit to win my mother. I'm very grateful for her and my experiences with her because it has made me into the man I am today. Without her I believe I would have died early in life and I wouldn't have gained a testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I could not have progressed this far if it weren't for my mother.

And it shall come to
pass in that day that
the Lord shall give
thee rest, from thy
sorrow, and from
thy fear, and from
the hard bondage
wherein thou wast
made to serbe.
2nd Nephi 24:3





Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for, lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of days. And in temporal labors thou shalt not have strength, for this is not thy calling. Attend to thy calling and thou shalt have wherewith to magnify thine office... And I will give unto him strength such as is not known among men.

Doctrine & Covenants 24:8-9,12

Behold, I am a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I have been called of him to declare his word among his people, that they might have everlasting life.

3rd Nephi 5:13

**Stories of My Life
Outside the Church**

Ditman Branch

East Los Angeles 1956

We moved to a little one bedroom house on Ditman Avenue in East Los Angeles. I slept on a cot in the laundry room. We lived in the back house behind the little store and between us and the store was another little house. So there was a long driveway from the street. The owner and his wife were quite old and lived in the back room of the store. It was still small in there and I never saw a lot of customers. At one particular time, my Aunt Ysidria lived with us and that's when I remember being introduced to cereal and a sugar bowl. My Aunt would serve my Sister Cindy and I. Cindy was 4 1/2 years old and I was 6. When my Aunt wasn't looking I would pour a spoonful of sugar in my cereal and push it down with my cornflakes so she wouldn't see. My little sister soon caught on. I was in the second grade and it was the first time I went to school alone. School was about six blocks away. Every time I had to leave, Cindy would cry and my Aunt would hold her as I walked down the driveway. I would look back to see her in the window crying until I was gone. As I turned the corner to where the Church was, I'd walk around it and head straight down the street. About two blocks into it, my friend would come out of his house and we'd race the rest of the way to school. He always won and I'd say to myself that I'd try harder the next day, but I never could out-run that boy.

We attended church on the corner, it was called the Ditman Branch and Brother Clark was the President. My Sister Cindy and I would play on the church grounds during the week. The houses were so little they hardly had yards to play in.

One of the several times we'd go to El Paso, we anticipated going across the border from El Paso to my Aunt Elvira's house. The houses were made of adobe and they basically had one big room with about four giant beds and a small area for cooking with an ice box which had a block to keep things fresh. They would make meals for the day and nothing was thrown away. Sometimes the neighbors would come to eat so there were no leftovers. When my family would leave to El Paso I would stay with my Aunt for days, enjoying the quiet serene water running in the canal and the backyard was as far as the eye could see. I would spend hours building little forts with twigs (there were no toys). Later in life I was told that my Aunt never took her eyes off me as she watched from the window. At night they would play guitars around the fire pit outside. Sometimes a man with a camera would come to the plaza and show a movie on the adobe wall. All the people would come from miles around.

Elvira's House

I had a BB gun but nothing to shoot at. After a few days there I noticed a sparrow would come to a thorn bush everyday like clockwork, so I waited for him, I took aim and just before I could pull the trigger, I was stung on the head by a yellow jacket. The bird got away and I ran into the house to tell my Aunt. She chipped a piece of ice for me to put on my head. I believe that was my first heavenly spanking. I loved my Aunt so much and felt very comfortable being in her home.

Pico Rivera

When we moved to Pico Rivera I attended Montebello Junior High, the little town I lived in was called the Montebello gardens, in Spanish it was (El Jardin). That's what

we boys called our little territory. We wore khaki pants and checkered shirts, which was the norm for generations, we also had the ones who dressed continental. My first friend was Robert, they called him (perito), he lived down the street from us. He would come on his bike and skid on my Dad's front lawn. We didn't have a fence until later. Robert and I grew up together. We got into a lot of mischief like most kids do. I got my driver's license at age 15 1/2 and began driving to school at El Rancho High. When I was home I would sing songs into my amplifier, I could spend hours doing so. One day Robert came over and heard me so we kind of started singing together. I had a lot of forty fives in my collection and still do today. We used to drive to Hollywood a lot and knew the places of interest. Once we heard they were auditioning at the Theater of Arts for new talent so we went in and met some people. We sang a song by Robert and Johnny called "We Belong Together" and they said, "Don't call us, we'll call you." I later answered another ad for Mickey Rooney's Actors workshop, which was on Robertson Avenue. I signed up for classes and I was there for about three months doing actual skits and met Mr. Rooney on several occasions. He was like in the movies, short and fast talking. My instructor was an old Hollywood Actress named Vicki Starr who had a number of exotic animals.

Weeks passed as I enjoyed the workshop and meeting actors that I would later see in major motion pictures. One day my father came home with a baby bobcat. One of his friends picked it up from the side of the road coming back from Texas. At first I was excited to have it but it didn't take long to see that they are mean little critters and all it ate was little pieces of kidney. I quickly remembered my instructor. At my next class I told her about the bobcat. I asked if she wanted it and she said, "Sure do!" I took it to her and soon

my classes were complete. I didn't expect to go anywhere with the training but enjoyed meeting all the stars.

Job Corps

I mentioned briefly of joining the job corps. Here are a few of the things we did while there. My cousin Fred and I signed up together. They had what was called the Buddy System where you were guaranteed to be sent to the same place. Kentucky was very different to us. There was lots of space, the blue grass was very country and the air very fresh. The little town was two blocks long in either direction. We had a commissary to buy things like a little store. There were seven mess halls in the camp, the main one was in the center of camp, it was a big cafeteria and the others were quite small.

Camp Breckenridge

One day while entering the commissary we saw a boy looking at magazines. I said to Fred, "That looks like Robert from back home." Sure enough, as he turned to look at us, we said: "What are you doing here?" Well he signed up before us and no one in the neighborhood knew about it. We began to hang around together for a time, then he told us he was going to California on leave but he didn't come back. Fred and I met Donald Roach and Lester Wooten and we became inseparable. There was a "teen post" in Evansville, Indiana where a bus would take us every Friday afternoon till about nine o'clock. They had a ping pong table and pool table, but we'd go walking through the city. Many of the houses were made of brick, sometimes you felt as if you were in London. Each month we'd get bussed to another state. Our first trip took us to the Indianapolis 500. The year was 1966, when they had the sixteen car pile-up. I remember when we first arrived, the bus driver told us where he would be after the race. It looked simple enough but when the race was over we

headed back to that spot and there were about two hundred buses so we got lost.

Indianapolis 500

We started walking through the neighborhoods asking people where the YMCA was and it took a good hour to find it. We were tired and hungry. We told them what happened so they called the camp and told us we could stay. They showed us our room and sent us downstairs to eat. We were there three days until our bus tickets came to head back to base. We didn't pay anything for the time we spent there. We walked through St. Louis and I took this picture on the parking lot overlooking the Gateway arch.



Another day while in St. Louis as we walked the city streets, we came upon a city block of Hollywood looking buildings, sort of like Warner Bros. Studio. We saw three limousines pull up to a gated building. We crossed the street and followed them in. No one asked us anything. It turns out it was a recording studio, so we sat on the chairs and they began singing "Hanky Panky". They were Tommy James and the Shondells. We had a great free concert. Once a month they would take us somewhere and one of the times we went to Shawneetown, Illinois to a rodeo. We had the time of our lives! We met Buddy Ebsen the Actor. He was quite tall and fun to talk to.

Jackie Wilson

Cousin Fred liked reading the newspaper. One day he brought it to my attention that Jackie Wilson would be performing at a little night club in Evansville on the coming Friday night. We boarded our camp bus and arrived on our regular time which was about 4:30pm and started for the night club. It was about a two mile walk, we arrived when it was getting dark. We were the only Hispanics in the whole place. It was quite big inside and we got to sit in the second row. Jackie Wilson sang a number of favorites, mine was "Doggin' Around". When he finished they had a surprise guest, Barbara Mason, who sang "Are you Ready". She looked very good and wore a beautiful reddish-orange dress down to her feet. We had a great time. Afterwards we headed back to base.

The Two Week Vacation From Camp

In 1966 we earned a two week leave to go home. We prepared our suitcases and were anxious to go home. We went to headquarters to get our ticket to fly home. We were not

excited to fly again but the thought of seeing our friends and family was too much to miss. We arrived at LAX and were picked up by my Aunt Juana. I remember as the pilot told us we'd be arriving in a few moments, we looked out the window and saw millions of lights, it was early evening.

L.A. Vacation

We had lots of fun trying to do everything in those two weeks, and it sure passed quickly. Two days before we were to return, they announced the airplane strike. That meant we had to stay longer. We called camp and were instructed to stay home while they sent us bus tickets. The news was good, so we took advantage and went to Port's O' Call for fresh fish then to the beach. Another day we went to Knott's Berry Farm when it was still fun to walk as in the days of the frontier. Soon our bus tickets arrived. We said our goodbyes and started on a two and a half day's cross country. I think we had more fun seeing the countryside. During the remaining time before graduation we saw Billy Joe Royal singing "I knew you when", Steve Alaimo singing "Everyday I have to cry some", and Johnny Tillotson singing "Poetry in Motion". We graduated in 1966 and received certificates of achievement. We got our plane tickets (which we cashed in for bus tickets) and enjoyed our trip home. We didn't waste much time taking jobs and saving money for a car. I forgot to mention that I had a 1940 Ford Coupe. It was orange and had a 265' block with three carburetors that my mother sold while I was gone.

Back Home 1966

I worked a while then bought a 1951 Chevy from an old man. I loved that car. Unfortunately I got hit or hit someone so all four corners of the car were damaged so much so that

I was pulled over every time a cop saw me. They probably thought that I was just in an accident. It got so bad that every time the lights went on, I'd park, get out and assume the position. Sometimes the police would laugh. I ended up getting rid of it. Later I bought a 1952 Chevy Deluxe from my Cousin Joseph for one hundred dollars. It was light green with a dark green top. It was a low-rider sitten on chrome reverse wheels down to the ground. I loved that car. I later sold it back to him for the same price. I started borrowing my Dad's brand new Comet Caliente. It was maroon in color. I started going to East Los Angeles, down Whittier Boulevard where people and car clubs came from miles around. I met a lot of people there. One Friday night we were driving slow like everyone did and saw a girl in the car next to us. I told them to pull over and they finally did. I quickly focused on one in particular, she was the prettiest thing I had ever seen.

Whittier Blvd

Her name was Mary. The whole time we talked I held her. I was afraid to let her go, but she and her friends had to leave. They assured me I'd see her again. This is a true story (before my son was born I told my mother and Mary together that he would have curly jet-black hair and blue eyes). He did. We were married and then Leo was born, later Cindy. We had usual ups and downs. Soon after I enlisted in the Army on April 4th, 1969. I went for a physical and was told we'd be going home to wait to be sworn in at a later date. The physical ended and we were sworn in and taken on a bus to Fort Ord the same day, so I didn't get to say goodbye. Our relationship began to change. Arriving at the fort around midnight, we were quickly put into formation and quickly found what standing at attention was, not something you want to learn when you should be sleeping. Ten minutes later we were taken into a building full of chairs and began

filling out forms. I can't begin to remember what they were. About two in the morning we marched to the barracks, received blankets and by four in the morning we hit the sack. Turns out we stayed in these barracks for a week, it was called orientation. We spent the week sending our clothes home, getting military issue clothing, writing letters, receiving partial payment and lots of instruction.

The Hill

During that week we only left the area with supervision, like to commissary or to pick up Army issued items. We had catering trucks that came by during the day with street food, pizza, cheeseburgers and fries. Saturday came, we had breakfast then marched to see a movie at the theater. The movie was about military life. The star of the show was "Johnny Crawford" co-star of the Rifleman Series. It was okay, we learned a lot. When the movie was over we stepped out to hear yelling from several drill Sargent's telling us to double time around the building. I heard a Sargent say these unforgettable words: "Run till I get tired". Guys were falling down and crying, it was quite a surprise for us. Later that day we heard rumors that it was a taste of what was waiting for us on the hill. Sunday morning we slept until eight o'clock, then walked over to the mess hall to eat. Later we signed out to go to church but when the driver left, we'd head for the canteen for drinks and pizza. Later that evening we prepared things to be ready, for in the morning we'd be trucked to the hill. They were known as "Cattle Trucks".

In the morning we had breakfast then got our duffle bags and stood outside waiting. There was a certain silence in the air as the trucks approached us. They packed us in two trucks like sardines. We headed down the road about a mile to the old barracks. When we arrived, there were drill Sargent's on both sides of the trucks with smokey the bear hats.

They just stood there till the trucks stopped, then they began to yell at us to get off. One said, "you got fifteen seconds to get off and you already used up eleven and a half." You could see duffle bags flying off the truck, and then the G.I.'s. There was much commotion, then the crying started. They made us empty our duffle bags then stand at attention while they looked for contraband. One boy had a pair of red jogging shorts, they made him put them on over his fatigues and run around the formation singing "quack quack I'm a turd bird" to put it nicely. We were at attention looking straight ahead, we could not look at him or laugh. If you were caught you'd be doing push ups till the Sargent got tired, or lie on your back moving your arms and legs saying out loud "I'm a dying cockroach, I'm a dying cockroach". I was sure I was in a nut house. After that we settled in our barracks and our assigned bunks, for the next eight weeks. We were marched to the arm's room where we received our M-14's. We had those rifles for about two weeks then turned them in for M-16's, they were lighter and better handling. The next four weeks we didn't walk, we double timed everywhere. On the fourth week we had just arrived for our next class and I walked to the Sargent's truck and layed on the step or running board.

The Hospital

I felt very weak. One of the drill instructors came over and told me to get up, I told him I couldn't. He then ordered me to. I repeated to him again, so he called the Captain over to look at me, then took me to the hospital. They put me on a gurney into a room. The doctors came in and by this time I was delirious but I could hear them saying that I might have Meningitis. It was going around. Then another doctor said I had a temperature of a hundred and nine. I was out for a day or so, then I started remembering things. I was in for two

weeks. My old company had moved on so I was put into another company that was two weeks behind, so I lost no training. Since the beginning of training we wore a white tag sown onto our fatigues so everyone knew we were recruits. They called them “maget tags”. In the hospital everyone tore them off so I did too and with that came the ability to move around the base and not be questioned. I started taking orders for burgers and off I went to the canteen with a clean laundry bag. I started losing weight but eating more. Our training did get more intense, we went on twenty mile hikes with a promise that trucks would bring us back but did not.

The End of Boot Camp

After a night of sleep we had breakfast and packed up to start our trip back to base. I remember walking into the barracks and dropping my backpack on the floor. I started for the latrine and felt I was walking on air. I think we slept the rest of the afternoon, we didn't even go to chow. About a week before graduation we signed out to a town, it was called Salinas. I believe the bar and dance hall was called the “Bear Cave”. Me and three friends walked into loud music down a long hall, I was last to enter, it was lined with guys and one fella told me something bad. I hit him and he went down so about five or six of his friends got me. I woke up standing in front of a mirror in the bathroom soaked in blood with two guys I didn't know holding me up. I thanked them and left. My friends with the loud music didn't have a clue of what happened till I told them the next day on base. I don't even remember how I got back. Before graduation was over I learned that my previous company was sent to Vietnam. Just before graduation week, we prepared for a P.T. test, the highest score being five hundred. When I entered boot camp I weighed two hundred and eighty pounds. In top shape, I

was one eighty five for the test. I scored among the top ten. The one with the best score was a Mormon.

Graduation Week

Two days before I was shining my boots and listening to “Everyone’s gone to the moon” by Jonathan King on my turntable, which went with me everywhere. A Sargent Novy from another company was walking by, he heard the music and came in to tell me he loved that song, I told him I would give it to him the next day. Keeping my promise I walked over to his company, he thanked me and I left. I was walking back when another Sargent saw me and ordered me to low crawl back to my company area. Well both knees were cut up so I graduated with burning knees. My mother and Mary came to my graduation. They were with me for a while then went home. The next day we received our orders for Germany. I went home for two weeks, then boarded a plane at L.A.X. headed for Philadelphia. I don’t remember the name of the base we were bused to. The next morning before chow, a Sargent came in and called out three names for K.P. so the next morning when he came, we jumped out the windows. On the third day we were again bused to the airport, we boarded Universal Airlines headed for Ireland. I believe it was eight hours over the ocean and stopped for one hour for refueling in Ireland. It was the first time I saw slot machines. Before boarding the aircraft I got plastered.

When I was sent home I told people I would never fly again, unless the Prophet was sitting next to me. We left Ireland and arrived in Frankfurt where we were taken to a large auditorium waiting for our names to be called. I was with about five friends but we all got separated. I was sent by train cross country with beautiful scenery to “Bad Kissingen”, a small town known around the world for its mineral water

that comes out of a cave, looking like a faucet. It tasted terrible but very good for you. A number of guys were standing at the station that came from other places in Germany. A bus picked us up and drove us to "Daley Barracks" where I would spend the next eleven months. We then entered again to a big hall and were given instruction to do's and dont's when going to town. We quickly learned that the beer is quite potent and the people there sure can drink. We could buy a six pack of Heineken for one dollar and twenty five cents, stick it in the snow for a short time and have a cold beer. I had never had cognac before, it was very powerful stuff. I still had the same attitude as before (they always told me I had a chip on my shoulder growing up).

When I left the states my m.o.s. was Infantry. We went on our first trip to camp Coburg right by the East German border for guard duty for a month, it was cold. We had a canteen on base. One Saturday I was playing pool with my close friends Dolinski and Hursh when I was getting ready to shoot, someone behind me said: "move your rear, I can't see" I turned around and kicked him off his chair. He got up and we assumed the ready position, when my Sargent stepped in to stop the fight. I later learned his name was Lewko from New York. I later fought three other tough guys and later we ended up being best friends. One Friday night we signed out to walk to town. We entered a beautiful restaurant, it was Ronald William, one other guy and myself. We sat at a table and when the waitress came, I spoke first and said: "Let me have a large pizza", she then said: "What will you guys have to drink" I said: no that pizza's for me. The rest of the guys ordered the same. The waitress just scratched her head. I asked her if they had chili (chopped) she said yes. I asked if she could put some on my pizza. When I bit into mine I turned red like a tomato, but I ate it all while my friends

laughed a little. It seems everything the German people have is stronger than what we're used to.

On Guard Duty

The first night we patrolled the fence along the border. There were mine fields between us and the Russians. It was cold. Only the driver of the Armored Personnel Carrier didn't have to pull guard duty at night outside the "track" as we called it.

KP at the Camp

One night they were showing a good movie in one of the buildings, but I was on Kitchen Patrol and couldn't leave till my buddy and I finished peeling a sack of potatoes for the next morning's breakfast. So we hurried and filled the tub with water then we each grabbed a handle to lift it into the ice box. It was so heavy that we dropped it on the kitchen floor. Lucky for us the cooks were taking a break at the other end of the mess hall, so we began loading the potatoes off the floor that wasn't even mopped yet. We filled it with water and stuck it in. The next morning we stayed away from eating potatoes. We did enjoy the movie.

The Jeep

One night we went into town in a jeep and took a couple of recruits with us. We got to feeling pretty good in the pub when we got into a scuffle with some local boys. All of a sudden two big guys in suits escorted us out, later we heard they were German Police.

We headed back to base camp. Apparently it was snowing while we were there, the road was already narrow and now it was worse. We drove very carefully for about a mile then

we saw lots of lights coming about three hundred yards ahead. We tried to turn around but fell in the ravine. We all got out and ran in different directions. We thought the driver didn't really have permission to take the jeep. I ran in the snow, it was at least two feet deep, I ran not looking back till I found myself quite alone. As I started walking I heard wolves, at least three of them. I began to run looking for a tree to climb but there was nothing. It seemed they were getting closer and in those days I didn't think to pray, I just thought... is this the way I'm going to die? I kept running with a renewed strength, then I saw lights, it was a town, it was the same town, turns out I ran in a circle and I was at the other end. I finally walked back to base and was arrested. I said: "What!" I was taken to the arms room and slept there all night on a chair. I hadn't talked to the other guys since we split up so a lot of things were going on my mind during the night.

Morning came, I could hear people talking outside the door and I was quite hungry. The door clicked and the Captain entered saying: "How are you?" I said: "Okay I guess." Then he said without wasting time "if you tell us where the gun is we can move on to the next phase of this investigation." I explained that I didn't know anything about a gun and that I thought I was here for the jeep we took. He left and later someone brought me something to eat then I waited several hours more till my drill sergeant came and released me informing me they caught the guy. It seems a guy we knew called "RED" had gone on leave back to the states and took the gun with him. I was told he received a year in prison for it. They gave me an article fifteen for the jeep, I cleaned offices for a week. We soon caravanned back to base. As we passed through little towns, the people could hear us coming from afar and they would take their children upstairs to watch us go by, waiving to us. In the little towns where there isn't much, you find the most generous people.

Grafenwohr

We arrived back to Daly barracks resting for a few days, then prepared for our trip to qualify our tanks artillery vehicles, scout tracks etc. Again we packed our gear and departed for Graf, several squadrons were there. We got to Graf Friday morning, rested, that evening we went to the main hall to drink & eat. There were several groups of people from all walks of life. To this point I had never met Italian people, I didn't know they wore suits, we were all in civilian clothes. Being with friends, we talked and drank when suddenly we saw four young men in suits being surrounded by seven or eight big guys. They were being challenged to fight. We couldn't hear the conversation but they sat calmly, soon the other guys were surrounded by at least ten Italians and everyone went their separate ways without incident.

A number of Puerto Rican Brothers lived in our company and they speak very rapidly. I found myself talking like them, after leaving for the America's, I lost that speed. And the German I learned, slowly slipped away. Around middle September, people talked about upcoming October Fest of which I never heard of to this point. We would be leaving back to the border around that time so we packed up civilian clothes incase we'd be able to get off the base, for we knew there was this little town nearby.

October Fest

The German Border

We did our duties throughout the month. When we had our day off, Dolinski Hursh and I went into town by foot. There were giant tents almost circus size, food everywhere, loud music and pitchers and beer mugs swinging everywhere. Of course we joined in the festivities, we had a mem-

orable time. The Germans were friendly and fun to be around, many had never seen G.I.'s before. We were introduced to the hoagie sandwich about the size of a pastrami with ham, cheese, lettuce & tomato, but at a cost of a quarter so I would buy at least three. In the evening we'd sit in the canteen having a drink and thinking of home, listening to the juke box usually playing "He ain't heavy, he's my brother". We soon headed back to base camp. It was nearly Thanksgiving time and the snow was two feet deep. For the holiday we were offered steak or half a chicken and all the drinks were free. A week later while spending time cleaning vehicles, I saw a scout track that hadn't been moved. I asked my sergeant about it, he said it was down for some time. I asked if I got it running if I could I have it, he looked at me and said sure. In a week it was running. My m.o.s. became heavy equipment operator (armor). I was ready for our trip back to the border.

Return from Border Patrol

Drivers don't pull guard duty, they stay inside with the heater on. We headed for the border, it was December now with heavy snow and we didn't get out much except for guarding the air strip and running up and down the fence line. We didn't see Russian soldiers walking about like before, it was a boring time the two weeks there. Back to base was a challenge on the roads but we made it. Christmas was just around the corner, the thoughts one has is what's happening on the Boulevard in East Los Angeles, Whittier Boulevard was it on weekends and still is today. Sargent Gomez who lived off base with his German wife and three little children from six years down had asked us three if we'd like to spend Christmas Eve at their home, he didn't have to ask twice. I remember the beautiful quilts all handmade, the house looked like a story book. We stayed the night into

Christmas morning, we had a fine breakfast then taken back to base. We stayed at base for months working on vehicles, then left back to the border and that's when orders came from headquarters for many soldiers to leave for Vietnam. I was one, so I said goodbye to my closest friends.

Orders for Vietnam

I went home for two weeks during which time I reported to Fort McArthur to receive my pay. While there I learned I would be reporting to Fort Lewis, Washington for a flight to Vietnam. Then I was told that I would probably stay for the rest of my tour in Fort Lewis pulling K.P. Duty for three months. I applied for a hardship discharge and was attached to the Honor Guard pending the decision. I became a driver taking soldiers all over California to burial details of fallen soldiers from the war. When not on burial detail I would take the wacs to and from the missile sights up on the hill overlooking the ocean. On weekends we drove home. On one occasion we went to Barstow, California on a detail, we arrived to a funeral on top of a hill away from a city, of course we were dressed in our class A uniform with a pistol belt, but no bullets. When the service ended a family member insisted we open the coffin, it seems the soldier was killed by a mine, so it was a closed coffin, plus we had no authority to do so. Finally the Sargent in charge was able to calm the family down, what a relief, like I said we were in the middle of nowhere.

Fort Mac Departure

On the way back we had a problem with the bugler. We had stopped at a liquor store, he insisted we don't buy what we thought was none of his business. He was in another vehicle, he wasn't even in our company. He said if we didn't, he'd turn us in, I advised him that would be a mistake. It

turns out he kept his word, then he had the nerve to come into our barracks that Friday night after we'd been at the canteen. I walked into the Barracks and he was sitting with the guys watching television. I hit him and he fell to the floor, he then left and I went upstairs to my private room. I fell asleep only to be awakened by a loud pounding on my door. It was the MP's, they took me to the brig which was downstairs, it had little windows where you could see the street (Main Street). I slept till early morning. We were told they needed three guys for K.P. duty. They called out three names only, two stepped up, the third guy wouldn't answer. The Sargent said if he didn't, that Flores would be the next name called. I advised this person to step forward because eventually I would find out and he did.

Released Back To Company

I was in there three days, then released pending court marshal. I performed my regular duties for about a month, during which time I was not allowed to leave base, unless official business required it. My Sargent was a good friend, he instructed me on many things. One day I was summoned to his office where he told me my discharge papers had come in but there could be a problem. He said: "I want you to take your papers to the Captains office at one o'clock. I went up, told the desk clerk I needed to be out of the Army by four o'clock. He took my papers and knocked on the Captains door for his signature, he was having a meeting, he signed me out. I was officially out of the Army at 4 o'clock.

I still had my commissary card, I went to base to get something before it expired. I was having breakfast when the bugler came to my table and asked if he could sit. I said sure, he then said "I'm sorry for what I have to do," I said, "you were really going to follow up on this case," he said yes. I said "well that's

too bad I've been out of the Army for two days," I got up and walked away. He just sat with his mouth open.

December 16th, 1970

Left the Army 1970

Leaving Fort McArthur in San Pedro I drove with a friend to Pico Rivera where my parents lived. I quickly found employment so I didn't spend much time there. I bought a sixty three Impala with the help from my Dad. I paid seven hundred dollars for it from a used car dealer in East Los Angeles. My older Sister Eloise lived in La Puente about twenty miles away with her then six little boys. She called me one day to inform me she was robbed by a man who entered her home late at night, so she asked if I could come and stay with them for a while. One day I was washing my car in the driveway when a car with four girls pulled into the driveway next door. I quickly focused on one in particular named Maria. We began to see each other and I soon learned she was attending beauty school on Saturdays for three hours, so I waited for her nearby when her father dropped her off and left, she would go with me. I finally had my own one room apartment for twenty five dollars a week. We stayed together ever since. When she was able to work we moved into a real apartment. I was still legally married to Mary. I could not afford to pay until 1994, when my Cousin Gloria got involved in our life, I'll share it later.

1971

I reconnected with a friend that was also in the Army just a little after me, so we started hanging around together, by this time we both had sixty two Chevy Impala's. His name was Bobby, I knew his mom and dad quite well since we grew up together in the same town. One day I was visiting with his

family when his Sister Delia's husband Henry came over. He told me he was on his way to a club meeting in East Los Angeles, and asked if I wanted to come, I said sure. The club was Orpheus, I was introduced to the guys, lots of them. Later Moni the President came out and the meeting started. I enjoyed being there that I later joined the club, most people outside of it didn't agree it was a club. On Fridays everyone came, we had a big parking lot that belonged to a doctor, his mother knew him so we had permission to use it on weekends. There would be hundreds of members even from other clubs and a group of girls called "The Lady Bugs", they drove Volkswagens. One Friday night a member of our club asked me what neighborhood I was from, as I was telling him Moni was passing by and made a remark to me about it:

East L.A. Car Club

I let him know I didn't appreciate what he said, he wanted to see what I was made of, we started swinging and we went toe to toe for some time, then we seemed to stop at the same time. I can only speak for myself but I was glad I was seeing dark spots, then Moni said: "Don't mess with me and walked away. Of all the people that were there, not a sound was to be heard. The next thing I remember I woke up in my backseat on the boulevard. I got out and asked for Moni. They pointed to his car, he also was asleep and just waking up. This was the best fight I ever had. About a week later Moni came looking for me in a '56 Buick with a car load of friends, I wasn't home. I soon left the club in my best interest. Sometime later I heard Moni passed away. I know he would never run from trouble, he was a good friend, lots of people knew him. I heard the funeral procession was huge. In the mid seventies my cousin Al decided to attend Rio Hondo College on the G.I. bill as mentioned before, we attended two and a half years. We took several classes automotive related, our final classes were auto body and paint.

Rio Hondo College

When painting our vehicles it was customary to remove all we could from the car at home before taking it to school to paint them, like bumpers, grills, headlights etc. So when we got to school we just had to mask it. One morning I left home in such a manner, while going through Legg Lake on the way a Sheriff's Officer pulled me over, for once I kept my mouth shut. He said: "If you have any warrants you're going to jail! If your car has any it's going to the impound. He then began filling out the ticket. When he was done with his long list of violations, he handed me the book and said "Sign here Mr. Flores". Well it paid off to keep quiet, a lesson learned for me.



In 1994 when starting church my cousin Gloria, seeing our efforts to change, helped us with a lawyer for the divorce, then when we were able to get married she provided the rings she had bought for her marriage that didn't happen, so we were very grateful to her. She remained involved in our

walk with Christ, she was there when I gave the closing prayer at the Stake Meeting when Elder Newell was there.

Second Edition

I wrote my first book some years ago, since then I come to realize I was critical of my mother, not thinking of why she was like that to me. Maybe something happened to her. I've never heard anything about her childhood that could tell me. Until forgiveness came into my life and constant visits from her told me she wanted to be a part of my life, and I needed to forgive her. What a wonderful thing it is. In this edition, I left the stories of what I went through because they are a part of my refinement. In the extension of the book I have added quick summaries of things in my life growing up in East Los Angeles. Hard lessons were learned there, in fact I wasn't put there by chance, my Heavenly Father knew what I needed to make changes in my life. These dreams and writings happened while I was trying to increase my efforts towards the Celestial Kingdom. Because of the effort of the adversary to stop us, I constantly told my wife I could not do it alone, then she had the dream titled "Hopes with Dreams". Soon after, I wrote "A Road to Celestial Marriage" in 2019. Three weeks before General Conference I had an extraordinary experience with my wife and then had the dream titled "A Meaningful Dream".

A Dream Within A Dream

I am grateful for this dream I had of my cousin Michael who passed away some years ago. He gave me a message for his wife Maria that he loves her and that she is beautiful. I was immediately taken to another dream that seemed so real. In this dream all the brothers of Michael were standing all around with their wives and kids. I told their mother, my

Aunt Eloise, that I needed to share something with everyone. The room got quiet and I began to speak the words that Michael asked me to say. Everyone in the room wept with each word that I recited, and the dream closed.

It wasn't until about twelve hours later that I heard my mother talking with my Aunt Eloise on the phone, that I remembered I had a dream about Michael, and I couldn't remember the message he left with me. I went into my room where it was quiet and got down on my knees and prayed to remember, asking God the Father and prayed that Michael together would help me, and they did. The very next day, I shared this dream with my Aunt Eloise and she said it was beautiful, and then said "You do realize that today marks the anniversary of his death".

A Message Received by

Maria Benita Flores

Our family on the other side is reaching out to us in every way they can to help wake us up, push us, remove the blindness in our eyes, ultimately to help us return to our Eternal Families, and join our Father in Heaven.

A Couple's Journey Home

In a book I wrote about spiritual experiences, I put a short story about my cousin Al and his experience with a pigeon. Later I wrote a story of him and Linda, I felt they could become an Eternal Family because of the way they lived. But not knowing Christ, they may have a chance to become one, for God is just and loving. Sometime later Linda passed away, I had already written the book, then soon after I had this experience. I was walking one early morning listening to the birds and watching horses and cows along the cemetery

across from my home. As I was enjoying the cool air and pondering my life, I suddenly heard Linda call my name, there could be no mistake of what I heard, but it had meaning. A message “tell Adolf it's okay! Come unto Christ it's okay.”

Later I shared this with Al as we often speak on the phone. Sometime later he called me to inquire of our plans to visit California so we could spend time together in our conversation he told me of a dream he had. These are his words: "As I slept one night I was awakened by a presence, I opened my eyes to see Linda from the waist up, she was dressed in white, there was no light in the room, she was the light. She seemed to be standing above the floor, as I looked at her she raised her hand up and said these words, “It's okay, it's okay, come unto Christ.” Then the dream closed.

I pondered and relived the dream, I could not stop thinking of her. I decided to take this to the Lord, I got on my knees and asked him to let me see her again. Days passed since the prayer. I was in my garage, sitting on my chair looking towards the house when I saw Linda in the kitchen, at first I cleared my eyes not believing it was her, then I looked again to see her calling to me “it's okay come seek the savior”, this time it was mental telepathy, as I looked at her in wonder I felt a message for me “Linda loves me and so does Christ”. Prayers are answered in God's timing, be assured that he will, for he loves his children.

Hopes with Dreams

My dream takes me to a dark hall with seemingly endless doors. I open the first door to see Gloria and Brother Diaz looking and sharing genealogy together, they each had a laptop. The feeling in the room was peaceful, I liked visiting with them. I was sitting on the floor and I was struggling to get closer to them, my legs felt heavy or, did I have any?

(I thought) I was dragging myself on the floor with my arms and elbows, a phone rings (a flip phone like Gloria's and Joe's) Gloria answers it, she said it was Joe and he said he was coming back for me. I didn't want to leave them, I liked visiting with them. I went to the door and opened it, Joe was there waiting for me, we went through the dark hall again. This time I was walking on my two feet, straight ahead and opened another door. I saw Patty and Dee Dee sitting in chairs on the left side of the room straight ahead there was a hospital bed, (it was my Dad) I said in my mind. On the right was another bed, I thought it was Joe but he's been with me. I didn't want Patty and Dee Dee to see me so I quickly closed the door. I was in the dark again with Joe by my side. Joe knocked on the next door to the left, someone opened it. Joe said, "here she is" and left me there with all the women, I saw my mother, my aunts and cousins. One lady asked me my name in English, and said "Who do you belong to?" I answered in Spanish (Mi nombre es Maria Flores-Yo soy la hija de Consuelo Almaraz Y Alfredo Alma Reyes." All the ladies said: "What a beautiful name (Maria Flores)". I felt a lot of love as I was welcomed into the room. Everybody seemed to be mingling.

There was another door they seemed to be entering it one by one everyone was in white temple dresses. I hear Joe trying to wake me up, I was in such a deep sleep but I could hear him, I didn't want to leave again. I thought what does this mean? What do we all have in common? I believe we were all on the other side of the veil on our way to exaltation to be with our spouses and families for time and all Eternity with our Heavenly Father.

"Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man" - 1 Corinthians 11

Maria G. Flores

A Meaningful Dream

For many years I've written my spiritual experiences on paper. I never thought I could put them in a little book, till we moved to Santaquin, Utah. A small town very rural, a place we enjoyed for two years. I began visiting the "Old Pioneer Press" to have copies of my writings made. They have a sign that reads "have you ever written a book". I thought to myself I certainly have enough material! Putting my stories in order, I presented them to begin the process. During that time which took at least a year, I often wondered how to get a copy to the General Authorities or even the Prophet himself. The book was published, I sold many copies and gave away numerous copies. Some time passed till one day my wife went to a Stake Meeting for the Teachers, she came home and related some of the things the Stake President spoke of, one in particular that caught my attention was that the Prophet said that our stake needed to be visited by a General Authority for our upcoming Stake Conference which was just three weeks away. I prayed about it all the following week inquiring of the Lord. Well Thursday came, that night I went to sleep as usual having no clue that an answer to my prayers would come to me in an extraordinary dream.

Four people came with a different message, they were all deceased family members. The first one was my Nephew Michael who died many years ago, who followed the plan of salvation with his beautiful wife and family. My dream starts in a room, Michael was sitting on a couch, he didn't say anything with words, but his heart spoke to me with love and pleasure knowing that I was also living the gospel, then my little sister Cindy came forth (I was very close to her) as I enjoyed her presence, three female cousins appeared slightly behind her, they all had the most beautiful complexions I've ever seen in any vision or dream, then they retreated

and an old man came forth, I didn't know who he was but he began to tell me things of the pre-existence and I fully understood everything that was being said (At the same time I also knew I would not remember once I awoke). As he spoke his countenance and eyes were changing, he was looking wider and his eyes deepened as if to show me his growth in the gospel since leaving this world. I now knew who he was. I only met him briefly in Mexico when I was seven years old, he was my Dad's Father Vicente.

Then my Mother came forth, she said these words to me with such great meaning "Is there something I can do for you" when she said it like that, the book quickly came to mind.

The next day I called the Stake Secretary to make an appointment to see the Stake President. I was informed that he would see me the following Sunday at 3:30pm. The day came so I went to wait for him, he soon came out and asked me to come in, we shook hands and we sat down, he then said: "What can I do for you?" I told him I would like to share my visit from the Prophet Joseph Smith first, I shared my testimony then asked if he could give this book to the coming Apostle for our Conference in two weeks, he then said: "could I read it first" I told him I brought him a copy also, he said he would, we both stood and he gave me a hug, the spirit was felt, I was humbled by the experience. This is a testimony of the Prophet.

A Road to Celestial Marriage

Like most, we grow and live the life provided to us by the Lord. Some say we were born to live in a certain environment to learn certain things. Born in the church I learned many things I never forgot. I left home early in life and left everything behind including my religion (not from unbelief), it took

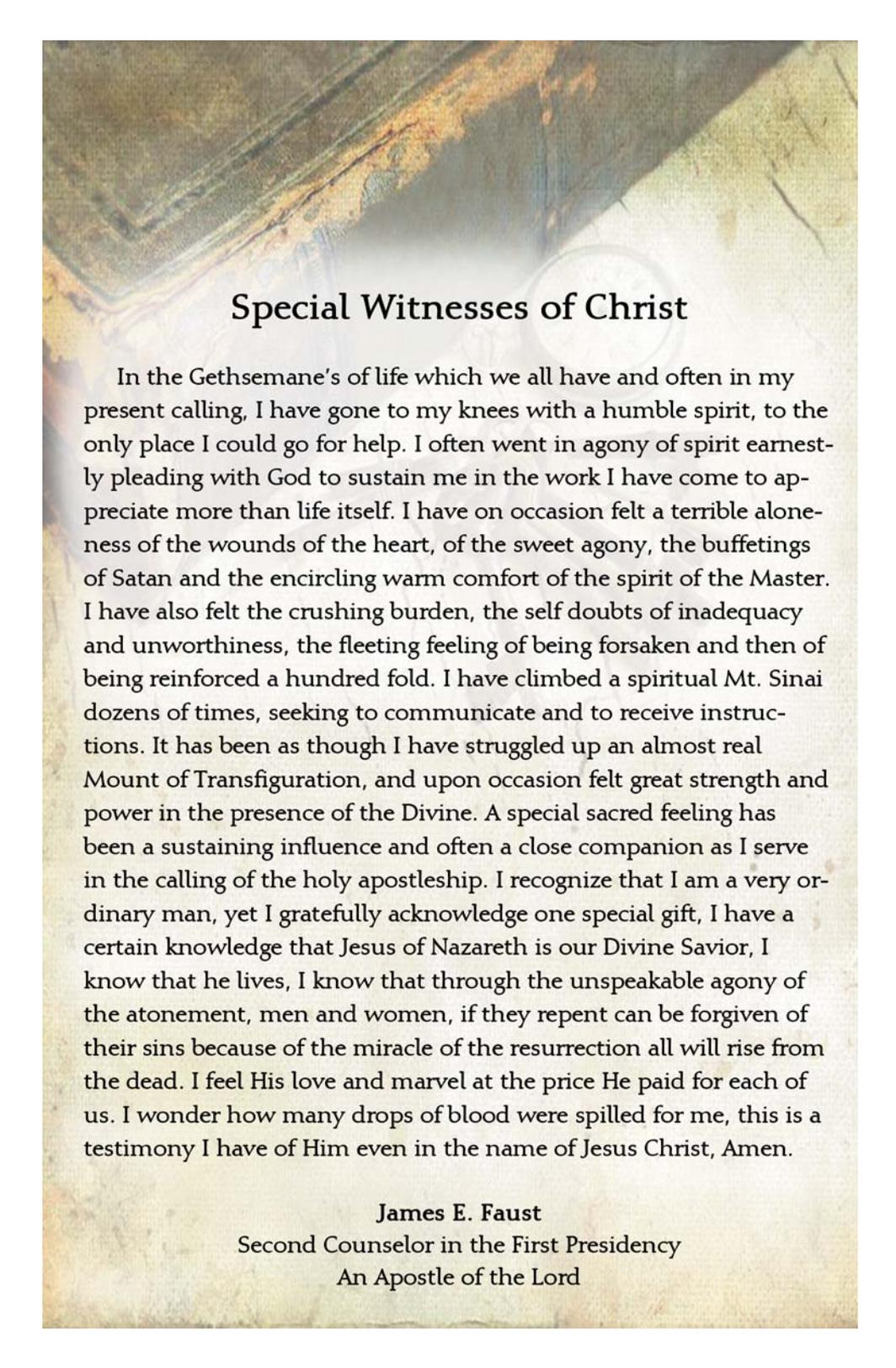
most of my life of learning disappointments, severe trials at times. I always had a testimony of the church, I just didn't know to what degree. Upon returning I studied in more detail, while reading many books I soon learned that this church has the fullness of the gospel and contains the Doctrine of Eternal Happiness (marriage). We can seal these things in this life, (The Lord didn't say it would be easy, He said it would be worth it). The road has been difficult. I think of the words of Wilford Woodruff and I quote "The Celestial Kingdom or Nothing". That's the way I want to think and be.

It took many years to see, the past will always come back and will be used against you as often as possible, I found that this would need to cease. Talking this out with your spouse and showing that you want to leave it behind, and that no good can come from it. (I always say that if you can help someone today by doing so then by all means). So moving forward takes the both of us, one cannot drag the other along, the burden is too heavy, the rewards of Eternal Marriage are immense, far too beautiful for our minds to comprehend. Reading and Prayer can give us a glimpse of the beauties of Eternal Life with the Family and our Eternal Father who awaits with open arms, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Jose Bonilla Flores

One who knows so much cannot keep from sharing with others the knowledge he or she possesses. And, wants to share that knowledge so others may have a chance for happiness.





Special Witnesses of Christ

In the Gethsemane's of life which we all have and often in my present calling, I have gone to my knees with a humble spirit, to the only place I could go for help. I often went in agony of spirit earnestly pleading with God to sustain me in the work I have come to appreciate more than life itself. I have on occasion felt a terrible loneliness of the wounds of the heart, of the sweet agony, the buffetings of Satan and the encircling warm comfort of the spirit of the Master. I have also felt the crushing burden, the self doubts of inadequacy and unworthiness, the fleeting feeling of being forsaken and then of being reinforced a hundred fold. I have climbed a spiritual Mt. Sinai dozens of times, seeking to communicate and to receive instructions. It has been as though I have struggled up an almost real Mount of Transfiguration, and upon occasion felt great strength and power in the presence of the Divine. A special sacred feeling has been a sustaining influence and often a close companion as I serve in the calling of the holy apostleship. I recognize that I am a very ordinary man, yet I gratefully acknowledge one special gift, I have a certain knowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is our Divine Savior, I know that he lives, I know that through the unspeakable agony of the atonement, men and women, if they repent can be forgiven of their sins because of the miracle of the resurrection all will rise from the dead. I feel His love and marvel at the price He paid for each of us. I wonder how many drops of blood were spilled for me, this is a testimony I have of Him even in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

James E. Faust

Second Counselor in the First Presidency
An Apostle of the Lord

One Handcart's Testimony

A wonderful testimony was related by President David O. McKay on October 2, 1947 - the pioneer centennial year. He told of a Sunday School teacher in a Southern Utah community who was criticizing brethren for permitting the Willie and Martin handcart companies to cross the plains with no more supplies or protection than a handcart caravan afforded. But then: An old man in the corner sat silent and listened as long as he could stand it, then he arose and said things that no person who heard him will ever forget. His face was white with emotion, yet he spoke calmly, deliberately, but with great earnestness and sincerity. In substance the father above mentioned said, "I ask you to stop this criticism. You are discussing a matter you know nothing about. Cold historic facts mean nothing here, for they give no proper interpretation of the questions involved. Mistake to send the Handcart Company out so late in the season? Yes. But I was in that company and my wife was in it and Sister Nellie unthank whom you have cited was there, too. We suffered beyond anything you can imagine and many died of exposure and starvation, but did you ever hear a survivor of that company utter a word of criticism? Not one of that company ever apostatized or left the Church, because every one of us came through with the absolute knowledge that God lives for we became acquainted with Him in our extremities.

I have pulled my handcart when I was so weak and weary from illness and lack of food that I could hardly put one foot ahead of the other. I have looked ahead and seen a patch of sand or a hill slope and I have said, I can go only that far and there I must give up, for I cannot pull the load through it." And a wife with a baby in her arms by his side! "I have gone on to that sand and when I reached it, the cart began pushing me. I have looked back many times to see who was pushing my cart, but my eyes saw no one. I knew then that the angels of God were there.

"Was I sorry that I chose to come by handcart? No. Neither then nor any minute of my life since. The price we paid to become acquainted with God was a privilege to come in the Martin Handcart Company."



David Osborn was present when Joseph Smith preached in Far West, Missouri, in 1837. He recalled these words of the Prophet:

"The Book of Mormon is true, just what it purports to be, and for this testimony I expect to give an account in the day of judgment."

The greatest torment [the Prophet Joseph] had ... was because this people would not live up to their spiritual privileges He said ... he felt... as though he were pent up in an acorn shell, and all because the people ... would not prepare themselves to receive the rich treasures of wisdom and knowledge that he had to impart. He could have revealed a great many things to us if we had been ready.

