

Only a Teacher

We all are aware that the first article in the Ensign each month contains a message from a member of the First Presidency of the Church. The home teaching brethren are advised to discuss this message during their monthly visit to their families. The subject for January was "Only A Teacher".

As I reflected on the content of this article and discussed its message, a parade of teachers, whose faces live to this day in my heart, passed before my eyes. It would take pages to describe the events, interactions, insights, motivations, and blessings brought into my life by these devoted people. I pray God to bless them all. Let me tell you about one of them: Glen Salter. But first, I need to give you some background.

My father, Howard Hall, and my mother, Florence Tracy were 31 and 32 years of age, respectively, when they were married on August 14, 1918. I do not know the reason, but upon marriage, father gave his mother, Mary Ann Woodcox Hall an Edison Phonograph and his wife a black upright piano. Some of you will remember the old Edison. It had a very thick disk type record and the groove was hill-valley like causing the tiny Steel needle to move up and down. The needle was fastened to a two inch diameter circular diaphragm that vibrated along its vertical axis to convert the motions into sound. The sound, in turn, was magnified by a conical horn which in this particular phonograph was enclosed in the cabinet behind double doors.

As children we loved to visit grandma Hall just to wind up the spring mechanism and play the records. The records that I remember were voices telling funny stories, singing (Caruso, I think) and other music, particularly saxophones. They really invited you to dance. At that point in our lives we wished that dad had given his mother the piano and the Edison to us.

Incidentally, Edison considered the phonograph to be his most important invention. It was a bolt out of the blue. The thought that voices could somehow be recorded had never before crossed anyone's mind. Edison is generally given credit for inventing the electric light, but others had made electric lights before him. Edison's great contribution in this area came from making the idea practical.

Now, back to the piano. I first remember it being in a tent located on a vacant lot at 1464 Jefferson Avenue in Ogden, Utah. We

lived in the tent while my uncle, Helon Tracy, built a half of a house for us with the idea that it would be finished later.

After moving into the house, my brothers and I had great fun running the piano stool up and down.

My mother did not play the piano, and neither did my father, but mother was desirous that I should learn. But there was no money for lessons. To the rescue, came a neighbor girl, June Larson, age ten. I was six. How I wished that I could play "Tea for Two", "Nola", and "Doll Dance" the way she did. Using her own beginning piano books, she taught me some fundamentals, all for free. Soon I was playing "Skaters Waltz".

Then, we moved to Marriott, a small farming community five miles northwest of Ogden. I was now seven and don't recall touching the piano again until I was eleven. At this juncture, my mother's cousin, Mary Butler, offered to teach me. She lived two miles east of us and I would get there by walking through fields of alfalfa and a swamp. After only six weeks, the lure of the old swimming hole (on Mill Creek) at the bottom of our five acre farm, ended this round of piano lessons. But when summer was over, I occasionally practiced some of the sheet music that I had acquired. After five years in Marriott, we moved back to Ogden (664-30th Street) where we were in the Ogden 18th Ward.

Again, a neighbor girl, Joy Hibbert, who lived with her grandparents, William and Annie Poulter, offered to teach me, for free, as it had been before. She was twelve and I was sixteen. She was an expert and was taking lessons herself from a professional teacher. She introduced me to difficult scales and fingering, and to classical music, which at that point in my life, was not interesting. After a few lessons, I quit again. However I was interested in the "Hit Parade" music of the day: "The Music Goes Round and Round", "Heart and Soul", "It's June In January", "When I Take My Sugar To Tea", etc. I had also discovered Music Theory which piqued my scientific curiosity.

These were Depression Years and 15 cents was a lot of money, and that's what it cost to buy a piece of sheet music. I picked beans and cherries, hoed and pulled weeds, and sold Liberty magazines for a nickel (I could keep one cent for making the sale). I was now fourteen and managed to make about \$10.00 per month. In those days, many children had to work to buy their own clothes, school books, and other necessities. I was among them. After the necessities were taken care of, I would buy some music theory books and an occasional piece of sheet music from Glenn Brothers Music

Back in the 1930's many families purchased bushel baskets of peaches, tomatoes, string beans, and so forth for canning. One autumn day during my early-teen years, I watched a farmer deliver five bushel baskets of tomatoes to a produce market. As soon as the farmer drove away, the market manager brought out a number of empty bushel baskets and began to transfer the tomatoes from the farmer's baskets to his. When the transfer was complete, the manager had seven bushels of tomatoes to sell. I was greatly amazed at what transpired and wondered what clever trick the manager had used to accomplish this feat.

This episode vanished from memory for many years. Then, in a college science course, I began the study of the arrangement and packing of atoms in crystals; the science of crystallography. I learned, in addition to many other things, that spherical atoms could be packed in various ways to give different packing densities. At this juncture, my mind flashed back to the tomato packing incident and I saw in an instant the relationship between the packing of atoms and tomatoes. The principles were the same! Ironically, the ancient masters of dishonesty and deceit probably discovered this secret thousands of years before the advent of the science of crystallography.

Let me explain how the manager was able to do this. Atoms are rather spherical (similar to a ball), and so are tomatoes. But atoms are very, very small. It would take more atoms than the number of hamburgers that McDonald's has ever sold to equal the size of a tomato. As the farmer picked tomatoes, he tossed them randomly into his basket and they automatically arranged themselves into what a crystallographer calls a "close packed structure". Further perfection of the close packed arrangement occurred by settling action as the farmer travelled rough roads on the way to town. Spheres cannot be arranged in any other way to obtain a greater density of packing.

If we had X-ray vision to see into a basket of tomatoes as delivered by the farmer, we would see the tomatoes arranged with their centers located at the corners of hexagons, a six sided plain figure. However, there are ways of packing sphere-like things wherein adjacent spheres touch each other but are not so densely packed and, therefore, occupy more space. Such an arrangement is one in which our X-ray vision would see the tomatoes centered at the corners of squares. The manager could achieve this kind of packing by placing tomatoes at the bottom of the basket on the corners of a square grid, like the layout of the streets in most of Utah's cities. He would then place a second layer of tomatoes so

that each tomato was located directly over the tomato below it and continue this procedure until the basket was full.

The above story and mention of the scientific underpinning shows just how complicated this scheme really was. More than ever before, we live in an era of schemes that claim to make you rich but are deceptively designed to take your money.

Honesty in the affairs of men is essential to a nations survival. America is great because its people are relatively honest. If total honesty were rated 10, and absolute dishonesty rated zero, I believe our country, on average, would rate above 8. However, we are slipping. If our honesty slips below 7, I think that we will be in deep trouble, headed for third world status.

In most third world nations, the bribe is standard practice, postal employees open and steal valuables from the mail, customs agents must be bribed to let you cross the border even though you are not carrying contraband, presidents and other high officials raid the national treasury and live in splendor while the poor starve. Corruption, favoritism, nepotism, special privilege, cruel punishment, detentions, unlawful procedures and oppression abound.

While citizens of a certain nation were starving and Utah citizens were fasting and sending money to relieve their hunger, that nation's dictator was allocating many millions of dollars to lavishly celebrate the tenth anniversary of his coming to power. I do not think that any one of us want to live in that kind of a country. To prevent this from ever happening, I suggest a pledge: In my heart, in this, the last decade of the 20th Century, I pledge to be honest with myself and my fellowmen and will teach my children to do the same.