

H. Tracy Hall, Sr. History, February 1990

## 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.

*how I learned?* Let me tell you about learning to play the piano. Four teachers entered my life to give me free lessons: **June Larson, Mary Butler, Joy Hibbert, and Glen Salter.** I will focus, primarily, on Glen Salter who taught me almost daily over a period of about five months.

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 and mother~~ 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 <sup>21</sup> grandma Hall just to wind up the spring mechanism and play the records. The records that I remember were voices telling <sup>the people</sup> 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 eleven. I was seven. How I wished that I could play "Tea for Two", and "Wedding of the Painted Doll" the way she did. She would also come to our house and play Hymns for my grandmother Emma Burdett Tracy who was a widowed invalid and lived with us. Using her own beginning piano books, she taught me some fundamentals, all for free. After awhile, I was able to play a simple beginners piece called "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 about eleven. At this juncture, my mother's cousin, **Mary Butler**, offered to teach me. She