

I have never won even so small a thing as a free year's subscription to the Reader's Digest in their Sweepstakes. Furthermore, I have not known anyone else who ever won anything. Sometimes I enter in spite of my better judgement.

It's just awful trying to find the secret seal or code, that is mine alone, and pasting it in the correct place. Now it's even worse than it used to be. They hide the secret in a cassette tape that you have to listen to.

I like the Digest's Swing/Jazz era music tapes and their piano arrangements and have bought almost everything in this category that they have produced.

Most recently (not in time for Christmas), I ordered a pack of compact disks (CD's) from this era although I did not yet own a device for playing them.

A couple of days before Christmas, I bought a (CD) player and integrated it with my existing high quality audio equipment. I also bought some classical music: Mozart, Haydn, Gershwin (Rhapsody In Blue, etc.) and also Handel's Messiah from Pegasus on 12th North, Provo. What an Audio feast. This new optical-disk-sound technology is amazing.

Returning to the Reader's Digest, you would think by now that my huge investment in their products ought to have been given some weight in the process of selecting the numbers so that I could win something.

I suppose that the chances of winning anything big from the Digest is about 1 in 50,000,000.

Winning a sweepstakes falls within the category of a coincidence, or an identity in which case my numbers would fall upon or are exactly the same as the winning numbers in the Digest's vault. Coincidence also embraces the idea of something occurring at the same time.

Now, while I have never won a sweepstakes, I have had several remarkable incidences relating to coincidences in time. All of them seem more unlikely than the one in fifty million chances that you have with the Digest.

On New Years eve 1990, I invited Ida-Rose to take the UTA bus with me to Temple Square in Salt Lake City to see the Christmas lighting.

As an aside, many of you might not know it, but Senior Citizens (age 65 and older) can ride the bus anywhere in the UTA system for 25 cents. That means that, if you wanted to, you could catch the bus in Springville, get a transfer, and ride to Provo. At a variety of Provo stops, you could transfer to bus No.1 and go to Salt Lake. In Salt Lake, you could transfer to the Ogden bus and go to Ogden. And you can do it all for a quarter!

Age does have some advantages. If you are 60 years or older, you should always inquire as to whether your purchase is subject to a discount. You'll be surprised as to how often they will have a deal for you. When you buy a hamburger at McDonalds, tell them that you are a senior citizen and would like a free soft drink. They'll give you one. I've even asked for milk instead of the soft drink. They brought it.

And I've always thought that Ida-Rose was the nervy one.

The entire month of December this year has been very cold. Records dating back to 1932 have been broken all over the place. The temperature on the 31st of December this year hovered around -10 degrees Fahrenheit. We dressed for our New Years Eve outing. I wore Damart's blue thermal underwear (top and drawers), over my usual garments. Then there was a shirt over which there was a blue sweater. On top of this was a nylon parka with a hood. Last of all, I piled on a heavy hollow-filled parka with a second hood. Oh, I forgot, under the first hood, I wore a fur lined Russian hat. I wore two pairs of wool stockings on my feet and 3-M's Thinsulate™ ankle high shoes. I also wore Thinsulate™ gloves.

Ida-Rose dressed similarly and we were never cold.

We got on the bus at the stop just south of the Provo University office of Zions First National Bank at 4:28 pm. The bus was exactly on time. My experience is that the on-time schedule of UTA buses is exceptionally good.

The bus was brand new and rode as smooth

as silk. I had not seen this type of bus before on the Salt Lake run. We chatted light heartedly like a couple of kids, talked about the good old days, told each other our private jokes (only funny to us), saw a beautiful sunset through the large picture windows, and saw other things that we had not seen before because we did not have to concentrate on the driving.

We arrived in Salt Lake City at ZCMI's on Main Street, right on time at 5:46 pm. ZCMI's windows were decorated with lovely, artistic dioramas created from sugar, depicting our mountains and other Utah scenery all lit up from above and shining though from underneath.

Leaving these wonderful works of art, we crossed the street to temple square. It's difficult to describe the visual impact of the thousands and thousands of variously colored lights most of which shaded to the red end of the rainbow. The thing that did come to mind was immersion. We were figuratively immersed in fire. Here was Pentecost, symbolically re-lived.

Now Ida-Rose and I had, during the Christmas season, gone through the "Acts of the Apostles" several times and the symbolism that we sensed on Temple Square was not lost to us.

When the apostle Paul, came to Ephesus on his return to Jerusalem, and finding certain disciples,

He said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, Christ Jesus.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And when Paul had layed his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied. (Acts 19:1-6)

As we began our walk along the north side of the Tabernacle to see the manger and other

scenes related to Christ's birth, who did we meet? Lory and Myrtle Joy Free!

Now this is an example of a coincidence in time.

Neither Ida-Rose nor I, although next door neighbors, had seen or visited with Lory or Myrtle Joy that week. Both parties were totally surprised at seeing the other at the same place on such a frightfully cold night. The Frees had, on the spur of the moment, got in their car and driven to temple square.

If I were a betting man, I'd wager that this coincidence was problematically more remote than winning the Digest's Sweepstakes.

But what better surprise for a New Year's Eve! Lory, Myrtle Joy, Tracy, Ida-Rose, neighbors, like minded friends, wondering, pondering, marveling, at the birth of our Saviour, Redeemer, Lord, and Master on our hallowed Temple Square.

I have thought about coincidences occasionally and have had a number of interesting ones. They are not only remarkable but may have a causal relationship to heavenly things.

Is it just a coincidence that Ida-Rose and I married? After marriage, I learned that Ida-Rose, from childhood, constantly prayed that she would someday have a good husband. What a responsibility that puts on me!

Is it just a coincidence that Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy (my great grandmother) at age 15, heard David W. Patten preach near Ellisburg, Jefferson county New York and became a member of the Church?

The faith and prayers of sincere people, I do believe, bring blessings from heaven through coincidences in time.

My mother in 1920, before her first born (me) was one year old, took the electric train from Ogden, to Salt Lake City for General Conference in the Tabernacle so that she could hear the prophet (Heber J. Grant) speak but mostly so I would hear him.

Thursday, January 24th 1991 was Timpanogos Club night. BYU President, Ernest L. Wilkinson, introduced me to this club sometime around 1960. University presidents, scientists, lawyers, businessmen, MDs, Musicians and others

have been members. A. Ray Olpin, Henry Eyring, Alexander Schreiner, Hugh B. Brown, Wallace Bennett and Richard L. Evans, to list a few, have been members.

I have enjoyed this club, which was founded sometime around the year 1900 because of its diversified, stimulating lectures. No one could forget Sterling W. Sill's depiction of an operation that he had had in the hospital. He kept us in stitches. Nor could one forget Harvey Fletcher's lecture demonstration on Stereophonic sound. He invented it.

We meet nine times a year and present a lecture to club members in rotation according to seniority in the club. At this point in time, my turn has come around twice. Membership is maintained at about 100 persons. The meeting begins with dinner followed by the lecture and, finally, a question and answer period. The club does not engage in any fund raising activities or champion any causes.

Before the Church abandoned the Hotel Utah building as a hotel, we met in the President's room where we ate at several very long tables. Looking down on us around the room were portraits of every president of the Church. Awsome!

The club has always had some non-LDS members. I well remember a University of Utah Professor who constantly objected to having a blessing on the food. We did it anyway. Another man smoked in the presence of all those Church Presidents while we endured his second-hand smoke.

Well anyway, getting back to the subject, I took the bus to Salt Lake for the Timp Club Meeting. It gets me there just in time for the 6:00 pm meeting which is now held at the Alta Club (Southeast corner of State and South Temple Streets).

The meetings last until about 7:30 pm. Unfortunately, the next bus returning to Provo is the last bus of the day and it does not leave until 10:15 pm. To kill the almost three hours of dead time, I have gone to the Family History Library or to the Thursday night rehearsal of the Tabernacle Choir. On that night, I went to the choir practice.

In spite of the cold, the Tabernacle had

several hundred people watching and listening. I find the rehearsals to be more interesting than the performance.

During the rehearsal, Robert Cundick, Tabernacle Organist and former BYU professor walked down the aisle past me and we exchanged pleasantries.

I first seated myself down close to the front. Opposite to me, across the aisle on my right, were a man and wife. I thought that I ought to be friendly so moved over behind them. They had seen me talking to Bob Cundick, so started asking questions about choir personnel, etc. I did what I could to identify people. One of them was easy. Don Riplinger, former Ogdenite and associate conductor is a shirt-tail relative married to a Tracy cousin of mine.

The visitors were from Chicago. The wife was a piano teacher. Their surname was Alexander. Remember my Nancy Alexander great grandmother mentioned above? Mr. Alexander is probably a distant cousin of mine. Coincidence?

The audience applauded all of the numbers that the choir practiced. The highlight of the evening was a duet by a woman soprano and a boy soprano. It was tremendous. Unfortunately, during rehearsal, the audience is not informed as to the title or authors of the music or the names of the performers.

Occasionally, during the performance, I would ask myself, "where in this tabernacle did mother sit while holding me on her lap at General Conference in 1920"? I want to sit there.

What are the odds that I could? There is seating for about 5,000 people so the odds are one in 5,000 that I could select the right spot.

The Alexanders had left now, so I walked over to the north side of the Tabernacle and picked a spot. It felt like it might be right..

But even if it wasn't, it didn't matter. I was in my reverie, reverently thinking of my mother, silently talking to her, with gratitude in my heart and a lump in my throat.