

LA IGLESIA DE  
JESUCRISTO  
DE LOS SANTOS  
DE LOS ULTIMOS  
DIAS

CENTRO DE ENTRENAMIENTO MISIONAL

Pocuro 1980  
Santiago, Chile

8 de julio 1989

Da Nevah-Endin' Nooz

Sumptin's alluz thar! Thangs keep on a-heppinin!

Last night when I talked to the new district-group leaders about their responsibilities, I asked them to have patience with the missionaries and practice the principles so beautifully taught in D y C Section 121:34-46, avoiding hassles over minor things that give rise to hurt feelings and resentment. Perfection doesn't come with one correction. Maybe one or two of the necessary hundred can be skipped occasionally, or possibly postponed a bit. Of course, if you have the knack, the blessed gift, of being able to correct with humor, humility, and love, leaving only positive feelings and results, well, of course, do it now--if it's worth doing at all.

Most of us are good at pointing. We can point at real, imagined, or invented defects in any one, any time, any where. We're as good at it as that old pointer dawg. Prolly Ah fust heerd de story fum old Uncle Harvey. Dis yere pointer war so good, one day when his marster tuck him t' town he ups 'n' points at sumptin' in de street. De marster done seen nothin', cain't figger hit out. Well, den, all of a sudden he seen de dawg war a-pointin' at a sign. De sign say, "A. Partridge, Attorney at Law." Or maybe de sign say "D. Quayle, V.P." Anyhow, we-all uz all good pointers. Wisht we war good correctors, startin' out wif correctin' ar sefs. Minds me uv mah all-time favor-ite ekzample uv pointin' 'n' correctin': Hit war King Sauls's darter, King Davids's wife Michal (2 Samuel 6:16, 20).

Oh, that is sooo good! David making a spectacle of himself, Michal pointing with scorn and then ridiculing the king to his face, that time-honored, revered, most respected and effective way of positively changing someone's behavior! Goll, though, if King David couldn't execute the true movements of the dance any better than that! Actually, I truly admire David. The author of Psalms 23, 24, 27,.... Well, why omit any? They're all so beautiful! And he dances his heart out before the Lord, praising him with his whole being. Michal was perhaps one of the original gringas. Reminds me of the dedication of the Provo Temple. Merrill and I were with the overflow crowd in the George Albert Smith Field House. The time came to give the hosanna shout. I, half-Latin American then, was moved to praise the Lord with all my soul, as many Latins would. I rose with the others to my feet and shouted **HOSANNA!** Whewww! The gringos around me were mumbling **Hosanna** and gazed at me as if at a weird specimen in a petrie dish. That effectively cooled me for a long time and the world was deprived of additional edifying spectacles.

Think back, you former members of the great and distinguished Ogden 18th Ward Male Chorus, on that sacrament meeting in the Farmington Chapel, circa 1941. Memorable! I sang tenor, probably at the side of my brother Gene and Lane Compton, doing my best to follow along with them. I also gave a talk. My two and one-half front teeth were still missing at the time and I was very shy and awkward. I prepared myself fairly well beforehand, though, and prayed that I might do my best. Afterwards, looking at the memorial in a hallway of the chapel where the first Primary was organized, I was about to turn a corner when I heard the voice of one of the cutest girls I've ever known say with sort of a lisp, mimicking me with heavy sarcasm, "Shakespeare says..." Everybody laughed and I didn't turn the corner. Years passed before I sort of turned it. Back then I had no eccentric perspective (off-center, not centered on my ego) from which to appreciate, enjoy, and profit from the enthralling, entertaining, instructive, and cathartically powerful intensity of tragicomic real-life drama--right on center in a way that third-party theater, even of a Shakespeare, can never be. But goll, I couldn't even claim credit for Shakespeare. The quote wasn't original with me. I just pulled the thought from some Church publication, probably from a talk by a general authority. Honest, I wasn't trying to act smart or show off. True, I had read much Shakespeare but didn't finish reading his complete works till I got started on the Aquitania (converted to a troop ship) on the way home from the war. While others were playing cards, gambling and using filthy language, I was reading Shakespeare (non-bowdlerized edition), checked out from the ship's small library. Enough not only to make a good soldier point but to make him puke! When will I ever learn not to make a spectacle of myself, even while just sitting silently on a crowded deck?

Have you ever cogitated about Descartes' famous statement **Cogito ergo sum** (I think, therefore I am)? Descartes lived to think the way others eat and breathe. I have to think up simpler postulates; e.g., I suffer **ergo sum**. This version occurred to me in the Provo Hospital, in silent screaming pain from a ruptured disk. I felt I existed. I felt, I existed. Another one: This's me in this photo **ergo sum**. For whom do I look first in a group photo? Truthfully, of late I've persuaded myself to look first not at Merrill, seeing myself at her side as well, but at all the others before getting to myself last of all. All the time, though, I'm not kidding myself--not my alter ego, anyway. He knows I'm only deferring a thwarted desire for self-delectation defeated by the unprofessionalism of the photographer, his inadequate equipment, the bad light, his poor timing--at the one millisecond in thousands that catches something other than the real me. "I ain't much, but I've got all I've got." (In terms of being.) A better one than the above: Someone has noticed me **ergo sum**. Even if it's a cute girl..... ridiculing me. That's the crux, and a key to missionary success.

Some people will paint their hair green to exist. Some are timid, lonely, aggrieved, misunderstood. They may not want to admit it but they long for someone to notice them, acknowledge their existence, reach out and touch, touch their hearts, somehow, sincerely, of their own volition, not coaxed, not from a sense of duty, of pity, of do-gooding--but if not thus, well, any way at all. Life may seem a solipsism ("The self can be aware of nothing but its own experiences and states"), but if we reach out with our senses, mind, and heart, we'll make convincing contact with the natural, the human, the divine. The self is not alone, by itself. **Solus**: alone; **ipse** self (solipsism). Our circuits are not completely closed and circular. There are experiences and states that are not our own alone but shared. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me." (John 17:22-23) In the Sistine Chapel Michelangelo's magnificent painting expresses this contact to our spirits: The hand of God reaches out to Adam, their index fingers touching. The apotheosis of God's regard for us is communicated in Mary's marvelous response to Elizabeth (Luke 1:48): "For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden..." (In her humble condition, her 'insignificance' among earth's inhabitants and in the universe, the God of the universe has noticed her!)

If missionaries can develop confidence and self-esteem, while retaining their humility and sense of gratitude and dependence on God, they can accomplish miracles, changing their lives and the lives of others. They will know that He is aware of them, He notices them, He sees every sparrow that may fall. How I love that Ogden 18th Ward Male Chorus song that we often sang and that I sing: "Teach me to pray, Lord God in Heaven above, Teach me to know that in thy boundless love Thou seest every sparrow that may fall And givest what is best for all. Although my ways are laid in pastures drear, Though burdens seem, more than my soul can bear, That in thy love thou gavest them to me; Teach me to put my trust in thee. Teach me to pray, to take my woes to thee With faith that thou wilt from them set me free, And give me faith to conquer every day; Father in Heaven, teach me to pray." Thus, missionaries will truly notice others and desire the same confidence and self-esteem for others that they themselves enjoy, as separate entities among men, walking before God in the light of the gospel and sensing his love. Having freely received, they will freely give.

Oh, we have missionaries like that! Remember Hna. Laura, in the heat of the tropics in eastern Bolivia? Angry bumps on her body where bugs have bitten her, heat rash, dust, dirt, sweat. In a recent letter she tells of teaching the gospel at an army encampment. She and her companion have converted some 50 soldiers! Our Sister Laura, so cute, petite, and neat, actually too elegant, with her fancy hose, ribbons, and lace, as missionary regulations go. But now with hardly any water to drink, no proper sanitary or laundry facilities, soiled, wrinkled clothes, smudged face and hands, to us she is more beautiful and wonderful than when at the CEM, where we thought she was so marvelous.

Ever-loving Mom and Dad / Merrill and Wendell

— — M — —  
— — W — —

What we enjoyed most in Antofogasta was gazing at the pictures of our missionaries on Pres. Espínola's transfer board while he commented on each one. They are all doing very well. Some are already senior companions; others will soon be district leaders. Our hearts oozed with love as we looked at them. Hna. Fernández, the epileptic who in a seizure unknowingly clamped her teeth on Merrill's thumb, is Hna. Gallego's junior companion--a challenge for her as she tries to keep up with one of our most gung-ho missionaries ever. At the table at the mission home I discovered that ties may be useful after all. Arturo, six, their youngest, unable to cut into the conversation, pulled on his dad's tie till his dad's ear was close enough to catch his message. He is a cute kid and after lunch (twice), I spent most of my time teaching him German words and phrases he could say to a little German friend. The Espínolas are from Asunción, Paraguay (she is originally, from Uruguay), members for about 30 years and excellent people.

The real reason we didn't spend more time in Antofogasta was to return here in time for Pres. and Sis. Taylor's farewell after three years presiding over the Santiago South Mission. At first, our friend Enrique Ibarra, president of the Merlo Stake, greater Buenos Aires, was going to replace Pres. Taylor. Instead, he will go to Lima, Peru, and a Pres. Zwick from the Salt Lake area will come here. At the pot-luck dinner, Merrill and I sat next to the Taylors and the Schmidts (Santiago North Mission). Some of the hair-raising tales they had to tell made us feel that our missionaries in Buenos Aires North and South were very docile, dedicated, and well-behaved. True, we have a tale or two to tell too. Some missionaries get the strangest ideas into their heads, which sometimes turn into fads. A current one, among some, is to see if they can make it through the mission with only two pairs of shoes. Pres. Taylor told how he advised one elder, toward the end of his mission, to replace his completely unwearable footwear--shreds and shambles. His parents came to Chile to return home with him, and in his final interview he sported some shiny new shoes, which evoked a warm compliment from Pres. Taylor. The parents were waiting in the parlor, the father hunched over on the edge of a sofa, his feet curled back beneath him. Yes, they had exchanged shoes. A proud, proud father, I guess. His son had made it to the end. (But only by dint of 24 months of persistent persuasion from Pres. Taylor to keep him from going home.) Wonderful to walk in the shoes of a son like that. Oh that he had been as tenacious in seeking, finding, teaching, and converting as in wearing out his shoes and the patience of his president.

This is a joke, my well-known abhorrence for "biology" in abeyance for a moment: According to a letter just received from the State of Utah Natural Resources Department, a registered engineer must check our property and well in Wallsburg to certify that the water has been put to beneficial use or else we'll lose our permit. This sounds funny to us, so long accustomed to using "el water" in the Latin American sense: toilet. Could we get a volunteer among you to use our "water" while an engineer makes a beneficiality determination?

June 30. The power supply for this Macintosh had to be replaced by a 220V one (\$260.). A surge of power apparently blew the old one. No surge protectors are available in Chile, we are told. It has rained twice since this letter was commenced. Rationing of electricity will still start Monday, however. We just returned from a sentimental journey to Valparaíso and Viña del Mar--three days, very memorable in every way. Coming next week: A Sequel to the Grapes of Wrath.

Ever-loving Mom and Dad / Merrill and Wendell



Thanks for your letter.

LA IGLESIA DE  
JESUCRISTO  
DE LOS SANTOS  
DE LOS ULTIMOS  
DIAS

CENTRO DE ENTRENAMIENTO MISIONAL

Pocuro 1980  
Santiago, Chile

26 de junio 1989

The Never-Ending News

There's always something! Things keep happening!

What is the best gift besides the Scriptures? A deed inspired by them or a book that makes you think on them and live by them. If not the book itself, well then a title or an author recommended by a friend. Dear friend, I recommend to thee The Friendly Persuasion by Jessamyn West. For much too long I resisted reading it, not wanting to recast Gary Cooper in my mind in the slightest in the misdoubtful light of a writer's prose. Prose? Jessamyn's The Friendly Persuasion is pure poetry. And when thee has read it, thee will talk Quaker talk like me. I have a Quaker friend, a best friend of my life, my foxhole buddy in the war, as gen-u-wine a Quaker as thee sees on a box of Quaker Oats, but he neversomuch as once ever said to me, "Hark thee, Rugged." ("Rugged" was my nickname in the army, ever since that time I proved it in basic training down in Texas.) Well, I think I will send Jessamyn's book to that backsliding Harold Howell to help him get his Quakerese properly up to snuff. What kind of a Quaker did he suppose himself to be, anyhow, going off to war like Gary Cooper's son Josh counter to the teachings of his religion and yet with nary a "Fash thyself not, ma" or "Save thy breath to cool thy broth, friend."

Ma and I were thinking about thee--all up in Antofogasta. A delightful, restful trip, yet we had to hurry back to Santiago. Our withdrawal symptoms were too severe. "What is that curious smell?" we asked ourselves, well aware, of course, that it was pure air. In our absence, the pollution reached such heights in Santiago that all car, truck, and bus traffic was drastically curtailed. The next day the bus drivers went on strike to save their livelihood. The following day, as our plane approached the city, the smog appeared to reach right up to the Andes, with only the highest peaks clearly visible. Traffic was back to normal, with only limited restrictions, prohibiting approx. 20% of all vehicles from entering the downtown area each day as determined by final digits on license plates. Some 200 polluting industries have been shut down until some rainfall helps to alleviate the situation. So far none in sight. Electricity may soon be rationed because Chile depends heavily on hydroelectric power and the reservoirs are drying up.

Actually we could have stayed by the beach in Ahn-toe-foe-GAHSS-tah foe-EV-ah, it was so nice. We should move the CEM up there, where it's never too hot in summer because of the ocean breezes. Our hotel was the Diego de Almagro, built in old colonial style with lots of wood beams and twisted curved wrought iron. Almagro, as you probably remember, was a Spanish conquistador. At night we could hear him groan in torment, paying for his inhuman exploitation of the oppressed inhabitants of the land. Turned out, we determined later, that it was only the old elevator as it descended down down down closer to where don Diego is roasting. This is the driest place we've been--drier than what we've seen of Morocco. Even with water, hardly anything would grow because there is no soil. We were told that formerly boats returning for new loads of copper ore or saltpeter would bring back dirt. Down the main avenue and a few other places there are some palm trees and other scanty vegetation that is highly treasured. A small irony: Chile has long been the earth's greatest source of natural nitrate, but the areas where it is found are so dry and barren that by itself the nitrate as a fertilizer would change nothing. This northern part of Chile was taken from Bolivia and Peru in the War of the Pacific. The world's first and third largest copper mines are here (Chuquicamata and La Escondida). The second largest (El Teniente) is south of Santiago. From the air the landscape looks like a moonscape. As we flew farther south, toward colder climes, the mountains looked like lumpy, twisted, deeply browned and lightly powdered pound cake. Normally, this time of year, the snow is very deep.

Thanks for your letter.