

Turning Points

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One summer evening as I sat on my tractor and watched the furrows unfold from the plows and glide away into the distance, my soul was stirred. "This is God's earth," I said. "It is not mine, but He has given me stewardship over a few acres to see what I will do."

My farm is located at 11166 South 4250 West in Payson, Utah, where I am growing trees that others might buy and plant. Trees are important friends. Why did I go into this? Financially, this project is a flop. Does it have other rewards? Quite probably. It is challenging and it gives me lots of exercise.

Turning over the soil to expose fresh, new earth made me think of "turning points." What if your life or my life took this turn, or instead took that turn? What would the result have been?

As a Latter-day Saint, I believe it is correct doctrine to say that God does intervene in the affairs of His children and considers the desires of a prayerful and righteous heart. Let me tell you of some turning points in my life.

It is amazing that children hear so much of swearing and dirty stories at an early age. Some of my earliest recollections concerning this occurred when our family lived at 1664 Jefferson Avenue in Ogden, Utah. We lived there from about 1922 to 1927 (about age four to age eight for me). During that period, I heard from other children most of the swear words and a number of dirty stories. One story was so bad that I have not been able to erase it to this day!

These things would come to mind at times and I wondered how they could be removed because I didn't want them there. Somehow, I decided that when they would pop up, I should immediately think of something else. I assiduously tried to do this.

For some reason, I never told my parents anything concerning these bad things. Peer pressure, I guess. I'm certain that my parents did not suspect anything like this was going on.

Our parents were devoted to the church and taught their children correct principles including personal prayer. I often prayed about my problem and the Lord helped me with it. To this day, I abhor swearing and bad stories.

In later years, I witnessed my brave father politely ask swearers and tellers of raunchy stories to please not do these things in his presence. Sometimes they would say, "Well what's the matter, there aren't any ladies present so what's the beef?" How I admired his courage!

In the fall of 1927, our family moved to a small, five-acre farm with a dilapidated home and a rundown barn and chicken coup located in the small farming community of Marriott, Utah (located about five miles northwest of Ogden). As we traveled toward Marriott we passed through Wilson Lane to pick up a cow so we could have milk. We had some kind of Ford truck that I remember was packed with some of our belongings. It was a dreary, rainy day. It was my job to keep the stubborn cow moving along behind the truck with a stick.

The farm came with a horse named Nig, a pig, and a dog named Lassie, and a few farm implements, including a wagon and a single horse drawn two-handled plow.

Keeping the plow upright took more strength than I had. On top of that, Nig stepped on my foot. We did not have a bridle or a saddle for Nig so we had to ride him bareback. On another occasion, I was riding him at full gallop when he took me under the clothes line wire and nearly decapitated me...

Nevertheless, my brothers and I had very happy times on the farm (mother had five sons and no daughters).

The old swimming hole was in Mill Creek at the north end of our farm. Incidentally, this is the same Mill Creek that bordered our home on Jefferson Avenue in Ogden where there was also a swimming hole.

During summer all the boys for a mile around would congregate there to lie in the sun or the shade of the old cottonwood and box elder trees and swim with the water snakes, dive, fish, and commune with nature in the nude.

In those days, men and boys never wore swimsuits. Even while attending Weber College, where the Weber Gym had a swimming pool, boys swam naked during their swim classes. Girls, however, wore swimming suits but not at the same time that the boys were in the pool. Girls and boys entered the pool from different dressing rooms as is usual but there was an accident one day. There was a mix up in class times and, for some unknown reason, a number of girls were still in the pool when the door to the boys' room was unlocked. The boys, in their usual fashion, charged into the pool with a dive from the water's edge and consternation reigned. Quite a scramble ensued!

There was another thing that went on at the swimming hole. The boys experimented with smoking. Alas, I went along with it—reluctantly, though I knew better. The reddish, dried seeds from the weed we called “Indian tobacco” was rolled up in a bit of newspaper and smoked. Although other weeds and even dry cow manure was tried, Indian tobacco was the smoke of choice until one day a boy showed up with a carton of Chesterfields that he had taken from an uncle who sold them. He hid them in a hollow of an old box elder tree adjoining the swimming hole. Now it was possible to smoke the real thing.

But I disliked the whole business that had been going on and entered into a pact with my friend Max to not smoke. The pact was very serious. We each got a small piece of paper and a Prince Albert can. Pipe smoking tobacco came in the can, which was something like a Band-Aid can with a more rounding shape. We then pricked a finger and got enough blood to write on the paper with an old-fashioned dip-type pen point.

I then wrote, “I will never smoke again in my whole life” and signed my name. Max did similarly. Then we put the papers in the Prince Albert can and buried it at the foot of the box elder tree. I lost track of Max. I never tried to smoke anything ever again and assume he did the same.