

WHEN I THINK OF MOTHER

By Edna Cardon Trejo

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Whenever I think of mother, in my mind's eye, I see her sitting in her rocking chair with a book in her hand. A book was just as much a part of Mother as her dress - almost. How she loved to read and to learn! I remember during the War years when they asked everyone to do Red Cross knitting, Mother always had her knitting close by but she never sat down to knit but that she was reading at the same time that she was knitting. I don't know how she did it, but she did.

During the years in Chandler, the city had no library, but there were a few books in the school library that mother had always read, and we had a very fine English teacher whose father had retired from the East. He had been a college professor and he had quite a personal library, and when he became acquainted with mother, he offered to let her borrow the books. I can remember many a summer day, in the mid-day, hot, hot weather, when mother would walk the 3 and 1/2 miles to his home and borrow books and walk the 3 and 1/2 miles back. She would be absolutely wilted by the time that she got home, but delighted with the wealth of material, the variety of material of good literature that she had to read.

Mother had, I think, close to a fifth grade formal education. I am not positive about that but this is what I remember. But I know that it wasn't much more than that. She always regretted that she hadn't been able to go to school, so she was willing to do anything that she could to help the rest of us to get through school. We had a motto in the family, "Every Cardon through college" and I want you to know that eight of them got through college, and you know who didn't.

Because of mother's keen mind and her real desire to learn, and with the reading that she did and also with the Relief Society courses that she took, that was her first love in the Church, was Relief Society. She was a well educated woman. I remember one of the years that Mother was presented with a loving cup from the University on Moms and Dads Day, President Atkinson paid her that compliment, that she was a well educated woman.

Mother was an excellent teacher. She knew the Scriptures and she and she loved them. I can't really recall at any time, in my memory, when Mother was not teaching one or more classes in Church, always a Relief Society Class and most often the Gospel Doctrine class.

Along with reading, Mother loved music. She had a lovely contralto voice. She loved the hymns. She knew them all by heart. She always sang in the choir. Sometimes if we were late, if we had to walk and we couldn't get there in time, she would sit in the rear and she would sing with the choir. I used to be mortified about that. I can remember she played the guitar and I can remember one of my fondest dreams was in the summer when the whole family would sit out under the trees, it was too hot to be indoors, and Mother would play the guitar and we would sing the old favorites like; Springtime in the Rockies, Old Dog Tray, Old Black Joe, and Red River Valley. She would always end with one of her favorite ballads. I can remember "I Stood on the Bridge at Midnight" - remember that one? And I can still hear her singing it. She always sang those as we ended. Those were great times, because we always had a melon patch and mother would gather melons during the afternoon - and cantaloupe - and she would put them in an old gunny sack and she would go out to the irrigation ditch and she would anchor that gunny sack down in the irrigation water, so that the

irrigation water would gradually cool those melons and we always had those. Once in a while we had enough money for a block of ice and we would snatch a little cream from the separator and mother would have a big freezer of home cranked ice cream. That was always my favorite.

Mother was a people person. She loved people and they loved her. all ages and from all walks of life, members of the church and non-members. She had many, many close friends and admirers who were not members of the church. She enjoyed being with her old friends. I can recall Aunt Sue Butler, those of you who lived here in Mesa and knew Aunt Sue, and when Aunt Sue would come down, Mother and Aunt Sue would get together, and she always spent the night at our house, because Louise didn't have an extra bed, and mother was sleeping out on the front porch, so she could have more room for all the borders and roomers in the part of the house where she could rent it and she slept on the front porch, and Aunt Sue and Mother would lie out there and giggle and laugh and talk most of the night, and that was a wonderful thing. I remember the birthday club that they had here in Mesa. Vilate's aunt was part of that Club, and they would meet every summer at a surprise at someone's home, and they would quilt for those people that day. I remember playing under the quilt and listening to those sisters laugh and chat, the wonderful secure feeling that I had because I knew Mother loved them and they loved mother. It was all part of the Relief Society. That was kind of my introduction to Relief Society.

She loved young people. In fact, at the time of her death, if I'm not wrong, she was Stake Gleaner Leader, and she was almost 67, and yet she had an appeal for them. She took boarders and roomers there in Tucson to help us get through school. She loved young people. She was doing the laundry for them, boarding and rooming and she did the baking and most of the ironing in the evening. When we would all come home from studying at the library, we would gather around the kitchen table and she usually had hot bread because she had to bake almost every day with the crowd that she fed. Mother could always keep her own in those conversations. She took the part of everyone and the kids helped her and guessedso did she love that.

She loved company and she always cooked extra food on Sundays because she went with the idea to church of there was someone who was a stranger there, she would invite them home at our home. She fed missionaries twice a week regularly for years. She fed them in the California Missionaries one day and the Mexican Missionaries another day. And whether there were two or whether there were six of eight, if they were having .(fun?) . . ., they were always welcome in mother's home.

She was very sensitive to the feelings and moods of other people. I remember just 2 or 3 instances. There was a very young couple in our ward in Tucson who had difficulty and were getting divorced. Everyone in the ward took the side of the woman. She remained active in the church and the brother was gone for some time, I don't recall for how long, but 2 or 3 years probably. And one day he showed up back in church with a new wife. I remember, you could almost hear what people were whispering, the antagonism and ostracism of this brother. I remember immediately after the meeting was over mother getting up and almost rushing over to this couple and welcoming them back into the church. And Betty, after she had joined the church and became active, she paid a tribute to mother what that had meant to her to be welcomed that way and it had had an effect on her. There was another couple, one that for reasons that I did not know at the time, were separating, both of them came to mother at different times to talk. I asked mother, "What's going on?" "Well, they've just got problems." That is all that she would say, but I could tell she was mourning with them and the problems. Later I found out what the problem was. But it was interesting when I read mother's journal she kept the last year or so of her life, that she entered this period of time and told how badly she felt and how sorry she felt, and how she would have done anything to have helped, especially the sister, who

was especially close to her. But she never did write down what the problem was, and I thought that was mother because she wouldn't have divulged a confidence.

Then when Pamela was born, Ralph was overseas. Those were the days when you were an invalid when you had a baby. You were in the hospital for 10 days and you took things easy. It developed that mother was - I'm sure she had at least 12 that she was cooking and boarding and cleaning for, and doing laundry for. When I came home, I did have a problem and I wasn't able to take care of Pam those first - about first 10 days. Mother took care of me and the baby, you know being up nights and so forth, besides doing all this work. But that wasn't enough. There was a little girl that had married a boy from Utah and he had deserted her. Her mother was an invalid and she had a baby just two weeks after I had Pam. There was no one to take care of her, so mother took Dixie and her baby. So she had two babies, two new mothers besides all this other. It was not an easy task, I'm sure. Since I've had my family, I recognize more clearly what she did go through.

Mother was not a complainer. It was not her nature to complain, not about what she didn't have, the things that were going on in her life, or anything. After living all those years, what I'd call hard work and pioneer living, she absolutely loved and gloried in electricity. It was wonderful to have electricity and have a refrigerator instead of an ice box or a cooler that you maybe had ice water and maybe you didn't; to have wood floors rather than dirt floors that she done for so many years and kept swept right down to the calechi so they were almost like cement; to have an indoor bathroom instead of the privy; to have hot and cold running water in the house. All these things mother delighted in. But she also delighted in the little things. She loved flowers. When we were on the farm she always had a row of flowers she planted across that fence. When you recognize that she had to carry water from the ditch to keep those flowers alive, you have an idea how much she loved them. I think anyone who knew mother in Tucson, and I'm sure Margaret does, remembers her sweet pea patch on the south side of her house, How she loved those flowers. She always found time to plant them and loved having them in the house for the fragrance and so forth.

Pat and Vilate were so good to mother in those years. They would take her driving. She loved to drive, to see the country. Pat and Vilate were so good and I remember them taking her out to see the poppies, remember, at Pachecho Peak? Those wild poppies that went clear up the side, Oh, she just loved those. And the smell of the desert after the rain. These are things that mother dearly loved. And if you gave her a kitchen gadget, she was in seventh heaven!! She had cooked for so many years on a wood stove and with pots that burned everything and scorched everything. And I remember too, especially right at the last, when they came out with rubber spatulas and she would take a jar of mayonnaise after she took every bit out she could with a spoon, then she would take the rubber spatula and bring it up and say, "Look, Edna, almost a tablespoon!" The next one was potato peelers. She had peeled so many, hundreds of pounds of potatoes in her life, and when they came out with a potato peeler, she thought that that was wonderful. They saved because they didn't cut quite as deep in the potatoes as the paring knife. She bought me one, and being left handed, I couldn't use it. On this last trip she went on before she died on her way home, she bought me a potato peeler that went both ways. She was delighted and so was I.

Mother worked hard, very, very hard and she taught us to work as children. She also taught us to appreciate work and to enjoy it. I think that the whole key to it was, at the time I wasn't really looking for a key, I just wondered if really she was thinking straight to . . . let her enjoy work, and wanting us to do the same. But I think the reason was because she did not look on work as

drudgery. It was service to others and it made all the difference in the world. All she had to do late at night when she went to bed and have a rest and she was up before any of us the next morning and she was at it again.

She had several maxims that she lived by and I am sure that the family will recognize this, "If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well." and another was, "If you are unhappy, forget it. Go out and find somebody and do something for him and you will feel better." and I certainly have found that that is true. And this was especially for me, Corinthians: "And though you give your body to be burned and hath not charity, you are as sounding brass and tinkling symbols." That was for me especially.

Mother had two physical challenges, that were just part of mother. One was her finger. She had gotten a bone fellow on her middle finger, and it was before I was in the first grade, I don't really remember exactly what period of time. There was no money for doctors. It went into blood poisoning and as a result, she had to have her finger amputated. I can remember all those years from the time I was little until mother died, whenever she would knock that finger she would wince. I think, and assume that the rest of the family felt as I did that that was just something that went along with an amputation, that it was always painful at the end. But just shortly before - well it was about the beginning of the second world war, and I really don't know how it happened, but I am certain that Pat had something to do with it. He had mother go to a Dr. Hastings who was a friend and a customer of his, a good friend, and had Dr. Hastings look at it and he said, "You know this is ridiculous. She has endured that all these years and what they have done, is somehow sewn the nerve in, so that the end was caught and was exposed. That should have been taken care of years before." So Pat made arrangements but before Dr. Hastings could do that, that was right at the beginning of the war, he was drafted, very hurriedly and had to leave, and mother never had that done. I'll never forget when mother was lying in her casket at her little house by Vilate's, I couldn't touch her, because I didn't want to feel her. I had never touched a dead person and I didn't want to remember mother that way. But I remember Orson reaching out and touching that hand of mothers and I recognized that he was feeling as I was, sorrow for all the years she had endured that pain because we just didn't know that it could be corrected.

The other thing was her feet. She had for so many years worn castoff shoes - very often mens shoes. I remember her walking to Chandler, to and from church. That was another thing about mother, if she took an assignment, she went there if it was raining, if it was muddy or whatever, if we had to walk, we walked the 2 and one half miles and we walked back. She never let down on an assignment. I can remember her wearing old men's shoes to the chapel and then just before she got there, she put on the shoes that she had that were more presentable. Her feet were in such terrible shape that for years she had to wear orthopedic shoes. I remember how delighted when she finally had her feet get to the point where she could buy a pair of "pretty lady's shoes" And she said to me, "Edna, it doesn't matter what you have on as long as your hair is combed and you are neat and clean if your feet are well dressed, you're well dressed." She really felt that way about it.

Mothers's priorities were in place, very, very firmly in place. She knew why she was here, where she wanted to go, and her choices took her in that direction. She had an unshakable testimony. She honored the priesthood, not only the general authorities but she taught us to honor papa because of his priesthood. I remember the challenge I had as a child because papa liked coffee, and I guess they didn't really place that much stress on it. His coffee was really flavored milk, but mostly it was sugar. It was loaded with sugar. He would take Amy on his lap and he would spoon a taste of this concoction to her, and then he would offer it to me and I just sanctimoniously wouldn't touch

it. Mother had taught us that we kept the Word of Wisdom and it was always a little puzzling to me the fact that she would fix that for papa and allow it in her home, because the Word of Wisdom was just something we didn't break. And then I decided, well, there had to be a special reason because mother had taught us that papa was perfect and if he did it, then there was a special reason and it was all right.

Elder Nelson in a recent book that he wrote, I think it was called "The Power Within Us" talked about sacrifice. He mentioned the fact that when you look in the dictionary, sacrifice means that you give up something. And I have heard often in the church, that if you give up something, that is true, to give it up for something better. But he said in there that the word sacrifice comes from two Latin words, I am not going to try to pronounce them, but the first word is "sacer" meaning sacred and the other is facere, means to do or to make. So the really, literally, the meaning of the word sacrifice, means to make sacred. And certainly in that sense as I think about my mother I think of her service to others, of her service to her family and, most importantly in her own thoughts and dreams in making her life sacred preparatory to returning to her Father in Heaven, I think I can say, my mother lived a life of sacrifice.

Now there is just one thing I want and that is, Stan should have written mother's life story. For years I have been after him to do it. Now he and Juliette are leaving on a mission next week, so that has to take president. But as I gathered this material and thoughts, there was just such a wealth of memories came back, that I have decided that I am going to make a stab at it. And I have promised Susette and Cathy, I don't know where she is, that I would write the sequel to my life's story. But that's all really down in my journal and in my letters to my family, so I'm going to postpone that a little bit and I'm going to write Mother's - everything I can remember about mother first. So if any of you have things to add to this before I do it, I would appreciate it. Then you can have a copy of this.

(Stanley requested Edna to read what Lowell Bennion said about mother)

I would like to quote from Lowell L. Bennion's book, "Husband and Wife" Elder Bennion really appreciated mother and had this to say about her in his latest book:

"I once knew a wonderful woman who was the mother of handsome, bright and wonderfully alive sons and daughters. She was left largely to her own resources in the rearing of her family. When the eldest son left their small farm to attend college in a distant city, she decided that her mission in life was to see that her family was educated. She followed her son to the university town, rented a large home, took in 4 - 6 boarders (only there were more than that - about twice that) and sent her children to school. They worked hard too. For years she won a cup each spring for having the most children in the university. (Now that was just one year she won that. That was one I contributed to. She won 5 cups and the one I contributed to. The others belonged to the others because they got it on scholarship) One year other parents tied her, but she usually controlled it because of the high scholastic achievements of her children had achieved. One year one of her son was cadet colonel (that was Bart) of the R.O.T.C. and he had the highest average of the largest college of the university, while working 40 hours a week at a service station. (And we can thank Pat for that service station. It put us all through school) Upon graduation he said of his mother, "There is nothing my mother doesn't know." (and that was about right) Another son received his masters in English that year. He said of her, "My mother knows more about English literature than I'll ever know." And so this large, sturdy and strong woman (and mother was a large woman. She wasn't fat, but she was a large woman) carried on in her boarding house a haven for good living and high thinking until her youngest child had graduated from college. Then she took the bus and

visited with her children's families now scattered from California to Michigan, came home (only she didn't quite get home. She got as far as Dora's and died there.) Her work was done. Her story, good humor, richly human, intellectual life was ended.