

MEMORIES OF MOTHER
by Chris Stevenson

On one occasion I remember mom telling me how important it was "to put first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and that all else would work out to my good". I can't remember when she told me that or under what circumstances. But, I was young and it left an indelible impression upon my mind. Mom was good at taking advantage of teaching moments.

There was the time when mom was angry with Thom and I and she had set out to physically catch the two of us. We did not want a spanking, so we began to run around and around the family table. She was fast, but, we were faster - probably due to her threats of corporeal punishment. Round and round we went. After several laps mom began to start laughing. Then we started to laugh. I don't think we ever received a spanking that day thanks to a mom who never quite got around to doing it!

I can remember seeing a photograph of mom at Whitmore Street in South San Gabriel. She was in a black or navy blue dress and standing by a rose bush. She looked absolutely beautiful. It is one of my favorite photographs of her.

One time, Thom and I were in the Volkswagen with mom driving. We were probably around fifteen years old. As she drove down Los Altos Drive, Thom and I were arguing with mom over something. I guess we were pretty brutal and were not sensitive to the tender heart of a loving mother. As she peered out through the steering wheel, because she was so short, she started to cry. I felt so horrible. I determined right then and there that I loved my mother too much to ever say anything mean again to make her feel the way she did that day. I think I was able to hold to that resolution.

One summer dad could not join us at Carpentaria State Beach. So, mom took Thom and I and two friends, Jim Bird and Bill Hoglund. That in and of itself was a very brave thing to do. However, the one thing that I remember from that trip was mom doing her monkey face in front of my friends. I was amazed she would be that loose. It made us all laugh and we had a great time.

There is a story floating around our family about mom laughing so hard one time she dropped her teeth right out and onto the floor. She was so embarrassed that she jumped on them, similar to a cat springing on a mouse. I guess a few of the children never knew till that moment she had false teeth.

Mom had nice handwriting. I can remember getting letters from her in the mission field and immediately recognizing the writing on the front of the envelope. She was also a very faithful writer and always included great bits of information.

How can one write about mom and not include in their comments

something about her cooking. I think I got spoiled. I begin to salivate when I think of her cheesecake, cornbread, tamale pie, city chicken legs, real macaroni and cheese, strawberry shortcake, fried chicken, banana oatmeal cookies and a myriad of other dishes. I use to dread the times when Nana would come to baby sit because she did not cook anything like mom. Even though her age might have had something to do with her bad cooking, it was not the most pleasant situation for kids so use to great cooking.

When Thom and I were freshmen at BYU, mom came to visit us while dad was floating down the Amazon River. On her way to Provo she stopped and to visit aunt Lucy in Las Vegas. The story goes that while in a casino, mom could not resist the temptation to play a slot machine. She put in one dime and won a thirty dollar jackpot. Aunt Lucy grabbed her by the arm and said, "that's enough, you're going to quit while your ahead". On the way out the casino door mom prevailed in convincing Lucy to let her try one more time. Low and behold, she hit another thirty dollar jackpot! When she got to Provo, she split her winnings with her two starving twins.

On several occasions Mavis has shared with me how much she loves and misses mom. Mom is one of her all time favorite people. She has told me that she always felt mom loved her and accepted her as if she was one of her own children. The times Mavis has mentioned this to me, there has usually been a tear or two in her eyes. Mom was such an accepting and loving person. I don't think there was anyone in the world that she disliked. She had a genuine love for everyone. Others, like Arnold Cortez, Ken Spackman and Jim Bird have said similar things about mom.

A lasting memory of mother for me comes when she was in the hospital for the last time. Mavis was pregnant with David and we went to visit her. She was obviously uncomfortable with tubes coming in and out of her body, lack of sleep, medications and what seemed to be an excessive amount of electronic monitoring equipment connected to her fragile frame. She could not even talk. Her only means of communication was a little chalk board, which was difficult for her to use. Because of her failing health and weak condition, we were not able to stay very long. However, I will never forget the three things she communicated. One was, patting my stomach, "Chris, lose some weight". The second, pointing to Mavis, was, "how's the baby?". The third was how much she loved us. I have thought many times since, what a great example mom was of unselfishness, even on her death bed. Under such miserable and discouraging circumstances, there were no complaints of discomfort or how bad her situation was. She was only interested in us, how were we doing? This is a wonderful lesson I will never forget.