

A JOURNEY

From

DUD to DUDE

GEORGE DURRANT

HIS--STORY

Childhood

Chapter ONE

I was exhausted! Wrestling with my eight-year-old son Dwight and his younger brother Warren was getting more difficult each year. Not wanting to acknowledge that they had defeated me in our front room arena I laid on my back as if I was asleep. When they discovered I wasn't giving them any more opposition they both stood and looked down at my motionless body. Dwight called out, "Wake up!"

When I did not stir the two boys became concerned and Warren asked, "Do you think he's dead?" Dwight then kneeled down and with his finger lifted my eye lid. Seeing my eyeball, he looked back up at Warren and announced, "He's still in there."

I hope as you read this book you will discover that I'm still in there.

When my youngest of eight children, Mark, was a toddler he knowing that I was about to enter the room where he was playfully hid. I had seen him scurry behind a chair so I knew exactly where he was, however I acted as if I didn't. I announced in a loud voice, "I can't find Markie. I went from one side of the room to another; first looking at a bookcase and announcing, "He's not in the bookcase. Repeating this act I went and looked behind the couch and announced again, "He is not behind the couch. I then looked behind the drapes and announced, "He's not behind the drapes." Finally I announced in my loudest voice, "I can't find him. I guess I'll have to go buy an ice cream cone all by myself."

Suddenly he jumped up, hurried came from behind the chair and proclaimed, "I found myself."

I can truly say that in writing this biography I think I have "found myself." So let's get reading and see if you can find the real George Durrant hiding between the covers of this book.

In the years that surrounded 1931, when I was born in American Fork, Utah (the ninth child of William Albert (Bert) Durrant and Marinda Mayne) folks in my hometown spoke a little different dialect than they speak today. They pronounced the name George as Garge and the name

Durrant as Dernt, and Fork as Fark. So back then, I was referred to as Garge Dernt from Merican Fark, Utah.

All that changed when a school teacher, who didn't know how to speak correctly, came to town to teach English. She taught us locals that the correct pronunciation of my first name was George not Garge, and my last name was Durrant not Dernt and that my hometown was American Fork not Merican Fark.

So from then on I knew I was George Durrant from American Fork. Or if you want to add my middle name you could say," George (the name that is fun to say because it fills your whole mouth and starts and ends the same way.) When saying my middle name, Donald raise your voice a little because all the Dons in my town were handsome, popular, and athletic. Then the last name Durrant. So let's all say my name aloud with some degree of affection, "George Donald Durrant." Well done!

Now putting all that aside you might as well know how I got my first name Garge or George (whichever you desire) and also how my middle name became Donald. My mother explains the circumstances this way :

"When George was just a few months away from being born, I received a telegram telling me that my brother, who was herding sheep in Colorado, had unexpectedly died. I was heartbroken over the death of this brother. I went to my bedroom and prayed and told the Lord that if this baby, still within my body, turned out to be a boy I would name him after my brother – my brother who had always been so good to me and had given me a five dollar gold piece so that I could make a dress for myself for my graduation from school. A brother who I considered to be the 'grandest man' who ever lived. Sure enough the baby was a boy and I named him after my brother, the grandest man who ever lived, I named him George,"

As for the name 'Donald' this is what brought that a bout according to my mother:

"My two daughters Afton and Marie, who were in their early teens, desperately wanted the baby to be a girl because the last five babies had been boys. They prayed for that to be so. When they received word that the new baby was a boy they proclaimed that their prayers had not been answered.

“One of them had a boyfriend named Donald. She made the case that the new baby should receive that name. In order to appease her, I agreed that Donald would be the new baby’s middle name. And so it was.”

Being the ninth child in a family of nine I was forever my mother’s baby. And because I was a remarkably cute baby my mother spoiled me. My older brothers and sisters would point out to her, “You are spoiling him.”

My mother ignored these criticisms and I remember thinking, “Mind your own business because I am enjoying it.”

She couldn’t spoil me with “things” because we didn’t really have much money. She just spoiled me with love, and that love did more to shape my life than any other factor.

While I was a youngster my two older brothers, Kent and Duane, who were much like Laman and Lemuel of the Book of Mormon infamy (that tells who I was like) were jealous of me and persecuted me. I learned to protect myself by being an expert ‘crier.’ I used to cry a lot. That was one thing I could do well. And I employed that tactic for several years. That was my protection against the persecutions that were heaped upon me. I’d come in the house crying and my mother would call in the other kids and tell them, “You’re the baby, not George. You’re the ones who always tease him and make him cry.” I’d stick my head out from behind her and say, “That’s correct.”

I remember many times those older brothers and sisters would look at me. I would shout out, “Mother, they’re looking at me.” She would protect me from their gazes. I was her baby and she loved me.

One day I was outside with my brothers and their friends. They were all playing baseball. I asked if I could play. They told me I was too little and go back into the house.

I turned away and began to cry. I made my way toward the house and when I saw my mother I increased the volume of my cries and shouted, “Duane and Kent and their friends said I was too little and to go in the house.” My mother was making bread. She had a big pan full of snow white dough. She smiled and told me, “We’ll see about that.” She then, with a wooden rolling pin, rolled it out into a big flat piece. She cut it into pieces

about the size of the palm of my hand, and she started frying it in the boiling hot grease on the stove.

We called what she was making, "scones." Note: Bachelors, you should never marry a girl who can't make scones.

When she had enough scones to stop my tears she kept making even more until she had a great big tin pan full of the golden brown treats. I wondered why she was making so many. Then she handed me the pan of scones and said, "George, take these and go back outside and see if they will play with you now."

I went outside with my pan of scones and suddenly I was the most popular kid on the whole block. I was hearing statements like, "Would you like to be captain?" "What position would you like to play now? Could I have another scone?"

Note: That experience made an indelible impression upon me. Ever very since then I've known that the secret to popularity is to carry with you pan of hot scones. But scones only stay hot for a few minutes and then become cold, greasy and undesirable. So the only scones you can really carry everywhere you go are the scones you carry in your heart: complements, words of encouragement and acts of kindness.

As the years passed, whenever I had a bad time at school or somewhere else I would come home, mother would cut two slices of homemade bread and make me a peanut butter sandwich. I'd sit in her lap and eat the sandwich and feel her love

My brothers would say, "Why don't you let him make his own sandwich? What's the matter with him, has he got a broken arm?"

I wouldn't say anything. Sometimes it's best not to talk back. When they were all gone and I was alone with my mother, I'd say to her, "Mom, the reason I like you to make them for me is because when you make them for me they taste better." She'd say, "Oh George, I'll make them for you as long as I live."

Note: Now I say to my wife, "Susan, would you make me a peanut butter sandwich?" She answers, "What's the matter with you? You got a broken arm?"

Because of my mother's constant attention being focused on me I could not adjust to attending kindergarten. When my mother and I walked together to the Harrington school I had no idea what I was in for. After a short conversation with the teacher—Miss Dunion my mother told me goodbye and started to leave the room. I ran toward her and began to cry. Miss Dunion tried to pull me away from my mother. But I would not budge.

Instead I used my old and valuable tactic of crying. There seemed to be no way to stop me from crying. After a brief conference it was decided between my mother and the teacher that I could not stay with the other children. My mother took me by the hand and we silently walked back home.

So I never had the joy or terror of attending kindergarten.

I spent the year with my mother and that added to my idea of what love was.

During that year I was the only child around. Because I was lonely and had no one to play with, I had to use my imagination to entertain myself. So in my mind I created a young friend who was just my age. He told me his name was 'Purnham Purnham.' It seemed that whenever I was alone he would come to be with me. When we would play games such as basketball on our little hoop I would shoot for me and then for Purnham Purnham. If he was, as he was some days, better at shooting than me I would be a bad sport and dissolve him.

I don't know what I would've done if I had not had Purnham Purnham for a friend. I never asked him why he didn't go to kindergarten. A year later he disappeared and I have never seen him since.

Note: I think he was at the roots of my imagination that has always been an integral part of my nature.

A year later I girded up my loins and attended the first grade. My imagination was much more active than my ability to read, or to spell, or to add numbers together or to be able to learn the alphabet. I guess that's why I was good at drawing and coloring pictures that were better than any of those done by my classmates.

Because of the religious nature of the environment in which I lived I tell the following stories about how I lived my religion and developed my character in those early days.

I've titled the first story, "Don't Tell Lies." Wow! That is a negative idea and I'm a positive person. Let's change the name to:

Tell the Truth

When I Was Seven years old I was in the second grade. Some days second graders only went to school until noon, and then they came home. Third graders and all those older had to go to school all day.

On one of the days when I only had to go to school half of the day, I walked to school with my brother Kent. He and his two friends talked about doing something called "sluffing." Sluffing is when you leave home like you are going to school. Instead of going to school you go somewhere and play all day and then you go home and your mother thinks you have been at school.

Kent asked me if I wanted to sluff. It sounded fun and so I told him that I did.

It was a warm spring day and we headed up to the creek to play. We had a good time, but I felt like I should be in school.

We caught about seven lizards under an old car door. We threw rocks in the creek. It was fun, but I still felt like I should be in school.

Finally my brother said, "I need to make a sundial so we can see what time it is. If it is 12 o'clock noon then George needs to go home or mother will wonder where he is."

He stuck a stick in the ground and looked at its shadow. After much study he and his friends agreed that it was noon. The time that I should go home. When I got to the front porch of our house my mother came out the door and asked, "Why are you home an hour early?"

I did not know what to say. I looked down and then I looked up at the sky. I saw one little white cloud in the sky. I told my mother, "See that cloud? My teacher saw it too and she said that it might rain and so we should all go home."

My mother came close to me and said, "George, look at me. Your teacher did not say that. You are not telling the truth. Where have you

been?" At the risk of being in trouble with my brother, I told her that we had all sluffed. I could tell that she was real sad. She told me, "George, don't you ever lie to me again."

I decided then and there that I would never sluff again. And then I would never have to lie to my mother again. I decided to always tell the truth.

Note: Since then I've never sluffed again. Even though that was a very happy and fun morning and there was many a day that I was tempted to go up the creek instead of school I never succumbed to such folly. I wish I could say that same about always telling the truth .Most of the time I do pretty good at that but it's like spelling words sometimes you just get the letters mixed up.

Well if you think that was an exciting story listen to this one.

Use Good Words

I had a brother named Stewart who was much older than me. He was married and he was my bishop.

One day he and all of our family went to an amusement park called Lagoon. My brother Kent was twelve and I was ten. Kent told me, "George, I just went on the roller coaster. It was the scariest thing I have ever done. You are too little so don't go on it. It would scare you to death."

I felt that if he could do it, I could do it too. I asked my older brother, the bishop, to take me on the roller coaster.

I got on the big car and held on tight. It slowly went up the hill making a click, click sound. I thought, "This is not scary." Then we suddenly went over the top. It took my breath away as it fell at a speed of ten thousand miles an hour. I was so afraid that I did not know what to do.

I started to say over and over again a bad word that I had heard Nerk Conder say when I beat him at marbles. I could not stop saying that word.

Finally the roller coaster car slowed down and was not dropping any more. Then, as suddenly as it had done before, it went down again and up came the bad words.

I have never been as happy as I was when that thing finally stopped and I got out. Hope My older brother took me by the hand and we went over and sat under a tree.

He looked at me and said, "How did you like that ride?"

"I liked it a lot," I replied.

"Do you want to ride it again?" he asked.

"No, I think I want to go on the Merry-Go-Round next," I answered.

He then asked, "What bad word did you say over and over again on the roller coaster?"

I said, "I don't know. I've never said that word before and I'll never say it again."

He smiled and told me that it would be a good idea for me to never use that word again.

I had been scared on that roller coaster. I felt bad that I had said that word. I decided that from then on I'd only use good words. I knew it would help me to only say good words if I stayed a mile away from the roller coaster.

Note: I've done pretty good on not using bad words. I still get scared on the roller coaster, but don't talk because I'm too scared to say any kind of words there. So my advice to you is if you're trying to stop using bad words stay away from the roller coaster I hope that story of the roller coaster didn't frighten you too much. But I'll tell you I'm a lot more comfortable on the merry-go-round or at the Disneyland ride called, "it's a small small world."

Next I'll tell you what made me famous in American Fork and also in some parts of Pleasant Grove and the south end of Lehi. Some said it was the biggest fire American Fork had ever known up until that time. Maybe this story will help you to remember stay away from the matches on the top shelf of your mother's cupboard. Here is the story about gaining infamy:

Become Responsible

When I was seven years old I got into the biggest trouble I have ever been in. My older brother Kent, our friend Allan, and I liked to make a bonfire out under the trees near my house. Then we would throw a potato in the fire. In a few minutes we would get a long stick and push the potato out of the fire. It would be burned black.

We would let it cool for a few minutes and then we would peel the black skin off the potato. Potatoes cooked that way are really good to eat.

One day we looked out of the window and it was raining and we knew we could not make the bonfire so that we could cook the potatoes.

We walked to the grove of trees and the wood was all wet and we could not build the fire. That made us sad because we wanted to have cooked potatoes.

Allen said, "We can go over to my grandfather's barn and build a fire in there. It will be nice and dry inside the barn.

Kent agreed, "That is a good idea." We all picked up our potatoes and ran over to the barn.'

We got some wood from the wood shed and took it into the barn. Pretty soon we had a blazing fire inside the barn. Soon our potatoes were cooked. We peeled them and ate them. They seemed more delicious than any potatoes we had ever cooked before.

We put out the fire and Kent and I went home.

An hour later the fire engine went by our house. I have never heard the fire siren sound so loud. My fifteen year old brother John came running into the house and shouted, "Allen's barn is on fire!"

My father asked Kent, "Have you kids been up there playing with matches?"

I crawled behind our big stove where I always went to hide. My mother looked out the window and said, "Oh no. The whole barn is on fire." I tried to disappear into the stove.

Pretty soon Allen's barn and all their other sheds were all burned down.

I was sure that the firemen and the police would find out that I had done it. I would be sent to jail. I was the most frightened and sad that I had ever been. I kept wishing that we had not gone up to the barn and made that fire.

My father said that it was all Kent's fault. He said, "Kent is ten years old. He is old enough to be responsible." He added, "George is only seven. He is not old enough to know what he is doing."

That made me feel a little better, but it sure did make Kent feel bad. The next few days I kept thinking about how we had burned down the barn, wishing that we had never done it. I knew that what my father said was not quite right. My father said that I was seven and did not know that we should not build a fire in a barn. The truth was that I did know we should not do that. I should have said, "Let's not build a fire in a barn. Building a fire in a barn could send a spark that could catch the barn on fire." I did not say that. I knew I should have said that, but I wanted a cooked potato, so I did not say anything.

Kent probably knew that we should not build a fire in the barn. So did our friend Allen. All I could think about was that I was responsible. I might not have been responsible at age five or age six, but I was seven and I knew it was not right to build a fire in a barn. I was old enough to be responsible.

"A month later there was a grass fire over by the creek. I went over there to watch the firemen put out the fire. One of the firemen said to another, "It looks like those darn Durrant kids have been over here playing with matches again."

When he said that and I heard what he said. I felt really bad. I never wanted to be called a "darned Durrant kid" again--I wanted to be called a "good Durrant kid." I wanted to be a Durrant kid who did good things. I did not want to be a kid who did things that were dumb... things like building a fire inside a barn.

I know we should not have done such a bad thing. Doing that bad thing taught me a lesson. I knew more than I had ever known before that I was old enough to know what was right and what was wrong.

Note: Well those are some stories that tell about how I learned certain qualities of character. Most of the way I act today are a result of the seeds were planted in me by my boyhood experiences.

My mother was a very religious woman. My father was not. My mother wanted us children to be religious like she was. My father wanted us children to be religious like their mother was. He did come to church once for my missionary farewell. But his big hunting dog Jake followed him into the chapel. The bishop told the deacons to get the dog out of the chapel. My dad shouted so that all could hear said, I told that darn dog to stay home. All who were there had a hearty laugh about these things.. The bishop who loved my father was greatly amused.

I could tell story after story about my religious experiences and some of them will be included in the next chapters. But here are a few examples of how my childhood life was shaped a bit by religion.

Pray

I was home alone with my mother. I could tell that something was wrong. I could see tears in my mother's eyes.

She told me that she had to go lie down on her bed. I could hear her crying.

After what was a long time my older brother Stewart and his wife, Leola, came to visit.

I told them mother was in bed and that she was crying. My brother went in to see what was wrong. Pretty soon he came out and said, "Mother is in great pain. I must go get a neighbor man. Then we will give mother a priesthood blessing."

Pretty soon he came back with the other man.

I stood in the doorway and they laid their hands on mother's head. They asked Heavenly Father to bless her.

I could only hear part of the prayer. I felt something that I had never felt before.

The next morning at breakfast my mother told me, "I was in such pain. I did not know what I would do. But when Stewart laid his hands on my head and gave me a blessing the pain left. And all night long I was able to sleep. This morning I feel all better." She then told me, "Your older brother has the power of the priesthood. The power of the Priesthood is the power of God. I hope you will grow up and have the power of the Priesthood. You are such a good boy that you will be able to help others the way that Stewart helped me."

Note: My older brother Stewart could play sports and he was handsome and big. He was good to me and I loved him. I wanted to be able to be good at sports like he was. I wanted to look like him. Most of all I wanted to be like him. I wanted to have the power of the Priesthood so that if my mother ever got sick I would be able to give her a blessing like my brother Stewart did and make her all better. I was so glad to know that Heavenly Father made it so we can pray and he will listen and help us.

I'd say more about prayer and spiritual things like that, but such things are sacred and so I will leave them deep in my heart.

This next story will make you a little bit upset at what I did to my friend Herbie, but then you will be happy at what else I did to Herbie.

Loyalty

When I was seven years old, the first day of my summer vacation I made myself a new stick horse. The one I had ridden the last summer was named Trigger. Trigger was getting old. He was not as fast as he had been last summer.

Early in the morning I went to the little stream where the willows grew along the bank. I cut off a long green willow with my pocket knife. I knew that this was going to be the best horse that ever had been in our town. Then I went home and carved him a wooden head out of a thin piece of cardboard. I nailed the head onto the willow. I called my new horse Silver.

Then I went up to my best friend Herbie's house. I helped him make his horse. He named his horse Scout.

That first week of summer, we rode those horses on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. We pretended there were a whole bunch of Indians up past our chicken coop. We pretended there were some bank robbers up by Allen's ponds. We were real good at pretending. During those first five days of summer, we had had ten battles with those Indians. They finally gave up and ran off in a cloud of dust headed for Idaho.

Then we took on the robbers. They were no match for Herbie and me and our stick horses which were the fastest two horses in the town.

Then one day a boy named Alan came to live with his grandfather and grandmother. Alan lived in Salt Lake City. He would come down and stay with his grandparents in the summer.

Alan did not like stick horses or other fun stuff. He just liked to sit in the log shed and read comic books. He brought more than a hundred of them with him so he would have stuff to do all summer. He invited me up to read some of them. They did not make sense to me. I just felt that stories of going to other planets and men flying around like birds were not true, and I

did not want to read no false stuff. I wanted to stick to things like the Lone Ranger and other true stories.

I got to be a friend to Alan. He knew a lot about big cities and street cars and other things that I did not know much about.

When Herbie would come to see me, I'd tell him that I was going up to see Alan. I could tell that Herbie wanted to go with me, but I didn't know if Alan would like that. I told Herbie I'd see him later. I took off and just left him standing there. Since I turned seven I did not like doing stuff like making others sad. As I walked away, I almost came back to get Herbie, but I did not.

I read comic books with Alan for two hours. Then something inside of me made me start thinking about how much fun I always had when I played with Herbie.

I told Alan I had to go home. He just kept reading his comic book like he didn't care if I left.

I went home. But I just went there long enough to get on my stick horse to ride up to see Herbie. Herbie was sitting on his porch all alone. When he saw me riding up on Silver, he got a big smile on his face. I told him to get his horse because the Indians had come back. And we needed to save the pioneers from an attack.

We were off in a cloud of dust. Our horses Silver and Scout ran faster that day than they had ever run before. It was so good to be back with my friend Herbie.

That day when I was seven I was so happy to know that I was a good friend to Herbie. I liked to be a good friend who wanted my friends to be as happy as I was.

Note: Since that time I've tried to be loyal to my family my friends, my religion, my country, my employer's and to myself

Most of you know, but if you don't know, I'll tell you now that one of the commandments in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is called the Word of Wisdom. Keeping this commandment makes us healthy spiritually, physically and emotionally. My father didn't always live by the Word of Wisdom but my mother did and she wanted all of us children to do if I broke a pretty dish that would make her wish I had not done so. But if I broke the Word of Wisdom by doing something I wasn't supposed to do it

would break her heart. This next story tells about an experience I had that I tried to never have again.

Don't Break the Word Of Wisdom

"When I was 11 my father took me with him up American Fork Canyon to hunt deer. I was excited to be included with my father and his brothers at the deer hunt campgrounds.

We all slept in tents. In the morning we got up before daybreak. It was very cold. We made a big bonfire my dad made a big pot of coffee. Everybody got a tin cup and filled it with coffee. I thought the coffee sure did smell good. My dad looked at me and told me to get a cup. I got it and he poured my cup half full He told me to put a lot of cream and sugar in it.

I wasn't sure I should be drinking coffee. But my mother wasn't there so it didn't seem to be all that wrong. It sure did taste good and made me feel warm all over."

When I got home I told my mother that I like coffee she asked me how I knew about coffee I told her the story of how my father gave me some when we were hunting deer. I could see my mother talking to my father later that day and she was pointing her finger at him and he was nodding his head up and down in agreement. He never offered me coffee again but other people did. And they offered me cigarettes and alcohol. But from then on I didn't like any of those kind of things.

This next story tells how I learned a profound lesson about how to be happy, and what causes so much unhappiness in the world. I don't like to tell you sad stories, but I assure you this one has happy ending.

Not Happy When Being Bad

We lived on a farm so we had a barn. We rigged up a makeshift basketball hoop and nailed it on the inside wall of the barn. I practice there for hours. The only way I could make a long shot was to shoot up over the rafters have the ball come down in the basket. I could do that a lot of times when nobody was watching. But if others were there I just couldn't do it.

I was playing out in the barn one day and my brother Duane came and challenged me to a game. My brother Kent was better at basketball than me. But I was better than my brother Duane.. So we started playing and I was making a lot more baskets and he was making but after a while I guess he got tired and so he got the ball under the basket when I wasn't even guarding him and shouted, "Whoever makes the next basket is the winner of the game."

I shouted, "That's not fair. I've made a lot more baskets than you. I longed to try to keep him from making the basket what was late. As the ball came through the hoop he shouted, "Ha, ha! I beat you again."

It was more than I could bear. I shouted back, "No, I beat you." But he merely laughed and replied, "No, you didn't."

As the game ended. I felt I had won. But because he was the older brother and he had more authority than I did, as he left to go to the house he called back. "I beat you again." I was upset beyond description. I looked at the cow who stood nearby. But she looked back at me as if to say. "Don't ask me who won. I can't even count!"

By now my brother had left the barn and was walking back toward the house. He turned back and shouted, "I'm better than you George I beat you every time."

It was then that I saw that my brother had left his newly purchased baseball glove in the barn. I reached down, picked it up, and threw it over my shoulder, out the barn window and into the pigpen. Then I went to the house.

When I entered he departed saying, "" I forgot to bring my mitt in the house."

After a few minutes he came back to the house and said, "I just went back to the barn and can't find my ball glove. Where is it?"

I replied, "I threw it out the barn window into the pigpen."

With a look of desperation in his face, he ran from the house. Soon he returned carrying his glove delicately between his finger and his thumb. The pig had not eaten this fine leather morsel, but had made it so that no one else over would want to.

The ball glove was ruined, torn inside out, and covered with mud and other stuff. My brother held it up so I could see it perfectly, and then he asked this question. "Okay, there it is. It's ruined. Now are you happy?"

After a slight pause, I replied, "Yes, I am. But there was only one problem with my answer. It was a lie. It was a lie told to my brother. I don't know if it fooled him or not.

Note: I knew then that it is impossible to do something which you know is wrong and to be happy inside after you do. I learned that "wickedness never was happiness."

Well, we are about through telling childhood stories. Just one more. I think I saved the best one until last.

Joseph Smith Story.

One day when I was eleven years old and in my last year of primary the teacher said something that I didn't recall having ever heard before. She said:

There was a fifteen year old boy in the state of New York named Joseph Smith. He wondered which church was the true church. So he went into a grove of trees and knelt down and prayed. He asked God which church was true. While he was praying he looked up and there standing just above the ground was Heavenly Father and Jesus. They told him that the true church would be revealed to him.

Three years later while this young man, Joseph Smith, was in his bedroom an angel appeared. This angel told him there were some golden plates hidden in a nearby hill. He told Joseph Smith exactly which hill. Later Joseph went to the hill. And under a rock he found a hole. In the hole were the golden plates. Joseph later took the plates home. He saw some ancient writing on these thin, metal plates.

He was able to translate this writing into English. It was a history of some people on this continent. It told of visit Jesus had made to these people. What Joseph translated from these plates became the Book of Mormon.

I was amazed at what I was hearing. I listened intently. I never moved a muscle as my teacher told this story – a story that seems so strange to me.

I hurried home. Soon I just forgot about it, and was more interested in playing basketball with my friends in the barn. But the seed was planted when I was a young boy and matured into a glorious truth when I was a young man.

Through the years I have heard that story many times but it never made its way from my head into my heart until I was a missionary. Later in this book I'll tell you that story.

There are more stories I could tell, however that's enough of the stories of my childhood. There is just one story that I haven't said much about because it's too big a story to tell. It is the greatest story ever told. It is the story of Jesus. I have heard this story in bits and pieces ever since I was a small boy. Ultimately it has become the story that has shaped everything I believe and know and live by. That story will be the centerpiece of all the stories that follow in the life's story of Garge Donald Dernt from Merican Fark, or George Donald Durrant from American Fork.

Chapter Two

Adolescents the Early Years

I'm not trying to extol the virtues of religion or to try to persuade you to be part of any particular faith. But my adolescent years were highly influenced by my involvement in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Therefore to understand me during those years it will be necessary to discuss my involvement in the activities of my church.

This story will enlighten you on the involvement of my mother and my church in shaping my activities and feelings as an early teen:

"It was a cold October day as I walked home from school. I was quite excited when I was just two blocks away from home because I liked home a lot better than I liked school.

Mom greeted me, "I have a birthday present for you George"

I smiled broadly with excitement as I saw a box wrapped in brown paper. I wondered what it was.

She handed me a pair of scissors, and I cut the strings that bound the paper together. I quickly unwrapped the package and saw a cardboard box. I threw the top of the box over my shoulder, I was greatly disappointed when I saw that she had bought me a navy blue suit. I wasn't too interested in getting new clothes.

Sensing my disappointment my mother took the coat out of the package and held it up for me to see as she said, "I've

bought you a new suit because this Sunday morning you will become a Deacon in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and will get to pass the sacrament. When you do that you'll be able to wear this new suit. Won't that be exciting?"

She then told me to go to my bedroom and put on the trousers, and the white shirt, and said, "I'll keep the coat here. I'll help you tie your tie when you get back."

Everything seemed to fit me pretty good.

My mother stood back a few feet and looked at me with tears of joy in her eyes. I could tell by her expression that I looked really good in my new navy blue.

The next night, Saturday, at his mother's insistence, I took my weekly bath. As I stepped into the warm water, my mother shouted, "Scrub yourself good George, deacons need to be real clean."

The next morning I put on his new clothes. Combed my hair, which I seldom did. I made a nice "part" in it, and combed it two directions. I looked in the mirror and kinda liked the way I looked.

A few minutes later I left the house holding my mother's hand to walk the ½ mile to the Old Fourth Ward Church.

Herbie was waiting at the church door to greet me. He was my Sunday friend.

After church started the bishop said, "Stand up Herbie and George. These two fine young men are old enough to be deacons. I know they're both good fellows who don't swear or

smoke tobacco, drink alcohol or swear. So I propose that they be ordained deacons. All those who can sustain George and Herbie to become deacons please raise your right hand.”

After that meeting everyone went to their Sunday school class. However the bishop invited Herbie and mand our parents to come to his office so we could be ordained deacons. The bishop spoke to the little group about how important it was a boy to become a deacon. When he was finished with that he said, “George take this seat here, and I will lay my hands upon your head and by the authority of the priesthood and in the name of Jesus Christ I will ordain you a deacon.”

I walked to the chair and sat down. I felt hi. hands on his head. As the bishop ordained me to be a deacon I felt good inside.

After the bishop said “amen,” he then shook my hand and said, “Go give your mother a big hug. She’s proud of you. A few minutes later Herbie had also received the great honor of becoming a deacon.

After Sunday school was over, every one began coming back into the chapel for the sacrament meeting. The Bishop approached me and Herbie and said, “The deacons who were supposed to pass the sacrament snuck out of church early. I would like you two take their places.”

Herbie smiled broadly in agreement because he didn’t mind making mistakes in front of other people. But I couldn’t bear to have people see him looking dumb.

When the bishop told us what he wanted us to do I was scared. I didn't know how to pass the sacrament. I told my bishop, "I can't do that."

He replied, "George you are a deacon now. When Heavenly Father wants you to do something, you can do it. Don't worry the Lord will tell you how?"

In a frenzy, I wondered, "When do we stand up, where do we go when we get the trays?"

Finally it was time. We stood. One of the priest handed Herbie his bread tray. And the other priest handed his to me.

With the tray in hand, for some reason, I suddenly felt calm inside and said to myself, "I can do this." My hand gripped the sacrament tray more firmly than I had when I first held it. I straightened my shoulders and lifted my chin and stood up a bit straighter. I knew everybody in the chapel was looking at me, but for some reason that didn't scare me like it usually did.

I turned and looked at the first row and decided I'd start there. I gripped the tray tighter and walked across to the end of the front row.

From there, I could see out of the corner of my eye that Herbie was now headed over to the side row of seats. He was smiling. Seeing him doing that made me smile. I didn't know if deacons were supposed to smile when they were passing the sacrament. But I was feeling good and couldn't help it.

Somehow I just knew where to go next. I could see that Herbie was doing an equally magnificent job. I found myself wishing Louise was there to see what I was doing.

After the sacrament meeting was over I met my mother at the door. I Held her hand as he walked down the stairs to the sidewalk. As we begin the journey home, she held my hand tight and exclaimed, “George I was so proud of you. I was fearful you might not know where to go. Did the bishop explain to you where should go what you should do?”

I replied, “The bishop didn’t tell us nothing. I just had these feelings what I was supposed to do and where I was supposed to go and I did it.”

Now time for a brief commercial. That was the first time I passed the sacrament. I did it many more times as a deacon. I think it might well be said: “Of all the deacons who served in the church, it is likely that if a vote were to be taken, George Durrant would be the finest Deacon the church has ever had.”

But! There always has to be a ‘but.’ Over at school things were not quite going as well for me as they were at church. Let’s now have a look at that.

Chapter Three

My Self-Image in Adolescence

Something happen the summer before seventh grade that had a bearing on my juvenile adventures. This story happened during the summer before I turned twelve years old:

One day I was helping Kent and some of his friends paint our family's house. These older guys often made fun of me. I guess I had big ears and so they, not Kent but the others, called me, "Ears." This taunting would hurt me deep inside, but I never said anything back to them.

When we were painting the house a girl rode her bike up the Alpine Road. She turned at seventh north and passed the mailboxes and came to our front gate. I recognize who it was and wondered why she had stopped at our house.

Kent and his friends watched her approach and wondered what was going on. I recognized that the girl was Eva June who had been in one of my classes at elementary school. After I knew who she was I didn't look at her anymore. I hoped she would get on her bike and ride away. I nearly died of a heart attack when she called out, "I came to talk to you George."

Kent's friends started shouting things such as, "Hey ears, go talk to her. She's your girlfriend. Having them call me "ears" and having that girl out there waiting for me to come out to her

was two hard blows all at the same time. I just wished the earth would open up and swallow me in.

The guys started shouting, “Get out there ears. Your girlfriends waiting for you.” They were all laughing and stuff like that.

I could not bear it, and abruptly went in the house. I left Eva June leaning against her bicycle at the front gate. After a few minutes she climbed on her bike and went on her way.

Inside the house I felt real bad and laid on my bed looking up at the ceiling trying not to cry. Because twelve year old’s don’t cry.

I felt worse than I had ever felt before. I felt sorry for Eva June because I know how bad she felt. But I just didn’t have the courage to do anything about it.

The story gives you an insight into my basic nature at that stage in my life. Somehow I had become quite a timid young fellow/had very little self-confidence. I was not sensitive to the needs of others because I was so caught up in my own perceived needs.

A month after the above event I would be entering the seventh grade at American Fork high school. (I say ‘high school’ because in those days seventh graders on up were part of high school – same building and same facilities.

I’ll always remember walking in the school the first day. I entered the door and was greeted by the words, “Hey ears welcome to high school.” These dreaded words, ‘Hey ears’ had

come from the mouth of my brother Kent's best friend who was standing with Kent and others near the front door of the school. Kent was always pretty good to me, but his friend was determined to perpetuate the name 'ears' as he had dubbed me the following summer. Other students standing nearby heard his words and they all looked around to see who fit the picture that this nemesis had painted. They soon recognized that it was me. As you might imagine being called 'ears' was not a boost to already damaged self-image.

This was my welcome to high school on the hill that was the landmark in the northern part of all of American Fork. But the story gets worse or better, depending upon the day, during the next six years.

To enable you to get an added picture of my social environment, I will tell you about my brother Kent. Kent had a more noble nickname than 'ears.' He was called 'Big Du.' Though only in the ninth grade, he was a budding giant standing 6'4". He wa

s projected by the avid sports fans as the one who would lead American Fork high school to its first state basketball championship – thus he was already a hero.

I was a fairly good sized se

venth grader, but was dwarfed by Kent. Somehow that was the recurring negative factor that marked my high school career. I took pride in being Kent Durrant's little brother. But at the same time I was humbled by the fact that I showed none of

the promise that he showed. I suffered greatly by being compared to him.

Note: Someone once told me, “George you wouldn’t worry what people thought of you if you knew how seldom they did.” That was probably true, but my mind I thought everyone was constantly wondering why I wasn’t like my brother and why he was a big wheel while I was a dud.

So that gives you a bit of an idea about the social environment that engulfed me while I crossed through the rough waters of adolescence. But lest you shed any tears for me, remember I had a mother, a religion, a pal named Herbie, and a special bonus girlfriend name Louise.

Chapter Four

Junior High School

I struggled over at school during the first couple of years. I was not the smartest boy in the seventh and eighth grade. I was

smart enough, however my mind often wandered, and sometimes I talked to others when I should've been listening to the teacher.

My favorite class was physical education. We called that class, "Gym."

I liked that class because playing sports was my favorite thing. I wanted to be like Kent, who was now on the varsity basketball team even though he was only in the 10th grade.

I had hoped that I would be the best athlete in seventh grade, but I learned in the gym class there were other boys who were now bigger than me, stronger than me, faster than me, more skilled than me. And more importantly they were much more mature physically than me.

Note:(I was what was called in late bloomer.) I was a fairly good sized seventh grader. As an eighth grader I was the same size as I had been in the seventh. As a ninths grader I was still that same size.

This is all too serious kind of stuff. Wipe your eyes and prepare for a joke. Here it is:

One boy could not grow. He said to his friend, "I can't grow and I want to."

The other boy said, "Put grease all over your body. That will cut down on the friction and you'll be able to grow."

A year later the two boys met again. The youngster who longed to grow said, "I put grease all over my body each day and I still didn't grow."

His friend asked, "What kind of grease did you use?"

The troubled boy replied, "I used Crisco."

His friend replied, "Oh no. You should not have used Crisco. it is shortening."

I was so desperate to grow I would've gladly greased my body each day if I had thought that would help.

Even the most average classmates were as good at me at sports.

Because of this realization began to feel inferior to the other boys. After all, I was Kent Durrant's brother and I was supposed to be a good athlete. And I wasn't. These realizations cause me to feel of little worth. I lost my confidence and became timid. No other successes could compensate for the fact that I was not the star of his gym class.

Besides that, in my mind I didn't have any other successes except in his mother's eyes. And maybe over at church passing the sacrament and doing stuff like that. But that was as important to me as things over at school.

However during those years I sometimes felt, when I was passing the sacrament; that that the most important thing in the world.

My social life centered pretty well on my friendship with other boys who wanted to be and were good athletes. Some of these boys swore and used other bad words to appear to be tough. I had also heard Kent use some of those words.

I thought that if I used those words, I might be a better athlete. But I knew it was wrong to talk that way when my brother was the bishop and my mother would be disappointed and sad if she knew he said those things. So I didn't do it. But I often wondered if I should.

At school I seldom saw Herbie. Part of this was because even though Herbie and I were the same age, Herbie was in a grade behind me in school.

Besides Herbie did not want to be an athlete and didn't even like to talk about sports. He was not popular. He often sat alone in the lunch room eating sandwiches that he brought from home. Besides me and a couple of other guys who like sports always bought the school lunch and sat together and talked and laughed.

Sometimes I would say hello to Herbie as he passed by. Other times I would just look the other way like I didn't even see him. I hoped that Herbie didn't feel bad being ignored, I wanted to be friendly to Herbie, but even more, I wanted to be with the athletic and popular kids. So I guess I concluded that there was no social gain to be had by being friendly with Herbie over at school so I didn't.

I was sort of in between what I wanted to be and who I really was.

I guess you could call me kind of a 'two-faced guy.' I didn't want to be that, but it seemed like I was

However each Sunday at church Herbie would once again be my very best friend. He was very respectful of all the

teachers. I sometimes liked to goof off during Sunday School classes, but Herbie was not good at goofing off. I tried to be as respectful as Herbie.

Meanwhile at school some of my friends tried to be funny by talking about girls and talking to girls. During these times I always remained silent. I wanted to say something, but I was too shy.

However there was Louise. I had liked her all through elementary school. She was always kind and said hello to me. It was hard for me to say hello back. I'd just duck my head and almost whisper "Hello." I felt he was not important enough to say anymore to such an important girl. But I sure did like it when she said, "Hi George."

I thought she was the prettiest girl in the world and I thought about her more than I thought about anything else. But I never talked to anyone, except myself about her. I never mention her to a friend or to my mom. My feeling about her was my big secret. It made him happy to think about her and to remember that she said hello to me every day.

Well that's about enough of these 'love-dovey' thoughts.

Before you give up on me I did have victory when I was in the ninth grade. This story will make your real proud of me. It had to do with Louise so you know it has to be a good story.

I walked down the old Mill Lane, climbed up the hill and entered the school for the first day of my ninth grade year. As I went from class to class I was saddened to see

that Louise was not among the students there. But upon entering his third hour there she was and she looked even more beautiful than ever.

I immediately knew that third hour would be his favorite class.

“I couldn’t believe my good fortune when I learned that I was assigned seated right behind Louise.”

“I never told anyone how I felt about Louise. I was afraid they would say, ‘You can like Louise all you want, but she could never like a dud like you.’”

“Friday was the only day Mrs. Isom called the role. She did so on that day so that each student could respond when their name was called. If they were prepared to report on a current event during the class period they would say, “Prepared,” If they didn’t want to give a report they would say, “unprepared.”

I quickly learned that Mrs. Isom was the kind of teacher that didn’t make you do anything. She said wanted to do the work we could. But if we didn’t want to do the work we didn’t have to.

She added the terrifying message, “However if you don’t do the work you will get a grade that would show your parents that you had not done the work.”

So each Friday when the teacher would call the role I was smart enough to know that if I said, “unprepared” I wouldn’t have to give a talk. I didn’t want to give a talk because I knew that some of the guys in the class would laugh at the speakers. I

knew of this because I was one of those who would laugh at those were giving talks. So each Friday when she called my name, "George" I would answer, "unprepared."

I got so I could say that word with quite a bit of dignity "unprepared."

This went on for a couple of months so I had said "unprepared" at least eight times.

Then one day Mrs. Isom called me to the front and showed me what was in her roll book. There I saw my name, "George Durrant," and following my name was eight negative signs-- minus signs. She explained to me that those minus signs will transform themselves into an F and I would have to take that home to my mom and dad.

As I pondered my predicament I considered the humiliation I would feel when I showed my parents my bad grade. But that embarrassment was far less than the humiliation I would feel from the ridicule I would feel from the laughter of my peers if I gave a talk.

So the next Friday I once again said the predictable word, "Unprepared."

The next week, as usual, I was sitting behind Louise. I never talked to her. I just didn't have the confidence to say anymore to her other than "hello," and then I would look away.

That day Mrs. Isom called the role and I answered "unprepared." To my surprise Louise turned around and looked at me.

I quickly looked down at my desktop. I looked to the right. But I could tell Louise was still looking at me. You can tell when somebody is looking at you. I quickly turned my head and looked to the left. Then I looked up at the ceiling. Finally I didn't know where else to look. I was compelled to look straight ahead.

I looked into the eyes of Louise. I'll never forget what she said. She glared at me and asked in an uncharacteristically stern tone, 'George, why don't you get prepared?'

Then she turned her head away from my gaze and she looked straight ahead. I asked myself, "What does she care? Unless she cares."

After school that day I cut an article out of the newspaper about American bombers destroying an enemy battle ship in the war which was raging at that time. I read this, several paragraphed article. I read it again and again. Finally I could read it without even looking at it--I had it memorized. I carried the article in my wallet all week. Each day I would read it again. Finally it was Friday-- third hour. Mrs. Isom started calling the roll. She didn't look up lest she would put the plus or negative sign on the wrong line.

She called those names began with A, then B, and the C. My heart pounded faster the closer she got to the D's. I was tempted to fall back into my old pattern and answer "unprepared." But it was too late for that.

Miss. Isom, without looking up from the roll, quickly completed the negative sign before I could reply. The sign she

knew would be the symbol that my answer would require. I remained silent for a few seconds. The noise that was always present in the classroom I was suddenly stilled by my silence. Finally I took a deep breath and quietly said, "Prepared."

A shock went through the classroom Mrs. Isom set up straight when she heard my answer. She held her pencil in place but lifted her eyes to look out at me. I stared back and then nodded my head in an affirmative manner.

Louise turned around and looked at me. This time I did not look away. Facing me a half smile crossed her face and she nodded her head slightly up and down. Mrs. Isom could be seen striking her pen across the negative sign and making it into a "Plus."

To myself I asked, "What have I done? Now I have to get up there and give the talk and be humiliated. To myself I reasoned, "I should have said "unprepared."

But it was too late now. The ten or so students who had answered "prepared" had now given their talks. Miss Isom had saved me for last.

My hands shook, my heart pounded as she finally she looked at me as if she was asking, "Are you really going to do this George?"

I knew I had to do it. I stood up. I felt the eyes of 30 students and one teacher all focused on me.

I made the seemingly long walk to the front of the room. My back was to the students. I didn't dare turn around. But I knew I had to.

I looked out at what seemed like 10,000 faces. I gulped. And began to speak. I remembered the first word, the first line. Somehow the feelings of fear departed. I remembered the first paragraph. I remembered the whole thing – every word.

When I said that last word, I still stood there. I did not want to return to my seat. I wanted to say more. It seemed like the dam that was holding me back had been breached and the water confidence was free to flow.

I decided not to walk back to my seat. But instead I decided to fly. When I approached Louise, I hovered over her like a helicopter. She looked up at me and smiled. I collapsed into my seat.

I said to myself, "This is the only way to live. I'm always going to be prepared. I'm going to do good stuff."

That day I took Mrs. Isom free agency from her. She had to change the sign by my name from a negative sign to a plus.

Somehow when she did that the negative signs that were in my heart also automatically switched to pluses.

I wished I had a microfilm of that roll book. It was one of the great records of my life.

That day when I knew I had done the right thing,

Oh my! Just writing that story made me feel pretty proud of myself. I'll bet reading it made you feel pretty proud of me

to. But of course that was not the end of my academic battles. Thereafter sometimes I said prepared and sometimes I said unprepared, and sometimes I was just right in the middle of the two.

But on that particular day, when I gave that talk, I knew my mother was right when almost hundreds of times, when I sat on her lap and she ran her fingers through my hair and told me I was special. I knew I had something to offer but I still struggled, because of my lack of confidence, to offer it.

Just one more story and then we will leave junior high and move on to high school. I think this story will help you understand what kind of a young boy I was. I don't know really myself just what kind of boy I was.

But before I tell the story I just mentioned I want to relate something I did, the memory of which makes me think I was a pretty good young feller. Here it is. I remember digging out a bunch of weeds out beyond our cherry tree so I could plant flowers. I'd seen a picture of flower called Gladiolus. I thought these kind of flowers are the prettiest I had ever seen. I decided I wanted to grow some of those as a gift to my mother. So I dug out the weeds which was a lot of work. Then I bought some bulbs and planted them. Sadly they never did thrive nor amount to much. But that didn't matter as much is the fact that I was willing to do that. Don't you think that's a pretty good clue though even though I was a dud. I was a pretty thoughtful dud. Maybe almost a dude.

But now let's get back to the story that will give you some more clues as to the sort of fellow I was:

“As I said earlier I was raised on a chicken farm. My job was to gather the eggs two times a day. My father couldn’t afford to pay me on a regular basis. Instead he just gave me money when I absolutely needed it. I hated asking him for money because he was kind of ornery when he had to dig deep into his overalls pocket to find his little black purse. Once he had snapped it open he would carefully and begrudgingly count out the few nickels, dimes and quarters necessary to meet my request.

As I gathered the eggs one afternoon, I saw two brown hens that had somehow immigrated into our all white chicken flock. About that same time I reached in to one of the nests and pulled out six white eggs and one brown one.

That sparked an idea in my mind. “What if my father would allow me to keep every brown egg I gathered?” I got to thinking that if I could acquire 10 more brown hens to live with my father’s white hens, they would lay at least six eggs each day. That way they would lay 3 dozen eggs each week.

I calculated that I could sell each dozen for 25 cents. That way I would profit by about 75 cents each week. With that kind of money I would not have to ask my father ever again to dig money out of his purse for me.

That night, as my father sat reading the daily newspaper I timidly approached him with the proposition. I asked him if I could get some more brown chickens and let them run loose with his chickens, and then could I have the money for the brown eggs so that he would no longer have to listen to my nickel and dime requests.

I was shocked when he replied “If that’s what you want.” Seeming to like the idea of my not constantly asking him for money. He added, “You can go over to Arnold Conder’s farm and ask him to sell you a dozen brown eggs that have been fertilized by one of his roosters. When you get the eggs you can put them under one of the white hens that sets in the nest all day wishing it could be a mother. “

He continued, “In 28 days you should have a dozen little chicks. When the little ones grow up we will eat the roosters and you can keep the hens.

We’ll keep doing this until you have at least 12 brown laying hens.”

In six months I was the proud owner of 12 of the prettiest brown hens you’ve ever seen. Thereafter I loved gathering the eggs hoping that in each nest I would find a nice brown egg.

I sold the eggs to all of my neighbors for 25 cents a dozen. I was now profiting to the tune of 75 cents each week.

I tell you of this economical venture because of something that happened to me because of my newly acquired wealth.”

Here is that story:

“Way back then we would go to Sunday. School in the morning. And that then we go back in the early evening to sacrament meeting.

On one Sunday afternoon between the time we got home from morning church and before we went to evening church Kent and his friends were playing croquet on our front lawn.

They were laughing, good naturedly and arguing with each other, and secretly moving their ball ahead to cheat just a little bit. They were having a great time.

I was standing on the front porch enjoying watching when one of them invited me to join the game. I was thrilled that I would soon be playing with these guys who would be seniors in high school the next year. I felt proud as I picked up a mallet and a wooden ball and joined in the fun.

About a half-hour before it was time for me to go to church, my brother Kent and his three friends decided to go for a ride in Moe Murdoch's model A Ford. Moe was the only one in the whole school who had a car. I was disappointed when Mo announced, "We can't go because my cars about out of gas and I haven't got any money to buy anymore."

Kent spoke up and said I think George's got some money. Haven't you got some brown egg money George?"

Kent added, "George if you'll give us just a dollar we will let you ride around with us."

My heart started to pound as I considered, "How would it be for me to ride around in that model A with those older guys."

But then I sadly realized that it was nearly time to walk to church with my mother. I took a few steps toward the porch to go in the house and put on my suit. But when I went up the first step porch I thought, "I'll probably never get another chance to ride around town in the Model A with these older guys. Besides, I could miss church this one time."

I didn't know what to do. I stood there not going up the stairs nor down Kent spoke up and said, "Go get a dollar."

I replied, "Church starts in 20 minutes. Will we be back by then?"

"Course we won't be back by then. Kent replied. He then added, "Hurry up and get the dollar."

I raced in the house and got the dollar and was headed out the door when my mother asked, "Where are you going?"

I'm going to go riding around in the Model A with Kent and his friends."

I was still on the move when mother shouted, "Who will go to church with me?"

I replied, "Mom you're just going to have to learn to go to church by yourself."

Before mom could say more, I was out the door. And 30 seconds later I was in the coveted back seat of Mo Murdoch's Model A Ford. I felt like I was in heaven.

I handed Mo the dollar. We went down to Kelly's service station, bought 3 gallons of gasoline.

For more than an hour we rode up and down the streets in American Fork from the shores of Utah Lake to the mouth of the canyon.

During that time I didn't say a word. I let the older guys do all the talking and laughing. I just sat there feeling important. I sat with my nose close to the window so that if we passed

anyone they could see that I was with these older guys driving around American Fork streets in Mo Murdoch's Model A.

I was bitterly disappointed when we did not pass a single person that I knew. Finally it was decided we should head for home.

As fate would have it, we passed by the old fourth Ward Chapel just as church was letting out. I looked at the door of the chapel that led out onto the ten or more cement steps that led down to the sidewalk.

It was a terrible coincidence. But just as we passed the church I saw my mother coming down those stairs holding onto the rail. I hope that she wouldn't stumble.

All the joy went out of heart. I wanted to shout, "Stop the car I want to get out!" But I didn't have the courage to do that.

We continued on to our house and Kent and I went in. He hurried to his bedroom. I waited in the kitchen for mom to come home.

Twenty minutes later she came in the front door of our large kitchen. I'll never forget how she looked at me. I can still see the hurt in her eyes. I didn't know what to say.

I finally stood and walked a little closer to her and said "Mother you'll never go to church alone again as long as I'm alive."

She came over and sat in the rocking chair and I sat on her lap. As we gently rocked back and forth.

Just one more story and then we will leave junior high and move on to high school. I think this story will help you understand what kind of a young boy I was. I don't know really myself just what kind of boy I was. But before I tell the story I just mentioned I want to relate something I did, the memory of which makes me think I was a pretty good young feller.

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But now let's get back to the story that will give you some more clues as to the sort of fellow I was:

Okay, and on that see what our hero, me, those in those wonderful but treacherous years.

Sadly they never did thrive nor amount to much. But that didn't matter as much is the fact that I was willing to do that.

Don't you think that's a pretty good clue though even though I was a dud. I was a pretty thoughtful dud. Maybe almost a dude.

But now let's get back to the story that will give you some more clues as to the sort of fellow I was:

Okay, and on that see what our hero, me, those in those wonderful but treacherous years.

Chapter Five

Senior High

Before I go on with my analysis of my sophomore school year there something special that happened to me during the summer that I should insert here:

"My father never took me to church, but I can't complain because he often took me fishing. I hate to admit it but at that time I liked going fishing better than I like attending church.

On the 4th July my father (I called him dad) said to my older brother Kent and me, "You boys dig some worms." That was his way of telling us we were going fishing.

My older brother Stewart (my bishop) had been in on the earlier planning of the fishing trip with my dad. So at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon he drove up to our place in his car. When Kent and I spotted him coming we ran out to the car with our fishing gear and piled into the backseat with our fishing poles sticking out of the open window. Dad soon joined us and we were off on our journey to the South Fork of the Provo River.

After an hour's drive we rented a little cabin under the pine trees and close to the river's rushing water. A half-hour later we were at the stream's edge to see if there were any trout waiting to eat a tasty worm.

An hour later the patience of Kent and me wore thin because neither of us had even had a nibble on our line. We started losing interest in fishing, and decided to go on a walk across the large field of newly mown hay.

Without even talking about it, each one of us simultaneously picked up one of the flattest of the two million rocks that lined the river's edge and threw them so they'd skip one or two or maybe even three times along the top of the water.

We were just sitting there silently watching the dark, then white, swirling, deep water pass us by.

Kent broke the silence by saying, "I'm pretty nervous about the basketball season coming up in a few months. The folks of American Fork think that I'm going to lead the team to the first state championship American Fork has ever won. I sure hope I can do that, but there are a lot of good teams in the state"

I spoke, "There's no way anybody could beat our team with you playing. You're 6'7" tall and you are the best darn player this state has ever had."

Kent, looking out at the river, nodded his head up and down as if to agree without saying no bragging stuff. Then he turned his head, looked at me and asked, "You want to play basketball?"

“Yeah.”

Kent sensing my desires and wondering if it could ever happen asked, “You’re in the ninth grade now, aren’t you? How tall are you now?”

I shyly replied with a surge of guilt, “I’m just 5’7.”

“Man!” Kent replied, “When I was your age I was 6’5” tall.”

Neither of us said anything for a few minutes. Feeling bad, as I always did when I considered not being able to grow, I picked up a big rock and held over my head walked over to the river and with both hands and splashed it down into the water registering my inward pain and bitterness that I couldn’t grow.

I explained to Kent something I had never said to anybody else, “I don’t even like to shower at school at the end of her gym class because a lot of kids my age are turning into the men, and I’m still a little boy. That makes me embarrassed. It makes me sadder than anything else in my life.”

Kent didn’t seem to feel sorry for me as he spoke again, “Yeah I sure was glad I developed into a man when I was in the seventh grade. But don’t worry about it someday you’ll probably grow. I’ll bet you’ll become at least 6 feet tall someday. ”

Almost before his last word was out of his mouth I replied, “I don’t want to just be 6 feet tall I want to be six seven like you. I want to be like you in every way.”

Kent who I think was a little bit surprised by my outburst implied “I appreciate that George. But there are other things besides sports. You’ll be a better man than me.”

“You’re already a better man than me George. You’re a religious guy. You like going to church. Me, I don’t like doing that. I don’t see any sense in wasting my time over there when I’d sooner be somewhere else. When I don’t go the Sunday school and that, dad makes me clean out chicken coop. But I’d sooner do that than go to church and listen to boring talks and boring lessons. I’m just not interested in that kind of stuff. I don’t want to pass the sacrament and stuff like that.” He then looked at me and asked, “Do You like doing that kind of stuff? If you didn’t go to church it would break Mom’s heart. I know it makes her cry when I tell her I don’t want to go to church. But I can’t live my life just to please her. She likes going to church and thinks I should, but I don’t.”

I felt all confused and didn’t know what to say. So I just sat there looking at the river and thinking.

When I didn’t answer him right off, Kent suggested, “You don’t have to follow their example. And you don’t have to follow mine. You just have to decide for yourself. Is it really worth going to church or not?”

That night inside the tent, as I lay in my bed, I could hear the stream running by.

Usually up in in the mountains, and with the stream making its soothing noises it made me fall off to sleep before I hardly knew it.

But this night I had a hard time going to sleep. I wondered what I would decide when I decided for myself whether or not to be a religious guy. ”

As I lay there unable to sleep, my mind jumped from one thought to another.

I went to church all right, but didn't go because of any burning desire in my heart. I went because it was the thing to do. It was like going to school or something like that.

I then said silently, “On the other hand I really do like passing the sacrament with Herbie at my side. And sometimes I like the talks a little bit in the lessons are kinda interesting at times.

I smiled up at the ceiling of the canvas tent. I knew there was something above the tent top and even higher than the mountains. A surge of joy and I soon fell asleep.

So with that experience in mind lets jump back to the more mundane things of my sophomore year in school

Finally I was fifteen years old and a mighty sophomore at American Fork high school. I just overestimated myself. In reality I was a rather insignificant, in my own mind, sophomore. I hadn't grown much since I was in the sixth grade, nor had I physically matured to the point where I didn't like taking a shower in the high school gymnasium locker room.

On the other hand, I had some good feelings about myself. Mouse Conder had taught me to calm my hair so it looked wavy. I had a kind of a feeling when I looked in the mirror that I was sort of handsome. Another thing was said when I was with my

friends I had somewhat of a keen sense of humor. That enabled me to have some mid tier socially friends.. Let's see there was Beano, Bago, Worb, Dutson, Frogly, Pie, and Ozie. (I proudly note that these were not their real names but nicknames I had personally attached to them – my imagination at times ran wild.) I did not Herbie in this list because he in a lower social tier and was only my friend over at church.

But as I said before being Kent Durrant's brother overlaid all my other feelings. Local adult sports fans often asked me, "Are you going to be as good at basketball as your brother Kent?"

I would not reply. But in my heart I wanted to say, "No, I'll never be as good as him, and neither are you." (I often had very clever things to say, however I didn't have the confidence to say them except when I was with Beano and Bago and the boys.)

Now let's just stick with the facts. I was now 15 years old and it was now my first day of school as a sophomore.

I recall:

As I walked up the hill and into the school, I was greeted by my best friend Don. He and I had been classmates from the first grade on. He was sort of everything that I wanted to be. (And would have been had I gone by my middle name which was Don. Kidding) He had broad shouldered, blonde, wavy hair, and all the girls liked him best. He was a great athlete. I felt it was an honor for me to be his friend.

After a whole summer, we were glad to see each other and compare schedules to see if we were in any of the same classes.

I was surprised to hear him say, “I hate this place. I would give anything if I didn’t have to come to school.”

He asked me, “Do you hate being here as much as I do?”
“Well... I don’t like it a whole lot, but, you know, I don’t hate it our nothing like that.”

He didn’t seem to hear what I said as he continued his rant, “Man! I can’t stand it here.”

Just then the bell rang and we went our separate ways. As I walked up the stairs to the second floor I kept thinking about Don. I wondered to myself, “What’s going on with him? It seemed like he always like school before.”

As I hurried to my first class room I saw a multitude of students going both directions. I hardly recognize some of the guys because they had matured. The girls had also.

Seemed like the world was changing for all of us sophomores. I was little bit shocked when I heard some swear words that I had never heard in the halls of the school before.

At the conclusion of the last hour of school, all of us boys who longed to be athletes headed for the gymnasium. We knew Coach Nelson was going to issue football uniforms to those he thought had potential in that sport. I stood there with the rest of the sophomore guys waiting for the coach to come out of his office. I hoped that somehow he would hand some football gear to me. But I realized that would be a miracle as there were so many other guys bigger and stronger than I was. But I still hoped. I was pretty good at hoping.

In those days sophomores usually didn't get to be on the varsity football team. And there wasn't a sophomore team. So coach Nelson only had a few secondhand outfits to distribute.

We all followed the coach into the locker room where the equipment was. There He began to call out the predetermined names that he had written on a piece of paper. He would read the name and then hand out the pads, pants, shirts, and the cleats to the boy whose name he had called.

I expected, and I think Don did also, that his name would be among the first to be called. But that was not the case. And after three names had been called he became fidgety. After five names had been called and Don's name was not among them, he turned to me and said "Tell old Nelson that if he wants me to play football I'm out in the hall." With that. He turned and departed.

The Coach, busy handing out the gear, did not see him leave The next name he called was 'Don.'

He looked around and then looking at me asked, "Where's your buddy, Don?"

After a slight hesitation, I replied, "He's out in the hall."

The coach abruptly said, "Go tell him if he wants to play football to get back in here."

I hurried to the hall, and saw Don standing with one foot cocked back against the wall. He was talking to a couple of other guys. I excitedly told him, "The coach called your name. He said that if you want to play football to get back in there."

Don was chewing gum and between his chomps he said, "Tell the coach to go to..."

Shocked, I replied, “You’ll have to do that yourself.”

So Don never did play football. His big hands never threw a forward pass to win a game for our school.

As the weeks went on, I observed Don and some of the other guys would skip classes and go down to the east side of campus to the little bridge that crossed the old Mill stream and smoke cigarettes.

I tell the story of Don to illustrate that we were all at the age of changing. Our bodies and even our souls seem to be different than they had been. I guess I guess We were growing up. Don.

Not all of us changed as much as did. I was one of that small group who didn’t seem to change physically at all. But we , including me, all changed not only in our in our inward feelings. Feelings that affected our attitude about life and religion and stuff like that.

I’ll have to confess : “I was also caught up in these changes and it was a little more difficult for me to be a “good boy. “

Kent, three years older than me, had drifted further and further away from the church. He got married between his junior and senior year of high school. In his senior year he was in the beginning stages of alcoholism. He still played basketball, but the stardom he was destined to attain was curtailed. He won an athletic scholarship. But he had no interest in going to college. Sadly, I still had a slight yearning to be like him.

I was not so determined to continue to be what was referred to in those days as a “mama’s boy-a sissy.” Don’t get me wrong.

I wasn't a bad boy. But I considered being a bit more rebellious than I had been.

I still wanted to be Jeff's friend, but that meant I would be being around guys swearing and smoking and stuff like that. I sort of wanted to do that, but somehow I just didn't have that kind of stuff in me.

I did skip classes once in a while, but I didn't go down to the bridge where the smokers were. I just went down to Abel's Store and bought myself a candy bar or a popsicle or something like that. Sometimes I was in my classes. I started using a couple of minor swear words."

That year, for the first time in my school career, I had a teacher who liked me best. His name was Mr. Sorensen. But I called him Clem because he was not around,

He was from Sanpete County and had a wonderful sense of humor. He said he went hunting with a fellow who had the shakes. The fellow who shook aimed his twenty-two rifle at a bird in a distant tree. He fired and the bird fell. He shouted, "I got him."

Clem replied, "You should've got him. You aimed at the whole tree."

Mr. Sorensen was a great sports fan and he loved to talk about Kent and how that this year would win the state championship. But I could tell as much as we liked Kent he liked me better. Maybe that's the reason that Mr. Sorensen is my favorite schoolteacher of all time.

At school I was pretty friendly but sometimes at home I would be a little ornery. I had always like Christmas because I got some really neat toys. But now Christmas mainly just brought me socks and shirts and stuff like that. So that Christmas when I was fifteen years old all the presents had been opened and I was a bit discouraged.

There were a lot of feelings I had on that Christmas day that I didn't tell anyone about because I couldn't really explain them.

I was all alone, sitting in the parlor by the Christmas tree. Kent had given Dad a little silver metal toy gun for a present as a joke. It shot BBs, but wasn't any threat to the neighborhood birds because it had little power.. And even with a dead aim you could barely hit the ground.

While I was sitting there feeling bad about feeling bad, I picked up Dad's gun and looked at it.

I shot it a couple of times at the cardboard box Then I looked over at the Christmas tree. I drew dead aim on a blue ornament hanging way out on the end of a branch about halfway up. Of course, I didn't shoot because nobody in all the history of mankind had ever shot a Christmas tree ornament.

I lowered the gun and was about to set it aside. The trouble was, I was so sad that I just felt like shooting at something. I raised the gun again, aimed right at the ornament, and slowly squeezed the trigger. It was almost impossible to even hit the tree with that gun, much less the blue ornament, but, incredibly, the ball exploded into hundreds of silver and

blue fragments. I was shocked at what I'd done. Then, as luck would have it, Mom entered the room. I've never seen her look more startled. She turned from the mess on the floor and looked at me. I was still holding the gun. There was no use telling her I hadn't done it. Kent wasn't home, so I couldn't blame him.

She didn't get angry. She just looked at me for what seemed like a long time. I didn't want to look back but I knew that I had to. I could tell she couldn't believe that her son George could have done such a thing. I was wishing she'd get mad because I knew you couldn't be both disappointed and mad at the same time. The most painful thing that could ever happen to me was to have my mom disappointed.

I told her I'd pick up the pieces. She didn't say anything, just turned and walked out of the room, her eyes moist. In a few minutes I went in to where she was sitting in her rocking chair. I didn't say I was sorry again because she could always tell how I felt and she knew I was about as sorry as anybody had ever been. She reached out and held my hand. As I stood close to her, I felt that toys didn't matter much. The only thing that counted was not hurting people and doing good things instead of bad things.

Later that day I tried to pick up the pieces of the broken ornament and put them together with glue. I soon knew I couldn't do it, any more than I could put a broken egg back together. I finally gave up and just sat there. I hadn't cried in two years. And I didn't cry then. I wanted to, but I couldn't.

I decided then and there that that would be the last ornament I'd ever break. Just deciding that made me feel better.

I was still too little and too slow and too weak to be even and averagely good basketball but I tried out and my name got on the list. I thought it was because my last name was Durrant but I was just glad to be there because I had a dream that someday I'd grow needed all the practice I could get. I shouldn't of felt bad about my basketball career at that point of time because of lease twenty other sophomores long to be on the team but didn't make it.

I spent most of that time on the bench the sophomore game sort of hoping that Louise wouldn't be there to observe my failure.

Springtime came and the lovebird bit my fellow sophomores. I classmate, Wendell had a girlfriend was a senior. It was hard for me to know that software could have a girlfriend who is a senior but I saw them going down the hall and Wendell had his arm around her.

I was amazed at any fellow can have the courage to right in public, in the school hallway crammed with students and walked down the hall with his arm around girl. Next hour as I sat in history class all I could think about was, " I want to do that, and when I'm at junior I will.

Note: Jumping ahead I didn't have the courage to do that when I was a junior. But I thought, when I am a senior to do that. But when I was a senior didn't have the courage to do it.

Of course if I had had the courage I don't think there was a girl who would go down the hall with my arm around her.

Well there's more I could say about the year I was a sophomore but we better move along or I'll never 'graduate.'

I used to measure myself standing against the wall making a mark to see if I had grown. During the summer for my junior year I was elated when the mark was up almost an inch and half. I still wasn't very big but I was growing.

As the school year began I wanted to go out for football but decided I'd better spend my time practicing basketball which because that was my first love.

Kent was no longer in school he had graduated. The hopes that he would lead the cavemen to the state championship was dead was lost when for two years in a row the great Kent Durrant, perhaps the most gifted basketball player that the state of you who taught had ever known lost the crown little old grants still both years. I could say much about that but just be summed up by the fact that each of these losses brought me greater heartache and anything in my life had ever brought me before.

But that was now water under the bridge it was time to move on my chances of even get to play was very remote to say nothing of leading our team to the state championship. But with no hope of and yet a small dream I practice my heart out to something that meant more to me than school or the church or anything else – game of basketball.

If I could brag just a little, I did make the junior varsity team. Against Lehi I made fifteen free shots in a row. I shot them underhanded which was the old-fashioned way. The crowd who were arriving with the varsity game were in awe at my uncanny ability.

Academically, without really trying, I was able to a straight C average.

Louise didn't did not know of my low grade point average or she might've told me, "George why don't you get A's." But she was not sent by the Lord to my school to encourage me academically. She had been sent there to say hello to me and in so doing give me the courage to try to be a fine young man.

I remember the time came for our junior prom. Louise was the cochairman of that big event. One day when I was in the gymnasium hanging crepe paper to make the hall look beautiful for the dance she came to my side and said, "George who are you taking to the prom?"

I pulled another strand of the crepe paper and mumbled, "I don't go to dances."

She replied, "I want you to go George."

For a brief shining moment I thought she was asking me to go with her and I replied, "Maybe I'll go."

She then said, "My friend Barbara cries each night because she doesn't have a date. I want you to take her."

I was shocked when Barbara agreed to go with me. I was awkward and couldn't dance very well but Barbara was thrilled

and her dream had come true for she was able to attend the junior prom.

Now for some more religion. You can't get enough of that.
Becoming a Priest

A month after beginning my junior year, in high school George turned 16 years old. It was time for me to become a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

Bishop Grant, my new bishop, took George's aside after Sunday school to schedule a time when he could be ordained me to this new office.

Seven days later as I entered the chapel I was greeted by the bishop who told me that the ordination would take place right after Sunday school.

After Sunday school, I hurried to be the first to arrive in the bishop's office. The bishop arrived next and I pleaded, "Could we keep the door closed for a few minutes there's something else I want to talk to you about?"

The bishop closed the door behind him and asked, "Sure. What's on your mind?"

"I don't know if I can memorize that long prayer that the priests say when they bless the bread and water."

he bishop replied "You don't have to memorize it. You read it. You can do that can't you?"

I replied, "I can read it, but not when everyone in the chapel is listening."

Bishop Grant replied, "The Lord will bless you. With his help there's nothing you can't do."

The bishop laid his hands on my head and ordained me to be a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- Day Saints.

At this time of my life, I was finally growing taller and had grown out on my original navy blue suit. The next week my mother bought me a brand-new baby blue suit so that I would look like a priesthood man.

An analysis

Looking back on my 'navy blue suit situation' I have come to the conclusion that though I prayed to grow, my mother prayed that I wouldn't grow because she at that time couldn't afford to buy me a new navy blue suit. It was all course folly to try to out pray my mother.

The next Sunday, I as a newly ordained priest was greeted at the front door of the chapel by my compatriot Herbie Pawlowski. The two of us made our way solemnly to sacrament table.

The opening song was sung. The opening prayer was said. The announcements were made. The organist began to play the hymn, "Oh It Is Wonderful that He should care for us enough to die for us." The congregation began to sing. It was time.

Herbie and myself as newly ordained priest stood in unison at the sacrament table, reached out, took in hand the corners of the white cloth and uncovered the sacrament trays.

We then then began to break the slices bread into the sacrament trays.

Of this experience George recalls: "I knew just the right size pieces in which to break the bread Finally the bread was broken. Herbie spoke softly, "Do you want to do the bread?"

"I do."

I adjusted the card so I could see it perfectly. I cleared my throat. I lowered my voice an octave so I would sound more spiritual.

I read the first words, "Oh God the Eternal Father..." When I said those holy words all fear left my heart. I continued on, without mistakes, to the final "amen."

I stood and Herbie and I handed the trays across the sacrament table to the deacons. I humbly hoped that somehow these new deacons would learn their sacred duties as well as Herbie and I had done.

"As the Deacons went their way, Herbie and I sat down. A feeling of goodness overcame me. I was overwhelmed by what I had just been able to do. Involuntarily I looked at my mother. She was shedding tears of joy. I looked around and everyone was looking at me – not in derision but in admiration. Somehow I felt that at that moment I became the real George Durrant.

Later in life I realized that that was the most spiritual and joyous moment of my entire life.

During my junior and senior years in high school I blessed the sacrament each Sunday. Each week as I broke the bread I thought to myself, “The hands that are used to break this sacred bread can never be used to hold a can of beer or a cigarette or do other unholy things.’

In my better moments, I thought, “The tough guys are not the ones up the canyon drinking beer. The tough guys are down in the Valley doing their priesthood duties.

Don’t get me wrong I didn’t always think these lofty thoughts. But I knew that subconsciously these were the very thoughts that enabled me to live in a more respectable way as I traveled through the difficult years of high school.

I dreamed during the summer before my senior year in high school that this would be the year when I would really blossom. I would be chosen as a senior class president. I would make Allstate in basketball and he would be popular with the girls.

I felt that as he reached each of these goals it would form the foundation for what I really wanted. And what I really wanted was to be known as a “big wheel.” When people saw me I wanted them to say, “There’s George and he is a big wheel.”

Those goals sound pretty impressive don’t you think?

Now I’ll tell you how I did in reaching those goals:

“My first goal was to be senior class president. Unfortunately for me the students did not know what a good leader was so I was never nominated to be class president. And of course never elected.

During football season I spent my time in the gymnasium practicing basketball. I had grown taller during the summer – 6’3. ” so I was big enough to achieve my Allstate status. But by Christmas we had played five games and I was not the star in any one of them. Gradually, I think because the coach like me best I was relegated to the bench. It is very difficult to make Allstate from the bench.

As I write this I feel that I’m might have disappointed you or perhaps even made you feel sorry for me. So perhaps it’s time to brag a little. I was the star in one game. We were playing B Y high school. The best team in the state. I was of course on the bench. But after halftime Leroy Griffin are starting center committed his fifth personal and the officials ordered him to leave the game. Our coach called timeout to decide what to do. The coast looked toward me and then looked away. He took three steps forward and three steps back. While he was pondering my cousin Boyd Durrant who was the chief of police for American Fork and who was at the game in his uniform came on set on the bench beside me, put his arm around me and said, “George, if the coach put you in don’t you disgrace the family name.”

I was petrified. Finally the coach with no other option shouted, “Durrant take your sweats off and get in there.”

Suddenly I was playing better than I ever played before. I was getting almost every rebound but I was not scoring. There were just a few seconds remaining in the game when I came down with the rebound between two opposing players one of them striving to knock the ball for my hands hit my arms the referee

blew the whistle. I walked to the foul line. The noise was so loud just turned into a buzz every eye in the gymnasium was fixed on me I picked up the ball, caressed it and brought it to a shooting and let it go.

Note: My wife Susan told me to write stories, but to never write a story where I was the hero. With that question in my heart I cannot conclude the story. You'll just have to guess whether or not the ball found its way into the net. Oh shucks. Some of you are so disappointed so I'll just add, two seconds later I was in the arms of my coach. I was a hero. Forgive me Susan but you also told me to always tell the truth. So that was my moment of glory.

From then on my senior season went downhill. I only got in the games when the score was 82 to 14 and were only forty-two seconds left – it didn't matter which team was eighty-two and which team was fourteen. That's when I went in often to the taunting of the student body shouting, "Put George in."

So there was no Allstate honors for me. Fortunately for me I was a dreamer and as I walked home from a bench sitting game, often in a snowstorm, I would say to myself, "next we can practice I'll really do good. The coach will be forced to start me. I'll make a make twenty-five points. I'll be the star. I'll go to that after the game dance and every girl in the place will want to dance with me. It didn't matter that the dream never came true. It just mattered that it made me feel good to be a dreamer.

Now I'm back to my third goal: to be popular with the girls. But the problem was the girls in my school were dumb and I was undiscovered.

But lest you suspect that I was a total dud I'll tell you that by my senior year the best looking girl in the school, the most popular girl in the school, the most academically gifted girl in school was my girlfriend.

She did not know she was my girlfriend because I never told her she was. But I was the authority on who girlfriend was and it was Louise. I couldn't even look at a map of the southern states and see Georgia and Louisiana kind of together without getting all shook up. That's how I felt about Louise.

Like I said I think she was only in my school because have always been Heavenly Father's favorite (*I hope you would disagree with that and say that you know that you are Heavenly Father's favorite.*)

As my senior year progressed I felt some general changes within myself. I was still held back from radiating much of a personality by my shyness.

Looking back on those days;

I believe that if you're really handsome in high school Heavenly Father blesses you and makes you timid. I believe that's why I was timid. He was saving me for the latter days."

As my senior year war on I finally did get a date

I finally asked Loise to go with me to the movie. I was shocked when she agreed. I did not have a car so I walked down

to her house and then the two of us walked three blocks To the Cameo Theater. As the two of us walked along I could think of nothing to say so I remained silent and so did she.

We entered the theater and I saw the popcorn that was for sale. I bought a sack. I remember the name of the movie was *Sentimental Journey*. The movie was about as exciting as our lack of conversation with each other.

I nervously ate several handfuls of popcorn. I wondered if I should offer her some, but I was fearful that if I did she would say, 'no.' I didn't think I could stand such a rejection. So I ate whole sack of popcorn myself.

A month after beginning my junior year, in high school I turned 16 years old. It was time for me to become a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

Bishop grant, my new bishop, took me aside after Sunday school to schedule a time when I could be ordained to this new priesthood office.

I advised the bishop that perhaps I was not ready to be a priest. When the bishop asked why not, I reported, "Sometimes, I, like some of my teammates in the locker room, use bad words and swear words. I don't do it too often. But sometimes I do."

The bishop encouraged me to change my ways. He felt that my sins were not too serious and that being a priest would help me to do even better.

After that discussion when the bishop wanted to proceed with the ordination the next Sunday, I agreed.

Seven days later as I entered the chapel the bishop told me that the ordination would take place right after Sunday school, and that I should tell his mother so she could be there.

During Sunday school my mind was in a state of wonderment. "I asked myself, "Am I really worthy to be a priest?" I answered his own question, "I guess if the bishop thinks I'm worthy. I might be." I added, "I hope I can quit using bad words. I guess I will."

After Sunday school, I hurried to be the first to arrive in the bishop's office. The bishop arrived next and I pleaded, "Could we keep the door closed for a few minutes there's something else I want to talk to you about?"

The bishop closed the door behind him and asked, "Sure. What's on your mind?"

While the two were still standing I shook his head from side to side, and ran my hand through hair and said, "It's just... It's just that I... I don't know. I don't think I can memorize that long prayer that the priests say when they bless the bread and water."

The bishop replied "You don't have to memorize it George. You just have to read it. You can do that can't you?"

I replied, "I can read it, but not when everyone in the chapel is listening."

Bishop Grant replied with words mingled with laughter, "George and I love you. You're one of the finest most honest guys I've ever known. The Lord will bless you. With his help there's nothing you can't do."

Just then there was a knock on the door. The bishop opened the door and my mother and Herbie Pawlowski and his parents entered the room.

Herbie was first to be ordained and then it was my turn. The bishop laid his hands on my head and ordain to be a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- Day Saints. While he was still talking, The bishop added these words to the blessing, "Dear Heavenly Father bless George with the knowledge that whatever You ask him to do he will be able to do."

After the "amen" was said, I stood up and shook hands with the bishop and looked into my leaders eyes. My doubts about becoming a Priest were erased from my mind.

At this time of my life, finally I was growing taller. Thus during the next week my mother bought me a brand-new navy blue suit so that he would look like a priesthood man as I began my career as a priest.

The next Sunday, the newly ordained priest was greeted at the front door by his compatriot Herbie Pawlowski. The two made their way solemnly to sacrament table. My mother had made her way to the front row to be as close to her adored son as she could be.

The opening song was sung. The opening prayer was said. The announcements were made. The organist began to play the hymn, "Oh It Is Wonderful that he should care for me enough to die for me." The congregation began to sing. It was time.

George and Herbie stood in unison, reached out, took in hand the corners of the white cloth and uncovered the sacrament trays. The two young priesthood holders then began to break the slices bread into the sacrament trays.

Of this experience George reports:

"I knew just the right size pieces in which to break the bread. I looked down while I was performing this sacred task because I hardly dared look up to see all the folks singing and staring at me. Finally the bread was broken. Herbie spoke softly, "Do you want to do the bread?"

"I do."

I adjusted the card so I could see it perfectly. I cleared my throat. I lowered my voice an octave so I would sound more spiritual.

I ,read the first words, "Oh God the eternal father..." When I said those holy words all fear left my heart. I continued on, without mistakes, to the final, "Amen."

I stood and Herbie and I handed the trays across the sacrament table to the new deacons. I humbly hoped that somehow these new deacons would be able to perform their sacred duties as well as he and Herbie had done "

As the the Deacons went their way, Herbie and I sat down. A feeling of goodness overcame me. I was overwhelmed by what I had just been able to do. Involuntarily I looked at my mother. She was shedding tears of joy. I looked around and everyone was looking at me – not in derision but in admiration. Somehow I felt that at that moment I became the real George Durrant.

(Later I realized that what I did that day was the most spiritual and joyous moment of my entire life.)

During his junior and senior years in high school George recalls:

“I blessed the sacrament each Sunday. Each week as I broke the bread I thought to myself, “The hands that are used to break this sacred bread can never be used to hold a can of beer or a cigarette or do other unholy things.’

In my better moments, I thought, “The tough guys are not the ones up the canyon drinking beer. The tough guys are down in the Valley doing their priesthood duties.

Special note: I want it to be known that I didn’t always think these lofty thoughts just recorded as I participated in the sacrament. But I knows that subconsciously these were the very thoughts that enabled me to live in a more respectable way as I traveled through the difficult years of high school.

I dreamed during the summer before my senior year in high school that this would be the year when I would really blossom. I would be chosen as a senior class president. I would

make Allstate in basketball and I would be popular with the girls.

I felt that as he reached each of these goals it would form the foundation for what I really wanted. And what I really wanted was to be known as a “big wheel.” When people saw me I wanted them to say, “There’s George and he is a big wheel.”

My goals sound pretty impressive don’t you think?

Now Let’s have me, in my own words, tell us how he did in reaching those goals:

“My first goal was to be senior class president. Unfortunately for me the students did not know what a good leader was I was never nominated to be class president. And of course never elected.

During football season I spent my time in the gymnasium practicing basketball. I had grown taller during the summer – 6’3. ” so I was big enough to achieve my all-state status. But by Christmas we had played five games and I was not the star in any one of them. Gradually I was relegated to the bench. It is very difficult to make all-state from the bench.

My goal to be popular with the girls was hinging upon me being all-state. Girls like basketball players, but not those sitting on the bench. So saying I was popular with the girls would be quite an overstatement.

My only solace was that the best looking girl in the school, the most popular girl in the school, the most academically

gifted girl in school was my girlfriend. She did not know she was my girlfriend because I never told her. But I was the authority on who was my girlfriend was and it was Louise.

As my senior year progressed I felt some general changes within myself. I was still held back from radiating much of a personality by my shyness. I recall when I was a sophomore I saw some of the guys who were juniors and seniors – bona fide big wheels – walking down the halls of the school with their arms around girls talking and laughing. I looked on in envy and said to myself, “When I’m at junior I’m going to do that.”

When I became a junior I said to myself, “I’m going to wait until I’m a senior to do that.” I decided to put it off for two reasons, first, I was too timid to do that, and second I couldn’t find a girl who would go down the hall with my arm around her.

Looking back on those days George reported;

“I believe that if you’re really handsome in high school Heavenly Father blesses you and makes you timid. I believe that’s why I was timid.”

About the only date I had in high school the summer before my senior year. Ronnie Clements was our paperboy. We took a paper that was delivered in the late afternoon. I knew he also delivered papers to a certain girl – not Louise another girl named Carol. In a burst of boldness brought on by long summer days I asked Ronnie to ask Carol I could take her to a movie on Friday night.

I was shocked when the next day Ronnie came pedaling up on his bike and excitedly told me that Carol said she would

be thrilled to go to the movie with me. Ronnie told me that he had told Carol I would be at her house at six thirty Friday night so that they could go to the 7 o'clock movie.

I did not have a car so I walked down to her house and then the two of us walked three blocks To the Cameo Theater. As we walked along I could think of nothing to say so I remained silent and so did she.

We entered the theater and I saw the popcorn that was for sale. I bought a sack. I remember the name of the movie was *Sentimental Journey*. The movie was about as exciting as our lack of conversation with each other.

During the movie I nervously ate several handfuls of popcorn. I wondered if I should offer Carol some, but I was fearful that if I did she would say, 'No.' I didn't think I could stand such a rejection. So I ate whole sack of popcorn myself.

That date was the beginning and ending of my dating with that girl and every other girl.

It was now the month May and the school year came to an end as was my high school career. It was the last day of school and none of us went to the meaningless classes. Four of my friends and I sat on the front lawn near the big weeping willow tree that graced the front of dear old American Fork high school.

As we sat there, the conversation between the four of us centered on what we were going to do now that we were out of high school. The others dreamed of getting a job, a car and

getting married. I really did not like any of those ideas, but I had hardly any idea of what I was going to do.

While we were talking I felt the presence of someone standing above me. I looked up and to my astonishment I saw it was Louise. She spoke, “George I’ve been looking for you. I want to write in your yearbook. Could I do that?”

The other four in the group were even more surprised than me at her presence and especially at the fact that she was paying such attention to me. I’m sure they were thinking, “George is a dud. Why is this most popular girl in the school talking to him?”

I almost boldly replied to Louise, “Sure you can write in my yearbook.”

Louise’s next words were, “I want to go somewhere where I can be alone to write. I might keep your yearbook for a half hour or so.”

I replied, “You can keep it as long as you want Louise.”

I handed her the yearbook and she departed.

I tried not to give the impression to the other fellows that I was a -big wheel” but I’m sure that they sensed that I was.

For the next half-hour or so I wasn’t much good at making conversation about the future because my mind was so consumed with the fact that Louise was somewhere alone writing in my yearbook.

Finally she returned. She smiled as she said “Thank you George.” Then as suddenly as she had appeared she was gone. As she handed me the book it sort of fell open to where she had written. I quickly saw that her words had filled the whole page.

I sensed that the other fellows wanted to see what she had written. But I said to myself, “These guys are not worthy to see what Louise wrote to me.” I quickly closed the book.

Early that evening I was alone in my back bedroom preparing to put on my best clothes – my navy blue suit, a white shirt and a red tie. I relished the thought that that night Louise would finally see me dressed in the clothes which I usually reserved for church activities. Surely she would think I was handsome.

Realizing that the graduation ceremony would take place in hour later. I sensed that now would be a good time to read what Louise had written.

My hands were trembling as I held the book, gently opened it and thumbed through a few pages until I was looking at Louise’s message.

I was shocked at her first words! I could scarcely believe my eyes for her words were, “Dear George.”

I whispered to myself, “Why did she call me ‘dear’ unless...” I read again the words, ‘Dear George.’ After savoring these sacred words for a few seconds I continued to read.

On the next line were the words, "I think you were the nicest boy in the senior class."

I stopped reading and lifted my eyes from the page and looked toward the window. And had a tinge of regret. I did not want to be known as the 'nicest boy. ' I wanted to be known as the most athletic boy. As the most popular boy. As a boy who was a, "big wheel."

I did not want to be known as the nicest boy. I took a deep breath and read again the words, 'I think you were the nicest boy in the senior class. '

Somehow the words sounded different this time. A smile spread itself across my face as I said to myself , "I guess I am a pretty nice boy. I guess being nice is even better than some of the other things I wanted to be."

I read on to see what else Louise had said, "I think you will go to college."

I shook my head from side to side indicating that there was little hope of that. I had barely made it through high school. But again I considered her words and I said to myself, "maybe I will go to college. I never really tried in high school. Maybe I could go to college."

Louise's next words shocked me. She had written, "I'll bet you will go on a mission for our church."

I put my hand on my forehead and rubbed it back and forth. With my eyes closed I whispered, "I can't even hardly talk

a girl into going out with me. How could I ever talk anyone into joining the church?"

But then it seemed like someone had turned the lights on in the room as I remembered how I wondered if I could ever have the courage to say the prayer at the sacrament table. I did that. I love doing that. Maybe I will... maybe I will go on a mission."

The rest of the Louise's writings were mainly about the memories we had shared in high school. After reading them I went back to the top the page and read again the words, Dear George.""

I closed the book.

Her message was second in importance only to my patriarchal blessing which I would receive later. "

Later that night I graduated from high school. I wondered what would really happen next. Was Louise right in betting that I would go to college? Right or wrong I could never forget her words, "I'll bet you will go to college."

The next week after graduation I got to thinking about something that had happened months before. I was in Hap Holmstead's American problems class. Hap was talking about something or other, and I was talking to my friend Worb about fishing for catfish down at Utah Lake. Hap interrupted his lecture and paused and asked, "Could I get you two fellows to pay attention."

We both set up straight and ended our private little conference. Hap added, "If you guys keep goofing off you're going to end up working at a service station all the rest of your lives."

I was shocked when Hap said that because working at a service was exactly what I felt would be a job and I would like the rest of my life.

Anyway, as fate would have it, a week later I got a job working for Leonard Kelly at the Phillips 66 service station just across the street the tabernacle in American Fork.

About midsummer when I was pumping gas to fill up Lloyd Wright's brand-new Chevrolet I once again recalled Louise's prophecy, "I'll bet you will go to college."

From that moment on I began to save my meager salary because I knew it would cost money for tuition when in the fall when I went over to Provo and enrolled in Brigham Young University.

Chapter Five

Senior High

Before I go on with my analysis of my sophomore school year there something special that happened to me during the summer that I should insert here:

“My father never took me to church, but I can’t complain because he often took me fishing. I hate to admit it but at that time I liked going fishing better than I like attending church.

On the 4th July my father (I called him dad) said to my older brother Kent and me, “You boys dig some worms.” That was his way of telling us we were going fishing.

My older brother Stewart (my bishop) had been in on the earlier planning of the fishing trip with my dad. So at about 3 o’clock in the afternoon he drove up to our place in his car. When Kent and I spotted him coming we ran out to the car with our fishing gear and piled into the backseat with our fishing poles sticking out of the open window. Dad soon joined us and

we were off on our journey to the South Fork of the Provo River.

After an hour's drive we rented a little cabin under the pine trees and close to the river's rushing water. A half-hour later we were at the stream's edge to see if there were any trout waiting to eat a tasty worm.

An hour later the patience of Kent and me wore thin because neither of us had even had a nibble on our line. We started losing interest in fishing, and decided to go on a walk across the large field of newly mown hay.

Without even talking about it, each one of us simultaneously picked up one of the flattest of the two million rocks that lined the river's edge and threw them so they'd skip one or two or maybe even three times along the top of the water.

We were just sitting there silently watching the dark, then white, swirling, deep water pass us by.

Kent broke the silence by saying, "I'm pretty nervous about the basketball season coming up in a few months. The folks of American Fork think that I'm going to lead the team to the first state championship American Fork has ever won. I sure hope I can do that, but there are a lot of good teams in the state"

I spoke, "There's no way anybody could beat our team with you playing. You're 6'7" tall and you are the best darn player this state has ever had."

Kent, looking out at the river, nodded his head up and down as if to agree without saying no bragging stuff. Then he turned his head, looked at me and asked, "You want to play basketball?"

"Yeah."

Kent sensing my desires and wondering if it could ever happen asked, "You're in the ninth grade now, aren't you? How tall are you now?"

I shyly replied with a surge of guilt, "I'm just 5'7."

"Man!" Kent replied, "When I was your age I was 6'5" tall."

Neither of us said anything for a few minutes. Feeling bad, as I always did when I considered not being able to grow, I picked up a big rock and held over my head walked over to the river and with both hands and splashed it down into the water registering my inward pain and bitterness that I couldn't grow.

I explained to Kent something I had never said to anybody else, "I don't even like to shower at school at the end of her gym class because a lot of kids my age are turning into the men, and I'm still a little boy. That makes me embarrassed. It makes me sadder than anything else in my life."

Kent didn't seem to feel sorry for me as he spoke again, "Yeah I sure was glad I developed into a man when I was in the seventh grade. But don't worry about it someday you'll probably grow. I'll bet you'll become at least 6 feet tall someday. "

Almost before his last word was out of his mouth I replied, "I don't want to just be 6 feet tall I want to be six seven like you. I want to be like you in every way."

Kent who I think was a little bit surprised by my outburst implied "I appreciate that George. But there are other things besides sports. You'll be a better man than me."

"You're already a better man than me George. You're a religious guy. You like going to church. Me, I don't like doing that. I don't see any sense in wasting my time over there when I'd sooner be somewhere else. When I don't go the Sunday school and that, dad makes me clean out chicken coop. But I'd sooner do that than go to church and listen to boring talks and boring lessons. I'm just not interested in that kind of stuff. I don't want to pass the sacrament and stuff like that." He then looked at me and asked, "Do You like doing that kind of stuff? If you didn't go to church it would break Mom's heart. I know it makes her cry when I tell her I don't want to go to church. But I can't live my life just to please her. She likes going to church and thinks I should, but I don't."

I felt all confused and didn't know what to say. So I just sat there looking at the river and thinking.

When I didn't answer him right off, Kent suggested, "You don't have to follow their example. And you don't have to follow mine. You just have to decide for yourself. Is it really worth going to church or not?"

That night inside the tent, as I lay in my bed, I could hear the stream running by.

Usually up in the mountains, and with the stream making its soothing noises it made me fall off to sleep before I hardly knew it.

But this night I had a hard time going to sleep. I wondered what I would decide when I decided for myself whether or not to be a religious guy. ”

As I lay there unable to sleep, my mind jumped from one thought to another.

I went to church all right, but didn't go because of any burning desire in my heart. I went because it was the thing to do. It was like going to school or something like that.

I then said silently, “On the other hand I really do like passing the sacrament with Herbie at my side. And sometimes I like the talks a little bit in the lessons are kinda interesting at times.

I smiled up at the ceiling of the canvas tent. I knew there was something above the tent top and even higher than the mountains. A surge of joy and I soon fell asleep.

So with that experience in mind lets jump back to the more mundane things of my sophomore year in school

Finally I was fifteen years old and a mighty sophomore at American Fork high school. I just overestimated myself. In reality I was a rather insignificant, in my own mind, sophomore. I hadn't grown much since I was in the sixth grade, nor had I

physically matured to the point where I didn't like taking a shower in the high school gymnasium locker room.

On the other hand, I had some good feelings about myself. Mouse Conder had taught me to calm my hair so it looked wavy. I had a kind of a feeling when I looked in the mirror that I was sort of handsome. Another thing was said when I was with my friends I had somewhat of a keen sense of humor. That enabled me to have some mid tier socially friends.. Let's see there was Beano, Bago, Worb, Dutson, Frogly, Pie, and Ozie. (I proudly note that these were not their real names but nicknames I had personally attached to them – my imagination at times ran wild.) I did not Herbie in this list because he in a lower social tier and was only my friend over at church.

But as I said before being Kent Durrant's brother overlaid all my other feelings. Local adult sports fans often asked me, "Are you going to be as good at basketball as your brother Kent?"

I would not reply. But in my heart I wanted to say, "No, I'll never be as good as him, and neither are you." (I often had very clever things to say, however I didn't have the confidence to say them except when I was with Beano and Bago and the boys.)

Now let's just stick with the facts. I was now 15 years old and it was now my first day of school as a sophomore.

I recall:

As I walked up the hill and into the school, I was greeted by my best friend Don. He and I had been classmates from the first grade on. He was sort of everything that I wanted to be. (And would have been had I gone by my middle name which

was Don. Kidding) He had broad shouldered, blonde, wavy hair, and all the girls liked him best. He was a great athlete. I felt it was an honor for me to be his friend.

After a whole summer, we were glad to see each other and compare schedules to see if we were in any of the same classes. I was surprised to hear him say, “I hate this place. I would give anything if I didn’t have to come to school.”

He asked me, “Do you hate being here as much as I do?” “Well... I don’t like it a whole lot, but, you know, I don’t hate it our nothing like that.”

He didn’t seem to hear what I said as he continued his rant, “Man! I can’t stand it here.”

Just then the bell rang and we went our separate ways. As I walked up the stairs to the second floor I kept thinking about Don. I wondered to myself, “What’s going on with him? It seemed like he always like school before.”

As I hurried to my first class room I saw a multitude of students going both directions. I hardly recognize some of the guys because they had matured. The girls had also.

Seemed like the world was changing for all of us sophomores. I was little bit shocked when I heard some swear words that I had never heard in the halls of the school before.

At the conclusion of the last hour of school, all of us boys who longed to be athletes headed for the gymnasium. We knew Coach Nelson was going to issue football uniforms to those he thought had potential in that sport. I stood there with the rest of the sophomore guys waiting for the coach to come out of his office. I hoped that somehow he would hand some football gear

to me. But I realized that would be a miracle as there were so many other guys bigger and stronger than I was. But I still hoped. I was pretty good at hoping.

In those days sophomores usually didn't get to be on the varsity football team. And there wasn't a sophomore team. So coach Nelson only had a few secondhand outfits to distribute.

We all followed the coach into the locker room where the equipment was. There He began to call out the predetermined names that he had written on a piece of paper. He would read the name and then hand out the pads, pants, shirts, and the cleats to the boy whose name he had called.

I expected, and I think Don did also, that his name would be among the first to be called. But that was not the case. And after three names had been called he became fidgety. After five names had been called and Don's name was not among them, he turned to me and said "Tell old Nelson that if he wants me to play football I'm out in the hall." With that. He turned and departed.

The Coach, busy handing out the gear, did not see him leave The next name he called was 'Don.'

He looked around and then looking at me asked, "Where's your buddy, Don?"

After a slight hesitation, I replied, "He's out in the hall."

The coach abruptly said, "Go tell him if he wants to play football to get back in here."

I hurried to the hall, and saw Don standing with one foot cocked back against the wall. He was talking to a couple of

other guys. I excitedly told him, “The coach called your name. He said that if you want to play football to get back in there.”

Don was chewing gum and between his chomps he said, “Tell the coach to go to...”

Shocked, I replied, “You’ll have to do that yourself.”

So Don never did play football. His big hands never threw a forward pass to win a game for our school.

As the weeks went on, I observed Don and some of the other guys would skip classes and go down to the east side of campus to the little bridge that crossed the old Mill stream and smoke cigarettes.

I tell the story of Don to illustrate that we were all at the age of changing. Our bodies and even our souls seem to be different than they had been. I guess I guess We were growing up. Don.

Not all of us changed as much as did. I was one of that small group who didn’t seem to change physically at all. But we , including me, all changed not only in our in our inward feelings. Feelings that affected our attitude about life and religion and stuff like that.

I’ll have to confess : “I was also caught up in these changes and it was a little more difficult for me to be a “good boy. “

Kent, three years older than me, had drifted further and further away from the church. He got married between his junior and senior year of high school. In his senior year he was in the beginning stages of alcoholism. He still played basketball, but the stardom he was destined to attain was curtailed. He won an

athletic scholarship. But he had no interest in going to college. Sadly, I still had a slight yearning to be like him.

I was not so determined to continue to be what was referred to in those days as a “mama’s boy-a sissy.” Don’t get me wrong. I wasn’t a bad boy. But I considered being a bit more rebellious than I had been.

I still wanted to be Jeff’s friend, but that meant I would be being around guys swearing and smoking and stuff like that. I sort of wanted to do that, but somehow I just didn’t have that kind of stuff in me.

I did skip classes once in a while, but I didn’t go down to the bridge where the smokers were. I just went down to Abel’s Store and bought myself a candy bar or a popsicle or something like that. Sometimes I was in my classes. I started using a couple of minor swear words.”

That year, for the first time in my school career, I had a teacher who liked me best. His name was Mr. Sorensen. But I called him Clem because he was not around,

He was from Sanpete County and had a wonderful sense of humor. He said he went hunting with a fellow who had the shakes. The fellow who shook aimed his twenty-two rifle at a bird in a distant tree. He fired and the bird fell. He shouted, “I got him.”

Clem replied, “You should’ve got him. You aimed at the whole tree.”

Mr. Sorensen was a great sports fan and he loved to talk about Kent and how that this year would win the state

championship. But I could tell as much as we like Kent he liked me better. Maybe that's the reason that Mr. Sorensen is my favorite schoolteacher of all time.

At school I was pretty friendly but sometimes at home I would be a little ornery. I had always like Christmas because I got some really neat toys. But now Christmas mainly just brought me socks and shirts and stuff like that. So that Christmas when I was fifteen years old all the presents had been opened and I was a bit discouraged.

There were a lot of feelings I had on that Christmas day that I didn't tell anyone about because I couldn't really explain them.

I was all alone, sitting in the parlor by the Christmas tree. Kent had given Dad a little silver metal toy gun for a present as a joke. It shot BBs, but wasn't any threat to the neighborhood birds because it had little power.. And even with a dead aim you could barely hit the ground.

While I was sitting there feeling bad about feeling bad, I picked up Dad's gun and looked at it.

I shot it a couple of times at the cardboard box Then I looked over at the Christmas tree. I drew dead aim on a blue ornament hanging way out on the end of a branch about halfway up. Of course, I didn't shoot because nobody in all the history of mankind had ever shot a Christmas tree ornament.

I lowered the gun and was about to set it aside. The trouble was, I was so sad that I just felt like shooting at something. I raised the gun again, aimed right at the ornament,

and slowly squeezed the trigger. It was almost impossible to even hit the tree with that gun, much less the blue ornament, but, incredibly, the ball exploded into hundreds of silver and blue fragments. I was shocked at what I'd done. Then, as luck would have it, Mom entered the room. I've never seen her look more startled. She turned from the mess on the floor and looked at me. I was still holding the gun. There was no use telling her I hadn't done it. Kent wasn't home, so I couldn't blame him.

She didn't get angry. She just looked at me for what seemed like a long time. I didn't want to look back but I knew that I had to. I could tell she couldn't believe that her son George could have done such a thing. I was wishing she'd get mad because I knew you couldn't be both disappointed and mad at the same time. The most painful thing that could ever happen to me was to have my mom disappointed.

I told her I'd pick up the pieces. She didn't say anything, just turned and walked out of the room, her eyes moist. In a few minutes I went in to where she was sitting in her rocking chair. I didn't say I was sorry again because she could always tell how I felt and she knew I was about as sorry as anybody had ever been. She reached out and held my hand. As I stood close to her, I felt that toys didn't matter much. The only thing that counted was not hurting people and doing good things instead of bad things.

Later that day I tried to pick up the pieces of the broken ornament and put them together with glue. I soon knew I couldn't do it, any more than I could put a broken egg back

together. I finally gave up and just sat there. I hadn't cried in two years. And I didn't cry then. I wanted to, but I couldn't.

I decided then and there that that would be the last ornament I'd ever break. Just deciding that made me feel better.

I was still too little and too slow and too weak to be even and averagely good basketball but I tried out and my name got on the list. I thought it was because my last name was Durrant but I was just glad to be there because I had a dream that someday I'd grow needed all the practice I could get. I shouldn't of felt bad about my basketball career at that point of time because of lease twenty other sophomores long to be on the team but didn't make it.

I spent most of that time on the bench the sophomore game sort of hoping that Louise wouldn't be there to observe my failure.

Springtime came and the lovebird bit my fellow sophomores. I classmate, Wendell had a girlfriend was a senior. It was hard for me to know that software could have a girlfriend who is a senior but I saw them going down the hall and Wendell had his arm around her.

I was amazed at any fellow can have the courage to right in public, in the school hallway crammed with students and walked down the hall with his arm around girl. Next hour as I sat in history class all I could think about was, " I want to do that, and when I'm at junior I will.

Note: Jumping ahead I didn't have the courage to do that when I was a junior. But I thought, when I am a senior to do that. But when I was a senior didn't have the courage to do it. Of course if I had had the courage I don't think there was a girl who would go down the hall with my arm around her.

Well there's more I could say about the year I was a sophomore but we better move along or I'll never 'graduate.'

I used to measure myself standing against the wall making a mark to see if I had grown. During the summer for my junior year I was elated when the mark was up almost an inch and half. I still wasn't very big but I was growing.

As the school year began I wanted to go out for football but decided I'd better spend my time practicing basketball which because that was my first love.

Kent was no longer in school he had graduated. The hopes that he would lead the cavemen to the state championship was dead was lost when for two years in a row the great Kent Durrant, perhaps the most gifted basketball player that the state of you who taught had ever known lost the crown little old grants still both years. I could say much about that but just be summed up by the fact that each of these losses brought me greater heartache and anything in my life had ever brought me before.

But that was now water under the bridge it was time to move on my chances of even get to play was very remote to say nothing of leading our team to the state championship. But with no hope of and yet a small dream I practice my heart out

to something that meant more to me than school or the church or anything else – game of basketball.

If I could brag just a little, I did make the junior varsity team. Against Lehi I made fifteen free shots in a row. I shot them underhanded which was the old-fashioned way. The crowd who were arriving with the varsity game were in awe at my uncanny ability.

Academically, without really trying, I was able to a straight C average.

Louise didn't did not know of my low grade point average or she might've told me, "George why don't you get A's." But she was not sent by the Lord to my school to encourage me academically. She had been sent there to say hello to me and in so doing give me the courage to try to be a fine young man.

I remember the time came for our junior prom. Louise was the cochairman of that big event. One day when I was in the gymnasium hanging crepe paper to make the hall look beautiful for the dance she came to my side and said, "George who are you taking to the prom?"

I pulled another strand of the crepe paper and mumbled, "I don't go to dances."

She replied, "I want you to go George."

For a brief shining moment I thought she was asking me to go with her and I replied, "Maybe I'll go."

She then said, "My friend Barbara cries each night because she doesn't have a date. I want you to take her."

I was shocked when Barbara agreed to go with me. I was awkward and couldn't dance very well but Barbara was thrilled and her dream had come true for she was able to attend the junior prom.

Now for some more religion. You can't get enough of that.
Becoming a Priest

A month after beginning my junior year, in high school George turned 16 years old. It was time for me to become a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

Bishop Grant, my new bishop, took George's aside after Sunday school to schedule a time when he could be ordained me to this new office.

Seven days later as I entered the chapel I was greeted by the bishop who told me that the ordination would take place right after Sunday school.

After Sunday school, I hurried to be the first to arrive in the bishop's office. The bishop arrived next and I pleaded, "Could we keep the door closed for a few minutes there's something else I want to talk to you about?"

The bishop closed the door behind him and asked, "Sure. What's on your mind?"

"I don't know if I can memorize that long prayer that the priests say when they bless the bread and water."

he bishop replied "You don't have to memorize it. You read it. You can do that can't you?"

I replied, "I can read it, but not when everyone in the chapel is listening."

Bishop Grant replied, "The Lord will bless you. With his help there's nothing you can't do."

The bishop laid his hands on my head and ordained me to be a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

At this time of my life, I was finally growing taller and had grown out on my original navy blue suit. The next week my mother bought me a brand-new baby blue suit so that I would look like a priesthood man.

An analysis

Looking back on my 'navy blue suit situation' I have come to the conclusion that though I prayed to grow, my mother prayed that I wouldn't grow because she at that time couldn't afford to buy me a new navy blue suit. It was all course folly to try to out pray my mother.

The next Sunday, I as a newly ordained priest was greeted at the front door of the chapel by my compatriot Herbie Pawlowski. The two of us made our way solemnly to sacrament table.

The opening song was sung. The opening prayer was said. The announcements were made. The organist began to play the hymn, "Oh It Is Wonderful that He should care for us enough to die for us." The congregation began to sing. It was time.

Herbie and myself as newly ordained priest stood in unison at the sacrament table, reached out, took in hand the corners of the white cloth and uncovered the sacrament trays. We then then began to break the slices bread into the sacrament trays.

Of this experience George recalls: "I knew just the right size pieces in which to break the bread Finally the bread was broken. Herbie spoke softly, "Do you want to do the bread?"

"I do."

I adjusted the card so I could see it perfectly. I cleared my throat. I lowered my voice an octave so I would sound more spiritual.

I read the first words, "Oh God the Eternal Father..." When I said those holy words all fear left my heart. I continued on, without mistakes, to the final "amen."

I stood and Herbie and I handed the trays across the sacrament table to the deacons. I humbly hoped that somehow these new deacons would learn their sacred duties as well as Herbie and I had done.

"As the Deacons went their way, Herbie and I sat down. A feeling of goodness overcame me. I was overwhelmed by what I had just been able to do. Involuntarily I looked at my mother. She was shedding tears of joy. I looked around and everyone was looking at me – not in derision but in admiration. Somehow I felt that at that moment I became the real George Durrant.

Later in life I realized that that was the most spiritual and joyous moment of my entire life.

During my junior and senior years in high school I blessed the sacrament each Sunday. Each week as I broke the bread I thought to myself, “The hands that are used to break this sacred bread can never be used to hold a can of beer or a cigarette or do other unholy things.’

In my better moments, I thought, “The tough guys are not the ones up the canyon drinking beer. The tough guys are down in the Valley doing their priesthood duties.

Don’t get me wrong I didn’t always think these lofty thoughts. But I knew that subconsciously these were the very thoughts that enabled me to live in a more respectable way as I traveled through the difficult years of high school.

I dreamed during the summer before my senior year in high school that this would be the year when I would really blossom. I would be chosen as a senior class president. I would make Allstate in basketball and he would be popular with the girls.

I felt that as he reached each of these goals it would form the foundation for what I really wanted. And what I really wanted was to be known as a “big wheel.” When people saw me I wanted them to say, “There’s George and he is a big wheel.”

Those goals sound pretty impressive don’t you think?

Now I’ll tell you how I did in reaching those goals:

“My first goal was to be senior class president. Unfortunately for me the students did not know what a good leader was so I

was never nominated to be class president. And of course never elected.

During football season I spent my time in the gymnasium practicing basketball. I had grown taller during the summer – 6'3. " so I was big enough to achieve my Allstate status. But by Christmas we had played five games and I was not the star in any one of them. Gradually, I think because the coach like me best I was relegated to the bench. It is very difficult to make Allstate from the bench.

As I write this I feel that I'm might have disappointed you or perhaps even made you feel sorry for me. So perhaps it's time to brag a little. I was the star in one game. We were playing B Y high school. The best team in the state. I was of course on the bench. But after halftime Leroy Griffin are starting center committed his fifth personal and the officials ordered him to leave the game. Our coach called timeout to decide what to do. The coast looked toward me and then looked away. He took three steps forward and three steps back. While he was pondering my cousin Boyd Durrant who was the chief of police for American Fork and who was at the game in his uniform came on set on the bench beside me, put his arm around me and said, "George, if the coach put you in don't you disgrace the family name."

I was petrified. Finally the coach with no other option shouted, "Durrant take your sweats off and get in there."

Suddenly I was playing better than I ever played before. I was getting almost every rebound but I was not scoring. There were just a few seconds remaining in the game when I came down

with the rebound between two opposing players one of them striving to knock the ball for my hands hit my arms the referee blew the whistle. I walked to the foul line. The noise was so loud just turned into a buzz every eye in the gymnasium was fixed on me I picked up the ball, caressed it and brought it to a shooting and let it go.

Note: My wife Susan told me to write stories, but to never write a story where I was the hero. With that question in my heart I cannot conclude the story. You'll just have to guess whether or not the ball found its way into the net. Oh shucks. Some of you are so disappointed so I'll just add, two seconds later I was in the arms of my coach. I was a hero. Forgive me Susan but you also told me to always tell the truth. So that was my moment of glory.

From then on my senior season went downhill. I only got in the games when the score was 82 to 14 and were only forty-two seconds left – it didn't matter which team was eighty-two and which team was fourteen. That's when I went in often to the taunting of the student body shouting, "Put George in."

So there was no Allstate honors for me. Fortunately for me I was a dreamer and as I walked home from a bench sitting game, often in a snowstorm, I would say to myself, "next we can practice I'll really do good. The coach will be forced to start me. I'll make a make twenty-five points. I'll be the star. I'll go to that after the game dance and every girl in the place will want to dance with me. It didn't matter that the dream never came true. It just mattered that it made me feel good to be a dreamer.

Now I'm back to my third goal: to be popular with the girls. But the problem was the girls in my school were dumb and I was undiscovered.

But lest you suspect that I was a total dud I'll tell you that by my senior year the best looking girl in the school, the most popular girl in the school, the most academically gifted girl in school was my girlfriend.

She did not know she was my girlfriend because I never told her she was. But I was the authority on who girlfriend was and it was Louise. I couldn't even look at a map of the southern states and see Georgia and Louisiana kind of together without getting all shook up. That's how I felt about Louise.

Like I said I think she was only in my school because have always been Heavenly Father's favorite (*I hope you would disagree with that and say that you know that you are Heavenly Father's favorite.*)

As my senior year progressed I felt some general changes within myself. I was still held back from radiating much of a personality by my shyness.

Looking back on those days;

I believe that if you're really handsome in high school Heavenly Father blesses you and makes you timid. I believe that's why I was timid. He was saving me for the latter days."

As my senior year war on I finally did get a date

Looking back on those days George reported;

“I believe that if you’re really handsome in high school Heavenly Father blesses you and makes you timid. I believe that’s why I was timid.”

About the only date I had in high school the summer before my senior year. Ronnie Clements was our paperboy. We took a paper that was delivered in the late afternoon. I knew he also delivered papers to a certain girl – not Louise another girl named Carol. In a burst of boldness brought on by long summer days I asked Ronnie to ask Carol I could take her to a movie on Friday night.

I was shocked when the next day Ronnie came pedaling up on his bike and excitedly told me that Carol said she would be thrilled to go to the movie with me. Ronnie told me that he had told Carol I would be at her house at six thirty Friday night so that they could go to the 7 o’clock movie.

I did not have a car so I walked down to her house and then the two of us walked three blocks To the Cameo Theater. As we walked along I could think of nothing to say so I remained silent and so did she.

We entered the theater and I saw the popcorn that was for sale. I bought a sack. I remember the name of the movie was *Sentimental Journey*. The movie was about as exciting as our lack of conversation with each other.

During the movie I nervously ate several handfuls of popcorn. I wondered if I should offer Carol some, but I was fearful that if I did she would say, ‘No.’ I didn’t think I could stand such a rejection. So I ate whole sack of popcorn myself.

That date was the beginning and ending of my dating with that girl and every other girl.

It was now the month May and the school year came to an end as was my high school career. It was the last day of school and none of us went to the meaningless classes.

Four of my friends and I sat on the front lawn near the big weeping willow tree that graced the front of dear old American Fork high school.

As we sat there, the conversation between the four of us centered on what we were going to do now that we were out of high school. The others dreamed of getting a job, a car and getting married. I really did not like any of those ideas, but I had hardly any idea of what I was going to do.

While we were talking I felt the presence of someone standing above me. I looked up and to my astonishment I saw it was Louise. She spoke, "George I've been looking for you. I want to write in your yearbook. Could I do that?"

The other four in the group were even more surprised than me at her presence and especially at the fact that she was paying such attention to me. I'm sure they were thinking, "George is a dud. Why is this most popular girl in the school talking to him?"

I almost boldly replied to Louise, "Sure you can write in my yearbook."

Louise's next words were, "I want to go somewhere where I can be alone to write. I might keep your yearbook for a half hour or so."

I replied, "You can keep it as long as you want Louise."

I handed her the yearbook and she departed.

I tried not to give the impression to the other fellows that I was a "big wheel" but I'm sure that they sensed that I was.

For the next half-hour or so I wasn't much good at making conversation about the future because my mind was so consumed with the fact that Louise was somewhere alone writing in my yearbook.

Finally she returned. She smiled as she said "Thank you George." gone. As she handed me the book it sort of fell open to where she had written. I quickly saw that her words had filled the whole page. Then as suddenly as she appeared she was gone

I sensed that the other fellows wanted to see what she had written. But I said to myself, "These guys are not worthy to see what Louise wrote to me." I quickly closed the book.

Early that evening I was alone in my back bedroom preparing to put on my best clothes – my navy blue suit, a white shirt and a red tie. I relished the thought that that night Louise would finally see me dressed in the clothes which I usually reserved for church activities. Surely she would think I was handsome.

Realizing that the graduation ceremony would take place in hour later. I sensed that now would be a good time to read what Louise had written.

My hands were trembling as I held the book , gently opened it and thumbed through a few pages until I was looking at her message. I was shocked at her first words! I could scarcely believe my eyes for her words were, "Dear George."

I whispered to myself, "Why did she call me 'dear' unless..." I read again the words, 'Dear George.' After savoring these sacred words for a few seconds I continued to read.

On the next line were the words, "I think you were the nicest boy in the senior class."

I stopped reading and lifted my eyes from the page and looked toward the window. I had a tinge of regret. I did not want to be known as the 'nicest boy.' I wanted to be known as the most athletic boy. As the most popular boy. As a boy who was a, "big wheel."

I did not want to be known as the nicest boy. I took a deep breath and read again the words, 'I think you were the nicest boy in the senior class. '

Somehow the words sounded different this time. A smile spread itself across my face as I said to myself, "I guess I am a pretty nice. "I guess being nice is even better than some of the other things I wanted to be."

I read on to see what else Louise had said, "I think you will go to college."

I shook my head from side to side indicating that there was little hope of that. I had barely made it through high school. But again I considered her words and I said to myself, "Maybe I will go to college. I never really tried in high school. Maybe I could go to college."

Louise's next words shocked me. She had written, "I'll bet you will go on a mission for our church."

I put my hand on my forehead and rubbed it back and forth. With my eyes closed I whispered, "I can't even hardly talk a girl into going out with me. How could I ever talk anyone into joining the church?"

Maybe I will... maybe I will go on a mission."

The rest of the Louise's writings were mainly about the memories we had shared in high school. After reading them I went back to the top the page and read again the words, Dear George.""

I closed the book.

Her message was second in importance only to my patriarchal blessing which I would receive later. "

A month after beginning my junior year, in high school I turned 16 years old. It was time for me to become a Priest in the Aaronic Priesthood.

Bishop grant, my new bishop, took me aside after Sunday school to schedule a time when I could be ordained to this new priesthood office.

I advised the bishop that perhaps I was not ready to be a priest. When the bishop asked why not, I reported, "Sometimes, I, like some of my teammates in the locker room, use bad words and swear words. I don't do it too often. But sometimes I do."

The bishop encouraged me to change my ways. He felt that my sins were not too serious and that being a priest would help me to do even better.

After that discussion when the bishop wanted to proceed with the ordination the next Sunday, I agreed.

Seven days later as I entered the chapel the bishop told me that the ordination would take place right after Sunday school, and that I should tell his mother so she could be there.

During Sunday school my mind was in a state of wonderment. "I asked myself, "Am I really worthy to be a priest?" I answered his own question, "I guess if the bishop thinks I'm worthy. I might be." I added, "I hope I can quit using bad words. I guess I will."

After Sunday school, I hurried to be the first to arrive in the bishop's office. The bishop arrived next and I pleaded, "Could we keep the door closed for a few minutes there's something else I want to talk to you about?"

The bishop closed the door behind him and asked, "Sure. What's on your mind?"

While the two were still standing I shook his head from side to side, and ran my hand through hair and said, "It's just... It's just

that I... I don't know. I don't think I can memorize that long prayer that the priests say when they bless the bread and water."

The bishop replied "You don't have to memorize it George. You just have to read it. You can do that can't you?"

I replied, "I can read it, but not when everyone in the chapel is listening."

Bishop Grant replied with words mingled with laughter, "George and I love you. You're one of the finest most honest guys I've ever known. The Lord will bless you. With his help there's nothing you can't do."

Just then there was a knock on the door. The bishop opened the door and my mother and Herbie Pawlowski and his parents entered the room.

Herbie was first to be ordained and then it was my turn. The bishop laid his hands on my head and ordain to be a priest in the Aaronic Priesthood of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- Day Saints. While he was still talking, The bishop added these words to the blessing, "Dear Heavenly Father bless George with the knowledge that whatever You ask him to do he will be able to do."

After the "amen" was said, I stood up and shook hands with the bishop and looked into my leaders eyes. My doubts about becoming a Priest were erased from my mind.

At this time of my life, finally I was growing taller. Thus during the next week my mother bought me a brand-new navy

blue suit so that he would look like a priesthood man as I began my career as a priest.

The next Sunday, the newly ordained priest was greeted at the front door by his compatriot Herbie Pawlowski. The two made their way solemnly to sacrament table. My mother had made her way to the front row to be as close to her adored son as she could be.

The opening song was sung. The opening prayer was said. The announcements were made. The organist began to play the hymn, "Oh It Is Wonderful that he should care for me enough to die for me." The congregation began to sing. It was time.

George and Herbie stood in unison, reached out, took in hand the corners of the white cloth and uncovered the sacrament trays. The two young priesthood holders then began to break the slices bread into the sacrament trays.

Of this experience George reports:

"I knew just the right size pieces in which to break the bread. I looked down while I was performing this sacred task because I hardly dared look up to see all the folks singing and staring at me. Finally the bread was broken. Herbie spoke softly, "Do you want to do the bread?"

"I do."

I adjusted the card so I could see it perfectly. I cleared my throat. I lowered my voice an octave so I would sound more spiritual.

I ,read the first words, “Oh God the eternal father...” When I said those holy words all fear left my heart. I continued on, without mistakes, to the final, “Amen.”

I stood and Herbie and I handed the trays across the sacrament table to the new deacons. I humbly hoped that somehow these new deacons would be able to perform their sacred duties as well as he and Herbie had done “

As the the Deacons went their way, Herbie and I sat down. A feeling of goodness overcame me. I was overwhelmed by what I had just been able to do. Involuntarily I looked at my mother. She was shedding tears of joy. I looked around and everyone was looking at me – not in derision but in admiration. Somehow I felt that at that moment I became the real George Durrant.

(Later I realized that what I did that day was the most spiritual and joyous moment of my entire life.)

During his junior and senior years in high school George recalls:

“I blessed the sacrament each Sunday. Each week as I broke the bread I thought to myself, “The hands that are used to break this sacred bread can never be used to hold a can of beer or a cigarette or do other unholy things.’

In my better moments, I thought, “The tough guys are not the ones up the canyon drinking beer. The tough guys are down in the Valley doing their priesthood duties.

Special note: I want it to be known that I didn't always think these lofty thoughts just recorded as I participated in the sacrament. But I know that subconsciously these were the very thoughts that enabled me to live in a more respectable way as I traveled through the difficult years of high school.

I dreamed during the summer before my senior year in high school that this would be the year when I would really blossom. I would be chosen as a senior class president. I would make Allstate in basketball and I would be popular with the girls.

I felt that as he reached each of these goals it would form the foundation for what I really wanted. And what I really wanted was to be known as a "big wheel." When people saw me I wanted them to say, "There's George and he is a big wheel."

My goals sound pretty impressive don't you think?

Now Let's have me, in my own words, tell us how he did in reaching those goals:

"My first goal was to be senior class president. Unfortunately for me the students did not know what a good leader was I was never nominated to be class president. And of course never elected.

During football season I spent my time in the gymnasium practicing basketball. I had grown taller during the summer – 6'3. " so I was big enough to achieve my all-state status. But by Christmas we had played five games and I was not the star in

any one of them. Gradually I was relegated to the bench. It is very difficult to make all-state from the bench.

My goal to be popular with the girls was hinging upon me being all-state. Girls like basketball players, but not those sitting on the bench. So saying I was popular with the girls would be quite an overstatement.

My only solace was that the best looking girl in the school, the most popular girl in the school, the most academically gifted girl in school was my girlfriend. She did not know she was my girlfriend because I never told her. But I was the authority on who was my girlfriend was and it was Louise.

As my senior year progressed I felt some general changes within myself. I was still held back from radiating much of a personality by my shyness. I recall when I was a sophomore I saw some of the guys who were juniors and seniors – bona fide big wheels – walking down the halls of the school with their arms around girls talking and laughing. I looked on in envy and said to myself, “When I’m at junior I’m going to do that.”

When I became a junior I said to myself, “I’m going to wait until I’m a senior to do that.” I decided to put it off for two reasons, first, I was too timid to do that, and second I couldn’t find a girl who would go down the hall with my arm around her.

It was now the month May and the school year came to an end as was my high school career. It was the last day of school and none of us went to the meaningless classes. Four of my friends and I sat on the front lawn near the big weeping willow

tree that graced the front of dear old American Fork high school.

As we sat there, the conversation between the four of us centered on what we were going to do now that we were out of high school. The others dreamed of getting a job, a car and getting married. I really did not like any of those ideas, but I had hardly any idea of what I was going to do.

While we were talking I felt the presence of someone standing above me. I looked up and to my astonishment I saw it was Louise. She spoke, "George I've been looking for you. I want to write in your yearbook. Could I do that?"

The other four in the group were even more surprised than me at her presence and especially at the fact that she was paying such attention to me. I'm sure they were thinking, "George is a dud. Why is this most popular girl in the school talking to him?"

I almost boldly replied to Louise, "Sure you can write in my yearbook."

Louise's next words were, "I want to go somewhere where I can be alone to write. I might keep your yearbook for a half hour or so."

I replied, "You can keep it as long as you want Louise."
I handed her the yearbook and she departed.

I tried not to give the impression to the other fellows that I was a "big wheel" but I'm sure that they sensed that I was.

For the next half-hour or so I wasn't much good at making conversation about the future because my mind was so consumed with the fact that Louise was somewhere alone writing in my yearbook.

Finally she returned. She smiled as she said "Thank you George." Then as suddenly as she had appeared she was gone. As she handed me the book it sort of fell open to where she had written. I quickly saw that her words had filled the whole page.

I sensed that the other fellows wanted to see what she had written. But I said to myself, "These guys are not worthy to see what Louise wrote to me." I quickly closed the book.

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My hands were trembling as I held the book, gently opened it and thumbed through a few pages until I was looking at Louise's message.

I was shocked at her first words! I could scarcely believe my eyes for her words were, "Dear George."

I whispered to myself, “Why did she call me ‘dear’ unless...” I read again the words, ‘Dear George.’ After savoring these sacred words for a few seconds I continued to read.

On the next line were the words, “I think you were the nicest boy in the senior class.”

I stopped reading and lifted my eyes from the page and looked toward the window. And had a tinge of regret. I did not want to be known as the ‘nicest boy.’ I wanted to be known as the most athletic boy. As the most popular boy. As a boy who was a, “big wheel.”

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Somehow the words sounded different this time. A smile spread itself across my face as I said to myself, “I guess I am a pretty nice boy. I guess being nice is even better than some of the other things I wanted to be.”

I read on to see what else Louise had said, “I think you will go to college.”

I shook my head from side to side indicating that there was little hope of that. I had barely made it through high school. But again I considered her words and I said to myself, “maybe I will go to college. I never really tried in high school. Maybe I could go to college.”

Louise’s next words shocked me. She had written, “I’ll bet you will go on a mission for our church.”

I put my hand on my forehead and rubbed it back and forth. With my eyes closed I whispered, "I can't even hardly talk a girl into going out with me. How could I ever talk anyone into joining the church?"

But then it seemed like someone had turned the lights on in the room as I remembered how I wondered if I could ever have the courage to say the prayer at the sacrament table. I did that. I love doing that. Maybe I will... maybe I will go on a mission."

The rest of the Louise's writings were mainly about the memories we had shared in high school. After reading them I went back to the top the page and read again the words, Dear George.""

I closed the book.

Her message was second in importance only to my patriarchal blessing which I would receive later. "

Later that night I graduated from high school. I wondered what would really happen next. Was Louise right in betting that I would go to college? Right or wrong I could never forget her words, "I'll bet you will go to college."

The next week after graduation I got to thinking about something that had happened months before. I was in Hap Holmstead's American problems class. Hap was talking about something or other, and I was talking to my friend Worb about fishing for catfish down at Utah Lake. Hap interrupted his

lecture and paused and asked, "Could I get you two fellows to pay attention."

We both set up straight and ended our private little conference. Hap added, "If you guys keep goofing off you're going to end up working at a service station all the rest of your lives."

I was shocked when Hap said that because working at a service was exactly what I felt would be a job and I would like the rest of my life.

Anyway, as fate would have it, a week later I got a job working for Leonard Kelly at the Phillips 66 service station just across the street the tabernacle in American Fork.

About midsummer when I was pumping gas to fill up Lloyd Wright's brand-new Chevrolet I once again recalled Louise's prophecy, "I'll bet you will go to college."

From that moment on I began to save my meager salary because I knew it would cost money for tuition when in the fall when I went over to Provo and enrolled in Brigham Young University.

