

Growing Up in the Church



From an interview with Elder Stephen B. Oveson of the Seventy, currently serving in the North America Southwest Area Presidency; by Janet Peterson

Bring [your children] up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

I grew up in the dryland wheat-farming country of northeastern Oregon, where my father managed an agricultural experiment station. I spent my boyhood in the little town of Moro, Oregon, which had about 300 people. There were no other members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Moro. We were the only members in the whole county.

We attended a small branch in The Dalles. But when I was about five years old, World War II started and we could not get tires or extra gasoline and could not drive the 80-mile round-trip each Sunday. So a home branch was organized in our home.

Each Sunday we held sacrament meeting and Sunday School. My father

taught my older brother, Richard, and my older sister, Joan. My mother taught my younger sister, Mary, and me. My mother was an excellent teacher and a wonderful storyteller. She made the scriptures come alive. We sang hymns and Primary songs.

My parents taught us exactly who we were and where we came from. I grew up with the sure knowledge of Father in Heaven, of

Riding a tricycle at age 6 or 7



Jesus Christ, and of the teachings of the gospel. My testimony developed steadily because of the teachings I received in my home.

When I was 12, we moved near Pendleton, Oregon, a city of 7,000 people. For the first time I lived in a ward. A couple of years later, my father was called to the high council of the Union Stake. He served in the stake presidency for more than 12 years.

During my teenage years, I

traveled with him to high council or stake presidency assignments. We'd get up early on Sunday morning and drive some distance to his assignment. As we drove, he taught me the gospel. He had great gospel knowledge. I have found that I usually know the right answer to gospel doctrine questions because I was raised in a home where the gospel was understood and taught correctly.

Next to the gospel, the most helpful thing I learned in my youth was the value of work. When I was eight, I joined 4-H Club and started raising lambs and calves. As a nine-year-old, I had the grand champion lamb at The Dalles Livestock Show. I learned to keep my own books, and I made a profit. I also mowed lawns. When I was 10, I started shining shoes in the only barbershop in town.

We had a cow, and I took care of it, milked it, and delivered milk to a couple of customers. Then I delivered the local newspaper, the *Dalles Chronicle*. I earned my own money and was able to buy the bicycle I wanted.

You children need to know that work is a good thing. It is



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enjoyable. Earning your own money is good. It gives you freedom to buy what you need. I always paid my tithing first, and I always had enough money because I did and because I had learned to work. Children, what you earn will make you a lot happier than things that are given to you for free.

Children, begin writing down your goals at a very early age. They should include fulfilling your requirements in the Church and doing well in school. The promise "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) applies to each of you. The "truth" includes doing the best

With his bride, Dixie Randall, at the Mesa Arizona Temple



you can and making right choices. If you keep the commandments, you will be free to accept callings in the Church. You will be free to go to the temple. If you don't keep the commandments, you will not be free to do either. Anytime you break the commandments of the Lord, you bind yourself in chains.

We don't have any commandments from the Lord that aren't for our own good. If we keep them, we'll be happy. If we don't, we'll be unhappy. It's that simple. ●