

A Different Kind of PIONEER

Children today can be pioneers too, . . . Walking our pathway with heaven in view (Children's Songbook, page 215).

FICTION

By Heather Christensen

Cody stared at the blank piece of paper in front of him. *It's no use*, he thought disgustedly. *I'm never going to come up with anything, even if I sit here all day.* While he sat worrying about his problem, there was a knock on his bedroom door. "Come in," he said.

It walked Jason, his next-door neighbor and the best friend in the whole world. He was carrying a dirty orange basketball. "Come on—let's go shoot some hoops."

"I can't," Cody answered. "I have to finish my Primary talk."

"You're still working on that? Don't you have to give it tomorrow?"

Cody nodded as Jason sat next to him on the bed. "What's it supposed to be on, anyway?"

Cody frowned. "That's the problem," he said. "Sister Hansen said she wants me to talk about 'My Pioneer Ancestors.' I told her I don't have any pioneer ancestors because my parents are both converts. She just smiled and said, 'As members of the Church we all have pioneer ancestors, Cody.'"

"What's that supposed to mean?" Jason asked.

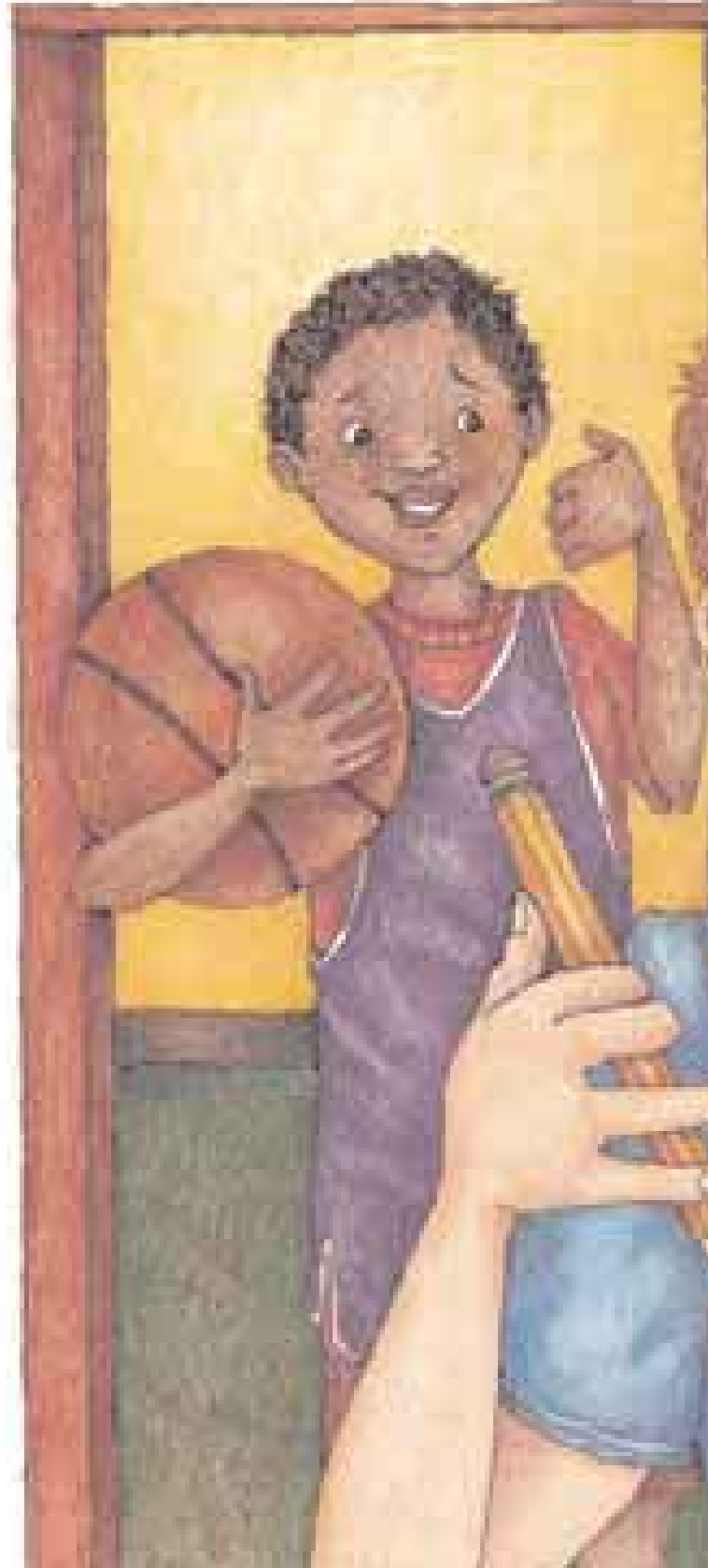
"Beats me. I'm probably the only kid in the whole Primary who doesn't have at least one ancestor who pulled a handcart across Wyoming."

"Why don't you just read a story about some pioneer?" Jason asked.

"Because after she told me that business about everyone having pioneer ancestors, she told me that she didn't want me to read some old story out of a magazine or something."

"Boy, she really knows how to make it tough," Jason sympathized. "I know! Why don't you borrow one of my pioneer ancestors."

"Great idea!" Cody slapped Jason on the back. Then he slumped down again. "Wait a minute," he said, "that won't work. Your mom teaches the CTRs. She'll know what I'm doing."





“Oh. Right. Are you positive you don’t have any pioneer ancestors? Not all the descendants of some of my pioneer ancestors stayed in the Church. Maybe one of your ancestors joined the Church, crossed the plains, then left Utah.”

Cody’s face brightened. “Maybe so. I never thought of that. Let’s go downstairs and see if anyone knows.”

Cody’s sister, Karyn, was just coming in the front door when they got downstairs. “Karyn,” Cody asked, “Do you know if we have any pioneer ancestors?”

“What kind of pioneer?” she asked, as she hung up her coat in the hall closet.

“What do you mean?” Cody asked. “How many kinds of pioneers are there?”

Karyn smiled. “Oh there are lots of kinds. My history teacher told us that a pioneer is anyone who prepares the way for others to follow.” The boys looked confused, so she explained further. “Like how the pilgrims prepared the way for others to come to America. Or how early doctors paved the way for better medicine.”

“How about Christopher Columbus?” Cody asked. “Wasn’t he a pioneer for other explorers?”

“Sure,” Karyn said, smiling. “That’s another good example.”

“I thought pioneers were only the people who pulled handcarts across the plains,” Jason said.

“Well, they were pioneers, too,” Karyn said.

“Because of their great sacrifices, the Church grew strong. For many of them, the decision to join the Church affected their families for generations. That’s what made them such great pioneers.”

Cody thought for a minute about Karyn’s definition of pioneers. He was pretty sure that none of the other kids in Primary had thought of pioneers like that before. Suddenly he had a terrific idea for his talk.

“Thanks, Sis. I know exactly what I’m going to give my talk on now.”

Jason looked at him in surprise. “You do? What?”

Cody grinned. “You’ll have to wait until tomorrow to find out.”

The next day in Primary, Cody sat in the front of the room, watching everyone else. He saw Jason sitting with the rest of his class. They were all being more reverent than Cody had ever imagined they could be. Jason must have told them all about Cody's mysterious talk, and they were all anxious to hear it. Then he saw his mom, dad, and sister come in and sit in the back and smile at him.

Soon Primary began. After everyone sang the birthday song, it was time for his talk. He slowly walked to the pulpit.

"For my talk, I decided to bring along a couple of real pioneers," he said. Jason stared at Cody. The rest of the children were craning their

necks, looking for pioneers. Even some of the teachers were searching for something out of the ordinary.

"These pioneers didn't cross the ocean, or pull a handcart across the plains, or even freeze any toes or fingers. But they did suffer a lot as the first ones in their families to join the Church. Their friends and family tried to discourage them from joining. They had to change their lives. And when they were married in the temple, no one in their families could be there. I think they are as much pioneers as anyone who crossed the plains to Utah. In fact, without their pioneering spirits, I wouldn't be standing here today. Mom, Dad, could you please come up and share your pioneer testimonies with us?"

Cody watched his mom and dad walk up to the front of the room. Karyn smiled at Cody and gave him a big wink, as if to say "Good for you!" Cody sat back and listened intently to his mother's testimony. *Maybe, he thought, someday I'll be a pioneer, too.*

