

## Full Time Mission Message #15

Elder / Sister xxxxx,

When I was a professional genealogist one of the things we did was helping people write their family history. There is one missionary story in particular that I think about a lot now. We thought we would share it with all of you as well.

This story was told to us by an older woman who was about 85 years old. We helped her write down her family history. She shared many life's experiences with us. One of the stories she told us was about her uncle. In the early 1900's, when she was about 5 years old, both of her parents were killed in a horse and buggy accident. Because of that she had to go live with her uncle and aunt in Idaho. They lived on a farm there. It was not uncommon in those days for men who were married with families to be called on missions. That is in fact what happened to her uncle. Even though he had a family and a farm they called him on a mission to the Southern States. In those days missionaries went without purse or script. That means they did not have any money of their own and they did not live in an apartment. They had to depend on non-members they met to feed them and let them sleep in their house at night. I thought Finland was a hard mission but I cannot imagine how hard that was for them. Her uncle finally came home after two years. That first night when he was home he had brought his missionary companion with him. He was from Oregon. He told them they had been companions the whole time. His companion said he wanted to meet his family before he went on home to Oregon.

As they sat there talking they told them of some of the experiences they had as missionaries. One experience they shared with them happened just a few weeks before they came home. Her uncle's missionary companion was telling them the story. He said they were in Alabama in a very hard area where none of the people would talk to them. They had gone 3 days with no food to eat and had slept in the woods at night. On the 4th morning as they started down a little dirt road they saw a house up ahead. They went off into the woods beside the road and prayed. They ask the Lord if He would soften the hearts of the people who lived in that house so they would give them something to eat. As they were praying they heard foot steps behind them. They opened their eyes and saw an old man with a long white beard and a shabby long dirty trench coat. He had walking up to them. They stood up and he asked them if they were hungry. They told him that they were. He reached into his knapsack and pulled out a warm loaf of bread wrapped in a white linen cloth. He handed it to them and said, "Here, you can have this". They were so involved in eating the nice warm bread that they did not notice him leaving. Then as her uncle's missionary companion was telling them this story he pulled out the white linen cloth and showed it to them. He said this is the cloth the bread was wrapped in. When he pulled it out her aunt started to cry. They asked her why she was crying. She said that a few days ago a Hobo came to her back door. They lived by a rail road track so they sometimes saw Hobos from the tracks. He knocked on the door. He had on a long dirty old trench coat and had a long white beard. She was very afraid of him and was not going to let him in. She thought she

would just ask him to leave. Then she thought of her husband being there on his mission and having to ask people for food every day. She did not let him come in but she ask him to wait. She had just baked bread and it was still cooling on the kitchen window sill. She took one of those warm loafs of bread and wrapped it in a white linen cloth, took it to the door and gave it to him. Then she looked at her husband’s missionary companion who was holding the white linen cloth his warm bread had been wrapped in and said to them, “That is my linen cloth that I wrapped that warm loaf of bread in that I gave to the hobo a few days ago.”

Her sharing that story with us had had a significant impact on my life ever since. It helped me be aware that there are many people from the other side of the veil who are watching out for us and our missionaries. We of course have no way to know who the Hobo was. Maybe it was one of the 3 Nephites.

Brother and Sister Vail

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