

## A Lesson In Life From Printers Ink

by Cordell Vail



I found an interesting picture today in my boxes of old stuff. This is a picture of Oren, my senior resident (sorry I have forgotten his last name now) when I lived in Chipman Hall at Helaman Halls at BYU in 1961. The reason this picture is so significant is not because of it being a picture of him but rather what I learned from the reason he is laying in newspapers. We decided to play a trick on him when he went home for Christmas. So just before he left one of the guys went in his room to talk to him and unnoticed by him, he unlatched his window. The way the halls were built back then there was a large ledge under the windows that a person could easily walk on. So after he left for Christmas later that day, one of the guys went out his window down the ledge to the Senior Residents window, came in his room and opened the door. For weeks and weeks we had all been saving our newspapers so we could stuff his room full after he left. Once we were done and had the whole room full, one of the guys went inside and closed the door, locked it again and pushed the papers up against the door as he wiggled his way back to the window. Then went out the window back to his room. Needless to say it was a real funny joke when Oren came back and could not open his door because of the papers inside. But the lesson I learned was from stuffing the papers in his room. We piled all the papers in the hall by his door then sort of formed a line and we each started picking up a sheet of paper, wadding it up and tossing it in his room. It took us about an hour to wad up that many papers. Then here is the "LESSON" I learned. As we all stood thereafter we were done stuffing the papers in his room, we realized that our hands were all black and we even had streaks of black printers ink dust on our upper lip, leading into our noses from the printers ink on the paper as we waded the papers up. I was astonished at that. It was like I saw this parallel to life in that experience. When you pick up a newspaper and read it you do not see any ink on your hands and especially around your nose. Even if you picked up 20 papers you would not see anything on your hands. But when we picked up literally 100's and 100's over and over, then we got printers ink all over us. I could see how that is just like our personal life. When we make one mistake or do something wrong, it does not really show in our life. Even if we make that mistake 10 times it does not have much of an effect on us normally. But if we do it 1000 times, over and over it becomes a habit. It becomes a part of our character. It is like the printers ink, one little encounter does not show but when we do it over and over it puts that puts a mark on us. I have thought of that example so many times since 1961. I did not realize I had a picture of Oren laying in the papers. I am so sorry we did not have the sense to take a picture of us with our black hands and black streaks of printers ink dust on our upper lips under our noses. But even without the picture of us, that example is set firmly in my mind and has been ever since that night. Little things when done often enough turn into big things. I guess it is the same example as when you wrap one thread round your thumbs. That is easy to break. 10 threads can still be broken, 20 are harder. However when you wrap a thread around your thumbs 100 times then it is very very difficult if not impossible to break the thread. It in a sense has become a part of your character and you cannot stop doing it (that is what the thread represents.... a habit, doing something over and over).