

May 26, 2003

Darlene Baird Missionary Journal

On May 19 we traveled to SLC and toured Welfare Square, The Humanitarian Center, Ate lunch at the Joseph Smith Memorial Bldg, listened to Elder Rudd (Pure Religion) and watched the movie "One Shepherd One Fold." Tuesday started our Welfare classes. We had two days of Employment training, one day of Humanitarian training and finished with Micro enterprise and Perpetual Education Fund. I shed a lot of tears. We watched videos of Wheel chair distribution, women feeding their families with a very small loan to start a business, and testimonies of education loans. We left the SMTC Thursday night stopped and saw Jim, Chandra, Austin, Jared, Jamie and Nolan. They had painted a huge poster and hung it on the garage door wishing us a Happy mission. Jared had lost his teeth. They were going to a party for Devin Harris five years cancer free. HooRay! We spent the night at Kim and Joan's. Poor kids they all thought as Cody stated. "Who is grandpa's new companion?" Grandpa told everyone "He had traded his young companion for and old one." So much for the blessing of white hair. On Friday Dick was able to get the camper shell installed on the pickup. We loaded up and headed for Wyoming by 1:30 PM. It seems like I have had to say too many goodbyes.

We drove to Green River and checked into our motel. Castle Rock is just two hundred feet from our motel window. Lovely dinner of homemade bread and fruit. You just have to enjoy Wyoming! What a sense of humor our creator has. Rocks, rocks and more rocks. Rocks piled high jumbled together forming a niche to catch seeds to grow. Huge piles of rocks with the top sliced off. (Me thinks giants use theses tables to serve breakfast.) Or maybe dinosaurs thought they were gigantic lollipops and licked off the top layer of chocolate.) Boulders and little rocks tossed together. Did our Creator shut his eyes and fling handfuls of rocks? Huge rocks resting quietly on tiny rocks, standing tall, facing the wind with courage. Rocks divided by color and crushed into long strips then stacked layer upon layer, color upon color forming Ribbon Mountains to "Please the eye."

Leaving Elder Kev's "Land of Desolation" the land turns green. I did not know antelope slept on a magic carpet of tiny purple flowers. Acres and acres of purple. As many times as I had traveled to Cheyenne I had never seen the Lincoln rock statue along the freeway. It took me by surprise to see his

bowed head guarding the way. Touched my heart to think of him and all he has done for our country.

Spring is a lovely time to travel across a desert. Green and more green. I fell in love with Nebraska! Puffy white clouds, blue, blue sky and green grass as high as the knees of horses. I started counting windmills at the Nebraska border. I quit at one hundred and five. We had traveled less than one hundred miles when I had reached that number. There were tiny windmills in front of homes to water gardens, the next size seemed to water livestock, bigger windmills for homes. The gigantic metal windmills marching in rows catching the wind and becoming electricity for a family. We took a little side trip to Big Springs NE. The night before a trucker had gone to sleep and totally wiped out an overpass on the freeway. He hit the pillars collapsing the entire span. The free way was to be closed at least twenty-four hours. Florence NE. Home of Winter Quarters Temple. We stayed at the "Mormon Trail Inn." Attended Church in the Garden Ward, a young married's ward. Tiny combined Priesthood and Relief Society (fifth Sunday) Humongous Primary. Lesson CTR. Choose to Read the Scriptures. Wandered the cemetery looking for Joseph Allen, five months old. Pondered on the temple grounds. Admired the stained glass windows. Beautiful, quiet day of 72 degrees. We ate Chinese food? for dinner. My surprise. No rocks in this area! None, zippo, nary a one. Imagine growing up never seeing a rock. Somewhere in Nebraska there was a change from semi-arid to arid. Omaha is GREEN. Grass is belly-high to a horse. Trees, trees and more trees. This must be a spectacular place in the fall. We saw St John's Basilica. The golden dome glistened for miles.

Iowa all rolling hills, terraced fields, corn, farm houses surrounded by trees, President Kimball must love Iowa it looks clean and neat. Miles of roadside lavender phlox and white daisies. Thank you Lady Bird Johnson. What a wonderful idea you had to scatter flower seeds across America's roadsides! We took an alternate route to Fort Madison near Nauvoo. The roadway was a divided highway but not the interstate. No semi trucks. YEA! We stopped at the gravesite of Chief Wapello. I had always heard of him. Someone from Wapello, Iowa named Wapello, Idaho. Chief Wapello was a good man. He wanted to be buried by his white friend. His gravesite is a memorial to his goodness.

May 29th What a night in Fort Madison. The fire motel alarms woke me up at 1:30 AM. All the action seemed to be in the hallway. People running back and forth. I'm not sure the pounding I heard was their feet or my heart. I could

hear the sirens blaring. I felt the door and it was not hot so I started to open it just a crack. Yikes the smell. I shut the door but unlocked it and went to the window. Fire engines and fireman everywhere. I found my clothes and figured out the window. I decided not to leave until someone hollered at me. An hour later the fireman left. Whew! Dick slept through it all. We wander about Nauvoo and attended the 11 AM session at the temple. It is beautiful and so much bigger than I imagined it would be. Last time we were here after Daniel's Wash. U. graduation we had walked around the temple site pacing off the cornerstones. Now a temple! The woodwork is elegant. The curved stairway wood and carpeting spirals five floors. The painting on the walls in the creation room is so vibrant. One wonders how one paints with such tender detail. I couldn't see much detail in the next room but Dick was able to describe it as "predatory." Needless to say the Celestial room is Celestial. The surprise ...as we walked into the Celestial room there was Aunt Katie Baird's sister Vonnie Ellis. Small world. We decided to leave Nauvoo and continue our journey. Traveling North in Illinois we again had lovely cool Oregon weather. We saw the birthplace of Ronald Reagan, Carl Sandburg, Gerald R. Ford and John Wayne. Hmmm. We stayed the night in Peru, Illinois. We went on our nightly walk to check out the countryside. The next morning we walked again and somehow we both lost each other. I stepped into Wal Mart to look for postcards and Dick was going to walk on to the motel. No postcards! I'm back out of the store in fifteen seconds and Dick has disappeared. I can't believe he could walk that fast. I check out both ways. After searching for 20 minutes I go back to the motel. BUT I'm locked out. The only thing I can figure out was he had accidentally use the extra security lock and then laid down to take a nap as he would not answer when I knocked. AND of course I needed to use the bathroom! Much later he comes down the hall. He had decided to wait for me at Wal-Mart by walking around the parking lot and did not see me come out of the store. He had been trying to find me. Why would my key not work? Who knows except the motel mechanic had to come and fix the lock to it let us back in the room Life is so funny sometimes.

May 22 On to Detroit. We slide through Indiana and into Michigan. So many trucks. We wonder if all freeways back east are made of concrete. Thunk, Thunk, Thunk I do not like Thunk tire noise BUT it we decided concrete roads are better than pulling as handcart. As we have traveled we laugh how we have been confused by the funny smells that seem to be at every rest stop, (Cigarette smoke)

June 1 For the next two weeks we are living in Novi MI. "Extended Stay America." Lovely living quarters. Small kitchenette, queen size bed, and clean. Another spring to enjoy as the tulips are just beginning to bloom here in Novi.

The Employment Resource Center is only four miles from here. We met our boss, Doug Mallory and his staff. He is going to be great to work with. Bruce and Janice Gilcrest, serving an employment mission from Orem, work in the office here and keep Brother Mallory organized. Janice and I became instant friends. He has every hour scheduled for us for the next two weeks. So much to learn. It has been fun to travel across the USA and see some of the places that I spent ten years talking to as I worked for L Kay Originals. Here in Novi area a man owned twelve Stride Rite stores and every few miles I recognize another town name. Yesterday we traveled to Toronto with the Gilcrests to attend a workshop. It was a long day. Four to Toronto a three hour workshop and four hours home. We met President Taylor. (Tremonton UT) and he told us that every ward/branch we attend in our mission we will be the minority. (The largest group of people in the mission to be baptized last year were Chinese.) The ward attending church in the mission home building is made up of people from forty-nine birth countries. My adventure is getting bigger!

The mission home is surrounded by tall buildings and a lot of concrete. We drove past our apartment complex and it is surrounded by more tall apartment buildings. I did not see one blade of grass while in Toronto! Today I am praying for a small window to be in our apartment. Friday and Saturday Dick's health was better. I think he has finally turned a corner and things will improve. Today we will attend church in the Livonia Ward.