

My Parents - King & Sharon Dalton

By Craig Dalton

Without comparing myself to Nephi of old I can truly say that I too was born of “*goodly parents*”. They worked hard to lead a large family in love and righteousness. I feel extremely fortunate to have been born into their household. I have often felt that my childhood was something akin to a fairy tale, a charmed time filled with dreams, adventure, fun times, even happy endings, but most of all love. My home life during my growing up years could easily have been the subject of a Norman Rockwell portrait, true Americana in its finest form. All of this I owe to my parents. They encouraged me in all that was good, corrected me frequently, but never squashed my dreams. Most of all they showed me what I wanted for myself someday, a home like theirs.

My father is distinguished among his peers as being extremely intelligent, honest, and hard working. In addition to these attributes I have noticed in him a great amount of patience, probably because I was the type of child that would make Job loose his temper.

My father was also noted for his many hobbies. It seems as though he tried about every sport or hobby imaginable and was good at most everything he tried. This was great for a boy growing up, because he allowed us to participate in most of the hobbies he indulged in. Photography, tennis, backpacking, scuba diving, and flying (airplanes) were some of my father's choicest hobbies during my childhood and youth.

Perhaps the quality I admire most about my father is his unselfishness. He had a lot of *stuff*, lots of *toys* you might say; boats, airplanes, dive gear, photography equipment, motorcycles, RVs, guns, and the list could go on and on. Throughout my youth I observed how quickly he loaned these expensive toys to just about anyone, seemingly without a second thought. Sometimes they'd come back broken or perhaps not come back at all, and yet it never seemed to faze him, it never caused him to withdraw his *stuff* from others and protect it, he was still as quick as ever to offer to lend it. As a youth I was amazed at this, because I watched most of the adults around me, including many of my friends' parents, who seemed so protective of their *stuff*. Yet my dad would allow his teenage sons to take his expensive boat out on the ocean, fly his airplane, run off with his camping gear or guns, without so much as a “now you be careful with that!” To him *stuff* could always be fixed, replaced, or done without. It never seemed to be a worry to him. I am still amazed at how truly free he is with whatever he has.

Let me conclude this sketch of my father's character by saying that he has been a leader in the business community and in our church and an exemplary father to me. He is a person I admire, respect, and, most of all, love.

My mother's teen-age years were spent in the Boise area. From what I have heard, she was apparently a very popular youth, being pretty and possessing a charming personality. My grandmother taught her to be a good homemaker (a very good homemaker). She learned the arts of sewing, quilting, cooking, thrift, and was most expert in maintaining a tidy and clean home. I can honestly say that I have never seen anyone keep a consistently cleaner house (with a large family) than my mother. This is a virtue that I took entirely for granted as a child growing up, but should be recognized as the admirable talent it is. She was also very good at making a comfortable home with very little. Unlike in later years, during my childhood my parents were not affluent, at times we had very little. The church's council on food storage hit close to home during those years as during parts of each year we found ourselves living off of that food storage. Mom was very good at managing a household with whatever was available and at times in her married life that was almost nothing.

As a child I remember my mother being very young in comparison to other kid's mothers (she was 19 years old when I was born). We were very close during my early childhood years

and she seemed to be more like a friend than a mother. This closeness did not diminish as I grew older, but it stands out in most of my earliest memories. I mention this to help describe an attribute of my mother that I will call being down to earth. She never made herself seem as though she were above anyone else, even her children. She was easy (comfortable) to be around, she was very real.

My mother was also very busy. It seems as though she was active in anything and everything. She always held callings in the church. From my earliest childhood memories she was always the Primary President. Shortly after I turned twelve and graduated from Primary, she was called as Young Women's president, a position she served in throughout my youth and beyond. It seemed that the bishops always stationed her in a position where she could keep a close eye on me.

She loves tennis and is very *outdoorsy* in nature, except for the fact that on campouts she always seemed afraid of bears. She learned accounting and computer work and has helped my father considerably over the years in the accounting business.

Probably the most important character trait that I have seen in my mother is that with all of her activities and interests she has always put her family first. I know that paramount in this woman's eyes is her husband followed closely by her children. I have seen her spend countless hours tutoring an uninterested grade school student when everyone was telling her that he's slow and should be held back a grade. The easy thing would have been to believe what she was told, however she never chose the easy road when it came to her family. I was that child (although not the only one) and although I remember her spending a great deal of time with me, I never knew I was having trouble in school. However, during junior high, high school, and my college courses, school was easy and I had no trouble getting good grades. I hate to think how being held back in grade school would have affected my life. What would have happened had she allowed me to be labeled "slow". I owe my mother a great deal for the love and patience she had with me, and this is just one occasion, there were many more.

Now for a few specific memories of each of my parents that I hold dear.

Times were substantively different during my early childhood years. My parents had grown up in rural Idaho where kids played and ran all over without much parental supervision or much worry. That's how they were raised and that's how they raised us. After moving to California, at the mature ages of 5 and 4, Kevin and I ran all over the neighborhood on our own playing in the citrus orchards, building forts, having battles, etc. It seemed normal to us at the time. The thought of two pre-school kids running around unattended in Southern California would make pretty much any parent today cringe. I remember spending a lot of time playing in some old junk cars abandoned in a field between our apartments and the nearby Michael's grocery store. We'd spend hours playing in those cars and I've often thought back and said "Mom, how in the world could you let a 4 and 5 year old play by themselves in a vacant lot in abandoned cars?!" A few years ago she responded, "Oh, I could see you from the kitchen window, I was watching!" That kind of ruined the memory for me, I always thought we were just "big".

A few months after moving to California, Kevin started kindergarten at Baldy View Elementary school, which was only a few blocks from our apartment. This meant that I spent what seemed like most of each day alone with my mother. I assume Shauna was with us too, but she wasn't much fun because all she did was lay there. I remember my mom being more of a friend than a mother. I remember her taking walks with me through the field or in the orange grove. She showed me a certain type of weed you could eat and how to make little scissors out of another type. She used to spend time watching me try to build things, and she was always a source of constant encouragement. She was the ideal mother for a little boy who didn't have anyone to play with while his older brother was in school. Almost everyday I used to watch and wait to see Kevin and his friend "Chucky" come across the field on their way home from school. I bet my mom was more relieved to see them come and take me off her hands.

During this time I don't remember spending a lot of time with my dad on a day to day basis because he was working so hard in his new job, however, we nearly always spent weekends doing something as a family. Much of the time we went on camping trips. My father enjoyed the outdoors and camping was a relatively inexpensive pastime and an excellent way to develop a rapport with children.

Even at the age of four I remember spending a lot of time hiking in the mountains with Dad and Kevin. Kevin and I had little backpacks that we carried a change of clothes in and Dad quite often carried us. I used to enjoy these little hiking trips more than just about anything else we did. I remember once when Dad took us each alone on a hike with him. On the trip I took with him we went up a familiar trail towards San Gorgonio mountain. At one place where we camped there was a lake and I spent most of my time catching *pollywogs* and putting them in an empty fruit cocktail can filled with water. Towards evening Dad came up and asked what I would like to have for dinner and I pointed to the fruit cocktail can and said *"this"*, he looked at me a little surprised and puzzled and chuckled, *"You want to have pollywogs for dinner?"* I looked at my can and back at him and said sternly, *"No, I want to have what used to be in the can!"*. He smiled and as we walked back to camp explained what this fruit stuff I liked to eat was called.

One hiking trip still stands out in my mind. I was about 5 years old and we had spent a long hard trip climbing up Mount San Gorgonio. The last portion of the trip was spent climbing up a rockslide to the top of the mountain and about a hundred yards from the top I decided that I had had enough and sat down. I remember my dad pleading with me explaining that we only had a little ways to go to make it to the top, but I absolutely refused to budge. He certainly would have even carried me to the top had I asked, he may have even offered. But I refused, I couldn't see the top, and I was mad. So with my utter rebellion he finally had to leave me sitting there, he wouldn't force me. In reality I must have been very close to the top because what father would leave a 5 year old sitting alone in the wilderness if he wasn't close enough to check on him? I have often thought how much my father mirrored how our Father in Heaven deals with us. He will encourage us, warn us, teach us, plead with us, even provided a Savior to carry us, but in the end He won't force us. Soon (although it seemed like forever to me) they came back down and we left. As a child I remember thinking "Oh, we hike up there all the time, I'll have another chance to climb that mountain." Over 40 years later, I have never been to the top of San Gorgonio! However that day my dad taught me a lesson I have never forgotten about *"giving up"*.

During my childhood Dad was especially fond of mountaineering. He never seemed willing to go up a mountain the normal easy way, he always seemed driven to go up some "mountaineer's route", which never consisted of a real trail. Mount Whitney brings back memories of throwing up beef stroganoff because of altitude sickness and lakes full of big trout that wouldn't bite anything, but for some reason we loved to go climb that mountain and it does bring back special memories of time together. Dad also always seemed to carry a pack that was so heavy that it required a forklift to put in the trunk of the car. The camera equipment alone that he carried usually weighed more than I did. So he was totally unsympathetic to cries of "my pack's too heavy!" From our earliest days both Kevin and I learned to hike very fast. Dad was a stickler about his kids not lagging behind, and enforced it with strategic "boot" placement to any behind that lagged within range. This helped me a great deal later when I went hiking with the Boy Scouts because hiking with them after hiking with my father was like a cakewalk.

Dad was a member of the Riverside Mountain Rescue and went on a number of rescue missions. He was always the hero in his young sons' eyes. I was so proud of him as I'd hear stories, or people would tell me he did this or that, or I'd see an article in the newspaper about him.

Growing up we did lots of outdoor activities together. Regularly took us shooting up at the range (which used to be where 21st Street in Upland dead-ended into Cucamonga Canyon) or up Lytle Creek Canyon. He was an excellent shot, especially with a pistol.

We spent a lot of time on the ocean. Kevin and I benefited from being the right age when he first took up scuba diving and spent a lot of time cruising around Catalina or San Clemente Islands. In particular I remember being so amazed at how long he could hold his breath under water while spear fishing. As a child it seemed like he'd be down there forever and I never knew where he'd pop up! Kevin's history records a lot of those stories so I'll defer to that.

Before Kevin and I went on our missions dad took us on a special deer hunting trip to the Copper Basin area of Idaho. He hired a guide out of Mackay and we packed in with horses spending several days. Dad was the only one who got a deer (although I got an elk but that's another story and we won't go there) but it was a great trip. A memory that will last a lifetime.

Another special excursion was a kayak trip down the upper Snake River and visits to Teton and Yellowstone Parks as a family along with our grandparents. That was another very memorable trip. Actually, we had so many different outings and trips that were all memorable and great that it would be impossible to do them justice here. Riding cycles out in the desert, Snow Canyon, Valley of Fire, Colorado River, hiking in the Grand Canyon, numerous camping trips to Idaho and the Sierras, Baja California, etc.

Holidays were always a source of extra excitement in our home. Every year I'd spend my time trying to devise a new trap to catch Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. Not that I was greedy or anything but I figured if I caught them I'd get all the loot. Fortunately for other kids none of the devices ever proved successful.

Normally Christmas at our house was celebrated by getting together with my cousins (the Trosts) and any Grandparents that happened to be visiting on Christmas Eve where we kids dressed up and acted out the birth of Christ. Afterwards we were allowed to open one present, usually one of the grandparents which normally consisted of pajamas and a small toy or puzzle to keep us occupied through the night (we were terrible insomniacs on Christmas Eve). After opening this present we would set out some cookies and candy for Santa Claus (I would set up my trap) and go to bed.

Another special memory of my mother in particular was candy. Christmas time at my house always meant delicious homemade candy. My mom was a candy-making expert. I used to love to try to help her make it, although at times she would get tired of my help and kick me out of the kitchen.

Christmas morning we'd get up real early and ask mom if it was time to get up yet, she'd usually grumble and say "*No!*". We'd wait in one of our bedrooms playing games for a few minutes and then try again. This process would continue until my parents gave up. After it was officially *time to get up* we'd all have to wait in the hall while my dad set up his camera equipment in the living room (my father, always the photographer) and light a fire in the fire place, then mom would finally say "OK" and it was like a stampede as we all rushed in to see what Santa had brought us.

After playing with our toys for an hour or so we'd begin opening the presents from each other which were wrapped and under the tree. This was done with one person opening a present at a time, utter torture!

The rest of the day was spent playing with our toys and having Christmas dinner which was always especially good.

Valentine's Day was always my dad's thing. In the evening dad always gave each of us children our own box of Valentine's candy, that I believe he always picked out and bought himself, meaning he didn't just have mom do it for him. He'd also give mom some flowers and a really big box of candy, which all us kids would eye longingly.

Another special holiday in the Dalton household was Easter. Easter meant new Sunday clothes, getting dressed up and having your picture taken when ready to go to church. We never

liked this part because we always felt kind of stupid standing there like overdressed pimps waiting for dad to finally take the picture, which could take forever!

Easter was special of course because of the atonement of Christ and the religious aspects, but also as little kids because of the Easter bunny and Easter baskets. This was a major ritual in our household. We had the same Easter baskets year after year and usually the same plastic grass inside them. We'd dye hard-boiled eggs over newspaper on the back patio, making a tremendous mess in the process. When dry, the eggs were put in their baskets and these would be placed out on the counter. Of course, I always laid numerous traps for the Easter Bunny to try and catch him. On Easter morning we'd run out to see what the Easter Bunny had brought. Among the chocolate bunnies, marshmallow chicks and rabbits, jelly beans, candy eggs, and other candy in the baskets, we would also typically find a little toy. This toy was usually a *squirt gun* or a *dart gun*, the kind with little suction cups on the ends of the darts. The Easter Bunny must have really wanted to torture mom on Easter morning by continually giving her little boys squirt guns. Imagine little boys having just been given these squirt guns and being told "*Now don't squirt your brother in his Sunday clothes!*" Yea, right! That was likely *Not* to happen! For the rest of the day, before and after church, we'd have battles and wars. The battle cry typically being heard was "*Kevin don't squirt that in the house!*" and "*Craig quit getting your sister all wet!*" We had a lot of fun at Easter time. Mom was a glutton for punishment!

Another thing I am amazed that mom put up with was all the tunnels we dug all around the back yard. She finally put an end to it when she watched a TV show one night about some kids who dug a tunnel that collapsed on them and the paramedics had to rescue. She told me, "tomorrow I want you to fill all those tunnels in young man!" Of course I did what any fine young man would do, I procrastinated. It didn't matter though because shortly thereafter it rained heavily and the tunnels all collapsed anyway. Although no one was in them at the time it did leave me with a tremendous snake-like hole to fill in. Of course I filled it all with water and played in the mud first.

When I was ten or eleven I saved my money and started putting together a mini-bike, which is a little motorcycle powered by a lawn mower engine. I worked like crazy on that mini-bike saving and buying the little parts I needed to make it go. I only bought the parts that were absolutely necessary to buy. I used wire, rubber bands, tape, etc. whenever possible. Things like brakes, of course, were not essential, my biggest problem was making the thing *go*, stopping wasn't an issue yet. I bought a motor from a dishonest teenager who said it ran fine, but in reality had major problems, and didn't run at all. After spending countless hours working on the little lawn mower engine I just couldn't make it run. My mom and dad had watched this project for a long time and were extremely sympathetic. Day after day I worked on that thing really not even knowing what I was doing. I'm sure my dad knew there was no possible way I would ever get it going. Then out of the blue one day my dad asked me to go for a ride with him. I soon found myself at a hardware store. I had no clue why we were there. But in the store they had several lawnmower engines on display, we looked at a few, and then dad picked one out and bought it, just like that. I was shocked! This was by far the most expensive gift I had ever been given. I grew up in a family with the philosophy of "*if you want it you earn the money and buy it*". I couldn't conceive of being given anything like that, it wasn't my birthday or Christmas or anything, and even if it was, expensive gifts like that were out of the question. Even now it brings tears to my eyes just remembering it, remembering what I felt like when he gave me that gift. I had saved for a long long time, I had given my all trying to get that old motor to run. I realize now that it was simply beyond my ability, probably anyone's ability, to make it work. And while I started out with unwarranted optimism, over time I came to realize my situation was hopeless. I had no money left and was heartsick. I never said anything to mom or dad. I just worked on it day after day as soon as I got home from school. I don't know how long they watched me out the window, certainly they realized my situation was hopeless long before I did.

Perhaps they hoped that by some miracle I'd manage to get it to run, but when no miracle appeared Dad gave me one. Dad, I'm sure you don't realize what that one act meant to me then, what it has meant to me since. It wasn't about a motor or a mini-bike that finally could run. In my heart I realized then, perhaps for the first time in a powerful way, that you were watching me, that you were aware of the pain that was in my heart, and you stepped in and lifted me out of a situation that was truly hopeless. Much like the Savior removes the pain and lifts us out of that which is hopeless. Thank you for giving me that wonderful gift. Thank you even more for pointing me toward the invaluable one.

So with my bright shiny new 3-horsepower Briggs & Stratton engine my mini-bike became mobile. It still didn't have any brakes except for my foot and a procedure of running into the curb, but it would go and that's all I cared about, and to this day I remember vividly how grateful I felt for my parent's concern and that little engine.

With all of this building I also became the household mess maker. Nearly all of the time that I was building something I spent cleaning up grease off the cement or something similar. Mom and Dad never told me to stop building stuff, they just handed me a can of cleanser and told me to start scrubbing the oil stains off the patio that appeared out of nowhere with each new project.

Another device that stands out was an underwater *breathing apparatus* that I made when I was 10 years old. I tried to make numerous underwater breathing devices, most of which had no basis in scientific reality. Then I finally came up with one that actually worked. It consisted of a gallon plastic bottle with a large hole cut in the bottom and a weight tied to it. I used to put my mouth over the neck of the bottle and walk on the bottom of the pool breathing air in through my mouth and out through my nose. The weight would hold the bottle of air down and the hole at the bottom of the bottle would allow the pressure between the pool water, the air in the bottle, and my lungs to equalize. This breathing apparatus became out dated when we were about twelve and were allowed to use actual scuba tanks in the pool occasionally. Also, the plastic bottles we used were old pool chlorine bottles, so we were actually breathing out of a bottle that used to contain a poisonous chemical! Mom and Dad gave us a pretty free rein, and perhaps were kind of oblivious at times. Parachuting off the roof, playing football in the street, jumping off the garage roof into the pool, etc. Of course like most parents they weren't aware of even a small portion of what we were doing until they were driving us to the doctor's. In regards to the chlorine bottles, I do remember Mom telling me, "Be sure and clean that out real good before you breath out of it!" For my true safety she should have told me, "If you breathe that chemical you'll die!" Then I would have been more careful and had Shauna try the bottle first to make sure I cleaned it out sufficiently.

Speaking of injuries, Dad regularly had opportunities to practice first aid in our home. I (like some of my siblings) was regularly getting cut up, scrapped up, in wrecks, etc. As an example, once when I was 5 or 6 (I was in 1st grade), I was playing with a pocket knife (my parents always let us have those), and throwing it so it would stick in the lawn. I was in bare feet and naturally I threw the knife so it stuck in my foot. I came running inside screaming with blood gushing everywhere. Even Mom, who was pretty used to seeing blood, freaked out. Dad came in, stopped the bleeding by pushing the wound together, cleaned me up, made a *butterfly bandage* out of adhesive tape, and declared me "good as new!" Forty plus years later, I still have the scar.

Butterfly bandages seemed like Dad's favorite first aid tool. Growing up I got tons of cuts, gashes, etc., to legs, arms, chin, head, you name it, but I have never once gotten a single stitch! Dad always said, "Oh, a butterfly bandage will fix that up just fine." Of course, the thought of a doctor *sewing* on me wasn't appealing at all, so I never complained about Dad's doctoral approach. *Just tape me up and let me go on with life* was way better in my view than a trip to the doctor's. Besides, for boys scars are like badges of honor. I went through the pain so I was at least entitled to my scar. By golly I had earned it!

However, it saddens me to have to relate that my dad was very discriminatory during those years. When the girls got even the teeniest little cut, my dad wouldn't grace them at all with his artwork of butterfly bandages. I guess he didn't love them as much as us boys. No, quick as could be he'd have them in Doctor John's office with that poor man stitching away like some seamstress in a sweatshop! He tried as hard as he could to keep them from having any scars at all. I felt so sad for them, all that pain and nothing to show for it in the end. Embarrassing really.

I knew then that I was the *favorite child*. Dad let me keep *all* my war wounds, never made me serve as sewing practice for Doctor John, and never took away my pocket knife! Like Tommy Smothers (of the old Smothers Brothers TV show) used to say, "Mom loves me best!" Alas, such was my lot in life as well, and dad obviously *loved me best* too!

My favorite scar is one I carry on my chin. Of course like all scars this one is special because of the story that goes with it. One day in my early teens my mom and Kevin were playing ping pong on the patio or driveway area in front of the garage at the side of the house. I wanted to play and they wouldn't let me, so I hung around kibitzing and generally harassing them. Several times Kevin said, "Mom, let me hit him!" Mom responded with "No, you can't hit him! Now Craig, just go away!" This kind of exchange occurred several times, and my harassment continued to grow more brazen because, of course, *I knew* she'd never let him hit me. As normal brothers who were close in age, we hit each other regularly but never in our parent's presence and we certainly never received their permission. However when he asked one last time to my utter astonishment she actually said, "Fine, go ahead and hit him!" Of course, Kevin didn't wait or say "Really? Are you sure?" No, he just turned around, slugged me in the stomach knocking the wind out of me, and down I went out cold. Apparently, falling to the pavement my chin struck the cement and split open. So there I was out cold, dead possibly, with my head lying on the cement in a growing pool of blood! It was so cool! I had never been knocked out before and I dreamed this really weird dream. But better than that, there was my very surprised older brother, feeling guilty as sin and wondering "Did I kill him?!" Of course for me the coup de grace was the fact that my mom was running around in a panic screaming, all the while knowing full well that *she* had caused, or at least given permission for, this brutal treatment of what has already been established as her favorite child. One can almost envision the newspaper headline: "Woman Orders Son to Kill Younger Brother" and of course the accompanying subtitle "*Mother Horror-struck to Find Favorite Child Lying in a Pool of Gore!*"

But eventually I came to, and Dad, patching my chin up with a *butterfly bandage*, soon declared me "good as new". I didn't feel mad at all at Kevin, because hey, I knew I deserved it. Although I do still grin as I think about him having to clean the blood off the cement. Actually, I felt thankful to him. You see, even at my young age I possessed a certain amount of demented wisdom. Even then I knew there is nothing more benevolent as a *penitent* mother. Guilt would have her eating out of my hand for months, perhaps years. Oh yes, I was going to milk this one for a long, long time! Whenever she'd get mad at me I'd just put on a pained expression and stroke my chin. Oh yes, life had just dealt me a wonderful *blow*!

My parent's effort and expense in patching things up wasn't just limited to us children. A menagerie of pets were also part of the Dalton family and Mom in particular spent a fortune in vet bills over the years. She was very kindhearted and really tried her best to keep our pets alive; tailless rats, three-footed hamsters, and even spent several hundred dollars trying to save my little sister's rabbit! (I would've just eaten it instead.) However, the queen of vet bills was my cat Rango, which ultimately lived to be some 22 years old, mainly due to my mom's kindheartedness and our veterinarian's skill.

Rango was a female calico cat that was predominately black. My mother use to call her that "*Old black cat*". She was born on Kevin's birthday in 1965 on the foot of Kevin's bed (Kevin had received a Calico cat named *Dottie* when he was in kindergarten the year before).

We were able to give away all the other kittens in the litter, but no one seemed to want this black kitten so I was allowed to keep her. She lived for over twenty years and then just disappeared. We never could find her, perhaps she was translated or “twinkled” as Mom used to put it.

I literally grew up with this cat. Rango was like my little puppy dog. She'd sleep at the end of my bed (until mom decided that all animals were to be outside), whenever I'd work in the yard she'd be sitting right beside me or following right behind, she'd follow me everywhere and watch over me like some guardian angel. Rango also seemed very accident prone, as she got hit by cars a couple of times and once came home with a severely broken jaw. Mom would take her to the vet and insist that she be patched up again and again (my mother had a tremendous soft spot for little animals especially one that meant so much to her son). With her broken jaw wired up we had to feed her milk and soupy stuff for a long time. Mom spent a lot of time nursing her back to health. Rango also had a multitude of kittens until mom had every one of our animals “fixed”. I still have a special spot in my heart for that little cat and somehow I hope that in the next life I can have the companionship of Rango again.

Kevin's collie dog *Gidget* was also very special to us as we grew up. Gidget was a very friendly dog, but at the same time very protective of us kids and the house. I remember one time when a repairman was working inside the house, Gidget never bothered him once as he went in and out of the house, but when he was through he picked up his tool box and started to his truck and Gidget wouldn't let him leave as long as he had that box in his hand.

Gidget was great at playing catch, you could throw a ball at her and she would grab it and come running back, but then you'd have to chase her to get the ball back. When we'd go swimming Gidget used to love to run around the pool then stop by us, bark several times, and run around the pool again. We would laugh and splash water at her and she'd love it. Rango used to sit on the wall and watch the swimming spectacle in disgust. When I was training for cross country or track I used to take Gidget running with me on occasion, but she'd get tired and I'd have to wait for her. She always wanted to go running with me and so it was hard for me to turn her down. She lived about 15 or 16 years. I would love to see her again, too.

Dad had a soft heart for animals as well. Guns and shooting were foremost hobbies from his childhood to this day. He taught us, and really beat into our heads, gun safety. He gave us a lot of freedom with guns but he also came down hard on us if he thought we were treating guns lightly or unsafe. In his younger days he was really into hunting but as time went on it was apparent that he didn't enjoy the “killing” part of hunting. In my late childhood and youth he didn't really hunt anymore, at least not with a gun. He stated he'd rather take pictures of animals than shoot them. The only times Kevin and I went hunting with him were on those couple of special deer hunting trips just before our missions, and his enjoyment was obviously derived more from the *trip* than the *hunt*. However, Kevin and I hunted a lot on our own during our youth, mostly for birds, rabbits, etc. Often we'd go to the wash area or citrus orchards at the west end of 18th street where it dead-ended. As a child it seemed we always had BB guns or pellet rifles, which we often shot around the house, and dad didn't have any problems with that except one day when he caught us trying to shoot a bird off the telephone line. He said simply but sternly, “If you kill it you'll eat it!” and walked away. That put an end to that because we knew he meant it. The thought of frying up pieces of sparrow in a pan and being forced to gage them down was not appealing at all, but we both knew that's exactly what we'd be doing if our marksmanship improved! The taking of life wantonly was something totally unacceptable to my father and he beat that point home to us boys.

Mom always loved road trips. In contrast my Dad seemed to hate road trips, unless it was going off to do some hobby. Of course on most of our frequent visits to grandparents in Idaho or Utah, family outings, vacations, etc., Dad had to go. So most of my road trip memories include him, however I do remember several trips to visit grandparents that my mom took us alone. Dad was undoubtedly busy working, but I suspect there were substantial sighs of relief as

even sitting down at a desk and working over tax returns was more appealing to the average male than being cooped up in a car with a bunch of little kids for 10, or even 20 hours straight!

Mom, on the other hand was a trooper, or perhaps just had a bad memory and couldn't remember what it was like on the last road trip. She just relished hopping in the car and heading out on the highway. She was kind of like that Steppenwolf song "Born to be Wild", only without the motorcycle and leather jacket, and umm, with a bunch of little kids wetting their pants in the back seat. Well, that kind of ruins the image. But still mom loved the open road and the wind in her hair! Of course, that came from having all the car windows open as we crossed hundreds of miles of desert with no air conditioning.

Fortunately for us kids this was in the days before nefarious seat belt laws and evil car seats. My heart goes out to today's poor little ones all strapped in like crash-test dummies. No, I was fortunate to live in the days when we just didn't know any better. Parents oblivious of any and all safety concerns should be every child's wish. You see little one, the *more* your parents know, the *less* you get to do! It's a law of nature.

Anyway, Mom always packed a bunch of luggage on the floor in front of the back seat making a big flat area over which she'd spread a blanket. Us kids would ride just free and easy, playing and bouncing around on this flat area the entire trip. In my mind I can still hear the squeals of "Mom, he's touching me!" And of course, Mom's threat of "Knock it off or I'll smack you!" Actually, she used to try to *smack* us all the time. I can still see mom driving with one hand and flailing her other arm over the seat back trying to *smack* us. But we had lots of mobility back there and it was loads of fun trying to dodge Mom's flailing arm or better yet shoving your brother or sister into its path! You see Mom really didn't care *who* she *smacked*. She just felt a sense of accomplishment if she managed to *smack anyone* at all.

Occasionally she'd use that oft-quoted parental threat, "Don't make me stop this car now!" Of course this was a pretty idle threat with my mom because we all knew that she *never* stopped. I mean your eyes had to be turning yellow before pleas of "Mom, I really really really have to go to the bathroom really really really bad!" elicited any sort of sympathy. And if you *lost it*, well I guess there's no point in stopping *now* is there. We loved to go on trips with my Aunt Carolyn because her bladder was apparently even smaller than ours and Mom would have to stop.

On trips to Idaho our first stopping place was usually four or five hours north in Lone Pine at a park that had an old fighter jet and a locomotive. We always looked forward to this park and had a great time climbing all over the jet and train, and playing in the playground. Mom would give us a decent amount of time here, probably as much for her own sanity as our need to run around.

Probably trying to calm us down as well as eliminate the question "Are we almost there yet?" Mom often told us "If you go to sleep the trip will go faster!" So you can envision all these little kids laying in the back with their eyes closed just *straining* to fall asleep. We strained so hard to fall asleep at times that it's a miracle none of us pulled a muscle. It just never worked. However, the stop in the park worked like magic. Mom, in her wisdom, gave us time to just wear ourselves out so usually shortly after that we'd conk out. And low and behold the trip really did go faster. Mom was right! It must have been some time space continuum thing.

Another thing we often did in the car was go to drive-in movies as a family. Once again Mom would pile stuff between the seats to make a big flat area for us kids. She'd also make a bunch of popcorn filling up a large grocery sack half full. And this popcorn was so loaded with butter that the sides of the bag always got saturated and greasy. It was wonderful! I can still remember pulling in, Dad attaching the old metal speaker to the car window, and us rolling around in the back kind of watching the movie and eating loads of greasy popcorn until we all fell asleep. I think this was Mom and Dad's idea of *date night*. Of course I can't prove it, but

I'm willing to bet once we were all asleep in the back seat there was a fair amount of *smooching* going on in the front seat.

My parents created many family traditions, most of which were good. We had family night each Monday night, family prayer which was usually done kneeling around the dinner table, family gatherings around the holidays which often included our grandparents and the Trosts, family outings and activities, etc. The 1995 Proclamation on the Family is really somewhat of a summary of what our home was like in the 1960's.

However, not all of our family traditions were worthy of emulation, because, as I'm sorry to have to relate, my parents were just plain *evil*! Of course in contrast, us children were righteous to the umpteenth degree. Don't believe me? You want proof? Well, just look at any of those many Easter photos. Examine those little ones, so cute and precious, standing so nicely in their new Easter Sunday clothes, and ask yourself, "Could there be anything but good hiding behind those cheery bright smiles? I say unto you, Nay!

If you want further proof of our parent's *evil* nature and our angelic innocence let me share another family tradition my parents perpetuated. For us children our favorite holidays were Christmas, Easter, 4th of July, Thanksgiving. Unarguably all the most righteous of holidays. (O.K. so we liked Halloween too, but let's not go there.) In contrast, my parents' favorite holiday was April Fool's Day. Now, tell me, any possible righteousness in that one? I say unto you, Nay, Nay, and even more Nay! It seemed every 1st of April my parents tried to outdo each other in creating devious new pranks. What made matters worse was that they often focused those pranks on their sweet cherubic offspring. And like most children we were calendar-ically impaired. For some cosmic reason we could never seem to remember when April 1st came each year or what April 1st really meant in our household! So there we sat innocently unaware as these twins of evil diabolic barbarism hurled their nefarious deeds our way. I mean, how many pancakes laced with string or Kool-aid made with salt should a child be made to endure?! But no, year after year we found ourselves trudging off to school wasting away and malnourished, while our parents laughed with crooked grins glorying in their evil deeds. Quite frankly, it's a miracle I came out of such a childhood the pious soul I am now! (Confession: I did use the stringy pancake thing on my mission companions one year, but I've since repented. Kind of.)

As I mentioned, my Mom was Young Women's president throughout my youth, so at youth activities, dances, outings, etc., she was always there. I didn't mind this at all because Mom was always really popular with the youth. The typical teenager is often embarrassed when his parent is visible at all, but I was proud to have my mom there. The feeling I got from the other youth was "I wish *my* mom was cool like yours!" We had a very, very large youth group in Upland II Ward while Mom was Young Women's president. I don't know exactly how many, but as an indication during my mission there were 18 out serving from our ward, a number typical of many stakes! In any case, Mom oversaw a lot of young women during her decade plus tenure as YW President.

The evil prankster persona in Mom also came out at times in youth activities. But this only made her even more endearing and cool to the youth. I remember once during a large overnight youth outing someone had done some prank and Bishop Haslam was interviewing many of us one by one trying to get us to confess. He sat me down and said, "Craig, I know you were involved in (such and such) so I want you to tell me who else was involved." Now I don't know where he got his info or whether he thought I might think he was just *inspired* but I did know one thing as absolutely certain, *I was not involved in the least*! (Of course I would have been had I known about it or had the opportunity, but that's beside the point.) So I looked him straight in the eye, with boldness uncharacteristic of my 13 years, and in essence stated, "Uh, no cigaro Bisho-buddy I'm calling your bluff because I don't know anything about it!" O.k. I was certainly way more polite than that, but the message was the same. He just said, "Oh, o.k. send (so and so) in." And so he went through pretty much all the youth with no luck at all. He

couldn't prove anyone did it. I found out later the reason why and that was because my *mom* did it! I can just envision her with the other adult YW leaders laughing as they watched this line of youth waiting their turn to get grilled by the Bishop. That had to be more funny than the actual prank, which has now faded from my memory, but the memory of that line of kids and a smug YW president will live forever!

A connected vivid memory I have of her was when she was pregnant with Chrissy and later Jeff. At mutual activities I remember the young men stuffing basketballs under their shirts and waddling around stating "Look I'm Sister Dalton!" Mom always carried her babies way out front and really did look like she had a basketball under her shirt, so their imagery was really apropos. She knew their teasing was just a sign that they really liked her and had a good rapport with her, and so she was never offended by it. Although I'm sure she threatened to *smack* them, and would have if she could, but she wasn't a very fast *waddler*, so we felt pretty safe when she was pregnant.

While I was growing up Mom always seemed like she was pregnant to me. I know that wasn't the case because so many of my younger siblings were born almost exactly 4 years apart, but that was my impression. The difference in ages between the older kids and younger ones seemed almost generational. Jeff was born during Kevin's mission and then Rick was born during mine. An over 21 year gap between oldest and youngest.

Mom and Dad seemed pretty matter of fact when each child came. They simple headed off to the hospital and a couple days later came home with a baby. That was pretty much all the involvement us kids had in the matter. We really never knew mom was in labor, she just calmly packed things up and went. In the fall of 1978 I was living at home attending Chaffey College (this was shortly before I left home and attended Snow College in Utah). Kevin had left on his mission the month before and Shauna, Valerie, Scott, and Christina were living at home. Chrissy was almost three but still the *baby* in my eyes. About 3:00am one night I was awakened by the weirdest phone call. I was surprised (and a little grumpy) that nobody else answered it. In my groggy half awake state I hear some woman, who introduced herself as a nurse, telling me that my mom was at the hospital. My mental acuity at 3:00am is a little lacking and so not really understanding what she was saying and really just wanting to be off the phone and back in bed, I responded, "My mom's in her bedroom, hold on, I'll get her for you." Now this woman's passive voice turned much more forceful and said something like, "No, no, no, your mother's at the hospital having the baby!" Still half asleep I thought, "What baby?" She continued, "Your mother asked me to call you, she wants you to bring the kids down so you can see the new baby."

By this time I was finally awake enough to understand what was going on. Nevertheless after I hung up I still checked my parents bedroom to make sure this wasn't just some prank that bored nurses do to pass the time at 3:00 in the morning. It was very unusual, first because at the time "birthing" was certainly not a *family experience*. Previously fathers weren't even allowed in the delivery room and before Chrissy was born we children had never even been allowed to visit Mom in the hospital even well after the baby was born. Second, before going to bed my parents hadn't given even the remotest indication that the baby's coming was imminent. I hadn't even heard them leave the house! I really was dead certain that my parents were asleep in bed, just too lazy to get up and answer the phone. So I marched right to their bedroom, flung open the door in somewhat of a huff, and found it empty! Now I started gathering all the kids out of bed, packed them all in my little blue baja bug car, and headed to San Antonio Community Hospital. On the way I stopped by Grandma Dalton's in whose care I left Christina.

I don't know if it was a new thing the hospital was doing to allow siblings to visit right after delivery. I always had the impression that our being allowed this privilege had more to do with the fact that not much was going on at the hospital in the middle of the night and the fact that our family had such a close relationship with Dr. John Sullivan. In any case, we arrived at

the hospital just shortly after our new little brother was born. We found Dad and Mom, with that new mother glow about her, holding perhaps the *yuckiest* looking creature I had ever seen in my life. And bear in mind, I had considerable experience with yucky things hunting, fishing, and of course being closely associated with Valerie and Scott during their younger years. So when I say this was the *yuckiest creature* I'd ever seen, that's really saying something! We had arrived so soon after he was born that the nurses hadn't had a chance to clean him up yet. I'd never seen a baby *that new*. Mom was showing him off and going on and on about how cute he was, what good skin he had, what a *pretty* baby, etc. I thought, "You've got to be kidding! This kid is red and crinkly and looks like a newborn baby mouse only with more crap on him!" Mom lovingly and proudly asked, "Do you want to hold him?" And I thought, "No way, clean him up first, he's disgusting!" But I could tell Mom was proud and so happy she was able to share this moment with all of us. So I held him and said kind and appropriate things like, "Yeah sure Mom, he certainly is, um, adorable. What's this yellow gunk?"

Actually this was a very special experience, a beautiful one that stands out supreme in my mind. I was able to see my mom at her finest! To see the love in her eyes as she looked on little Jeffrey Paul Dalton, and realize that she must have looked at each us that way. It was a chance to see inside her character, to understand a little better who my mother was. I could envision this same woman 18 years earlier holding me in her arms and cooing to her beautiful baby. Of course, I'm sure I wasn't ever disgusting like Jeffy was and as we all knew, Mom loved me best, as we already established, *I was her favorite!*

Fortunately Jeff did clean up nice and was a cute talkative little boy. My mom always said he looked like Kevin. Three weeks later as Kevin was leaving the Language Training Mission for Spain, Mom made a special trip to see him off at the Salt Lake airport and to give him his only chance in two years to see his new little brother. Of that experience she related:

"Well first of all his hair had changed. He went in [to the LTM] blond, he was real blond when he left. While he was in there, because he wasn't out in the sun like he'd been playing tennis a lot before, his hair turned dark. I walked right by him, I didn't recognize him in the airport and went right by him. He chuckled about that a few times because he said 'Mom!?' He took Jeff who was just little and held him and said 'Oh he smells so good! He smells like a baby!' He held him practically the whole time before he had to leave, he sat and held that baby. He knew he wouldn't get to enjoy him being little. We were in the airport a couple of hours. He was tickled to see the Jeffy, it was cute, he was good with him!"

This is probably a good story to end with. Many of my other stories relating to my parents growing up are contained in Kevin's book and I'll let that suffice.

In closing this I'd like to state that it has been a true privilege and honor to be one of King and Sharon Dalton's sons. It is really scary to imagine where I might be without them. I owe them a debt that I could not possibly repay. In addition, we have had such a good time together. A foundation was laid by them during my childhood and youth. When times get dark or depressing I need only look back to my time growing up with them and a grin covers my face, a warmth fills my heart, and I know that I had and always will have two of the best parents on earth. And of course, who love me best.