

Good and Faithful Servant

The gray sky cast a light mist over the cemetery and surrounding fields, but it was good to be home. Although it seemed like the heavens were mourning, there was a proud joy in my heart. As I watched the casket gracefully sink into the ground I could only wonder what my life would have been like without my faithful mother.

The Great Depression was deep on the eastern Canadian province of Prince Edward Island. As one of six children, my mother was forced to quit school during ninth grade because she had no shoes to wear for the winter. As was common in her era, she left home at sixteen and worked as a housekeeper to make a living. When World War II ended and The GIs returned home, my mother met and married my father. As the wife of a career military man, they enjoyed going to clubs and especially loved to dance. But the Lord had other plans for Mother and through the persistence of a faithful colporteur, she was baptized into the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. This of course did not go over well with my atheist father who had now lost his dance partner.

I believe this was the beginning of my mother's strong determination to do what was right, no matter the cost. After my brother and I were born, she made it her special mission to make sure we were raised Adventist. This was not a simple task as she did not drive and we moved every 2-3 years to a new military base. In most locations, my mother was able to find a ride to church but the posting to Hemer, Germany posed a unique challenge as there was no Adventist church within 100 kilometers. Undeterred, Mother's solution was simple: keep the Sabbath at home, then walk to a Sunday church for fellowship. As a youth, I can still remember the great song services I enjoyed at that Salvation Army Church in Germany.

In 1970, my father retired from the military and we settled in New Brunswick, Canada. I attended public school through grade nine, but my mother was determined that I needed an Adventist education. She was wise to see how the public schools were beginning to affect my spiritual life. Again she had a major problem - money. The cost for a year of boarding academy was \$3,000 and now she would have two sons in an Adventist school. My dad, while not opposed to us attending an Adventist school, did not contribute financially to this foolish idea of Christian education. My mother was a woman of faith and she knew that if she did her part, God would provide the rest. She was an excellent knitter and found an extra job knitting custom sweaters for a tourist shop. If she knit in the evenings, after working her regular job as a housekeeper, she could make an extra \$50 per week. Her efforts, along with the faithful donations of some local church members and money we earned with the school work program, provided the money my brother and I both needed to graduate from Academy.

For my mother, I think the most difficult part of sending me away to the Academy was the distance - 1,000 miles. I would only come home for Christmas and summer vacations and there were no cell phones for a daily chat. In fact, in our family, long distance calls were only for emergencies. It was also a



Author (11) with mother in Hemer, Germany, waiting to walk to the Salvation Army

personal sacrifice for her to allow her last son to leave. We had been very close and she would be lonely. She would also lose the spiritual support of another Adventist in the home. But when my brother graduated from the Academy, and I turned 15, it was my turn to go. I can still remember that September day. For me it was a grand adventure, but for my mother it must have been more of a Hannah and Samuel experience. She felt my salvation was at stake and was determined to do what was right regardless of her feelings. She had tears in her eyes as my train pulled away from the station and I began the 24 hour ride to Kingsway College in Ontario. But in the long run, her sacrifice paid off. I made Adventist friends, found an Adventist wife and sealed my dedication to service and to the Adventist church.

Through my mother's foresight, wisdom and unselfishness, she gave my brother and me the education she never had. We both graduated from an Adventist Academy and University. I know that someday, the Lord will take Lucille Smith aside and say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant". Let us not lose our resolve to do what is right.

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