

## Chapter 4 – Mission to Australia

I was indeed fortunate to grow up with good clean companions who had ideals similar to my own. Weldon Taylor, Clyde Sumsion and I spent many weeks working together on Uncle Will Taylor's farm where we helped with the harvest in the fall. We also went together on dates, to parties and spent a great deal of time in each other's homes. Our companionship grew closer with our experiences together.



*November, 1928 - taken just before the three of us left for missions, Clyde Sumsion (left) to England, Weldon Taylor to Ohio, Dean Johnson to Australia.*

We were all anticipating mission calls, so we went together to Patriarch Keeler's home in Provo where we were given Patriarchal blessings of which the following is a copy of my blessing.

Dear Brother Dean: In the authority of the holy Priesthood I place my hands upon your head, to confer a blessing as I may be directed by the Holy Spirit of promise; and I pray that our hearts and minds may be in atune with that Spirit for this occasion

One of the objects of this blessings is to reveal your lineage so that you may know who your ancestors are, back to remote generations. Verily, you have descended from Joseph who was sold into Egypt by his brethren, through the loins of Ephraim, his son. Now upon Ephraim rests a great work in these latter days. So It is your destiny to assist your brethren to bring to pass the purposes of the Father in these latter days, according to the promises give to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph—ancient patriarchs, made by them of old concerning their seed.

You were born in this day for a wise and a glorious purpose; and your parentage was also ordained of God. You merited this blessing through your good works in your former home—in that other world; for you were faithful and true in that life, to the principles of the Gospel and thereby merited many blessings in this earth life, being endowed with a great birthright—among which is ta right to the fulness of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood.

Through this Priesthood and good works, you will have the right to enter the holy temples, and to be joined with one of the daughters of Zion in holy wedlock in the Everlasting Covenant—with one of the choice daughters of Eve, who will be loyal to the principles of the Gospel and a faithful helpmeet to you. Children will be your heritage and your crown; and your Kingdom, beginning here and extending into eternity. To bring this about with true purpose, you must be prayerful, humble, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit that you may be directed aright.

Your work will not always be at home, but it will be in other lands and climes. Prepare yourself by storing your mind with knowledge; read the scriptures and be familiar with them. Become acquainted with the histories of nations and people of ancient and modern times; also, with language that you may express your thoughts and ideas clearly—for you have this talent within you. Therefore, cultivate it.

Be not timid or backward in good works but consider yourself the equal of any man in these things.

I bless you spiritually that you may have great insight into the hidden things of God, and of nature. This is a natural characteristic. Cultivate this. I bless you in your body that it may be strong to bear the burdens of life—and so it will be if you treat it properly. Be wise in this respect.

You also have the gift of faith; and if you exercise it, it will become a great power in you. Disease will be overcome by your administration, even the winds and the waves will be subject to you in time of need. Evil spirits will be rebuked and many other manifestations of the power of God will be brought to view by exercise of this principle.

I confide you to your Guardian Angel. You have heard his still small voice whispering to your soul when you have been tempted to do wrong. By that same voice he has urged you to do right. Now follow his whisperings and you will be led into paths of safety.

Now as to the future life: It is your destiny to come forth in the morning of the first resurrection, clothed upon with a Celestial body. And in this state, you may dwell in the presence of the Father and the Son. You will also be entitled to associate with the great and the good of all past generations, in that Holy City, the new Jerusalem, which will be built upon this continent. There you will mingle with His people. See to it that you do not forfeit your birthright, but so live that you may enjoy all of the privileges, which God may grant.

I seal and pronounce this blessing upon you by future of my calling in the Priesthood, and in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen, Provo, Utah Oct. 28, 1928. Joseph B. Keeler

During the month of October, Velma left for her mission to the Northwestern States. I received my call to labor in Australia on October 18th. I was notified in a letter from President Heber J. Grant to appear at the mission home on Monday, November 19<sup>th</sup> and I was set apart for my mission there by George Albert Smith, a member of the Twelve Apostles. Later he became President of the LDS Church.

I received my endowments in the Salt Lake Temple on November 22<sup>nd</sup>. This was a very inspirational day. Following the endowment work, we were permitted to go into nearly all of the various rooms of the Temple as well as having explanations concerning its construction, and the importance of the various rooms, and the purpose for which they were built.

After a little more than a week at the Mission Home, I returned home for a few days. My farewell party and Testimonial was held in the Lake View Church where I bid farewell to members of the ward. On

November 27th at 10:00 A.M. my folks, Uncle August and Grandpa Johnson accompanied me to Salt Lake to bid me farewell as I left by train for San Francisco.

There were four missionaries bound for Australia—my companions were Therice Duncan, William Tingey and Neil Davis. We arrived in San Francisco on November 28<sup>th</sup> and sailed aboard the S.S. Sanoma at noon on November 30<sup>th</sup>. Dinner was served at 1:00 p.m. I was seasick by 3:00. I could not eat supper. With the coming of dawn my sickness left me, and I was all right for the rest of the voyage.

Stops were made at various islands along the way. We docked at Hawaii on December 6th, at Pago Pago, Samoa on December 12<sup>th</sup>, at Suva in the Fiji Islands on December 16<sup>th</sup>. At Pago Pago we had the interesting experience of seeing bananas growing on the trees. We bought an entire stock of bananas for 50 cents which we hung it in our state room and feasted on for many days. We arrived in Sydney, Australia on December 21 after twenty-two days at sea. We were met by President Tingey of the Australian Mission and some of the elders.

It was the Christmas Holidays. We were permitted to remain in the Mission Home in Sydney, and on January 3, 1929, I continued my journey, for I was assigned to labor in Adelaide, in the South Australian District. On January 5<sup>th</sup>, after a period of 40 days from the time I had left Salt Lake, I reached Adelaide, which was to be my home for the next 1 ½ years.

The account for all of my activities and rich experiences during the following two years would fill many books. I will therefore just mention some of the most outstanding experiences that happened during my time in the Mission Field.



I was soon thrust into full service of Missionary work, tracting, speaking at all kinds of meetings, teaching classes in Sunday School, Mutual and Priesthood visiting saints and investigators, and holding cottage meetings along with taking care of the living quarters back of the Church, as well as the chapel itself. We were invited out for three or four meals during the week which helped sustain us along with our own home cooking.

### **A Testimony**

There was laboring in the South Australian District of the Australian Mission with their headquarters at Adelaide, five Mormon Elders: Elder S. Palmer, presiding, Alva E. Jensen, Therice H. Duncan, Dean A. Johnson and Joseph F. Durfey.

On the night of July 21<sup>st</sup> at the conclusion of Sunday services, a very pronounced manifestation of the power of the Priesthood was given. As the day's activities had continued, there had been felt among the brethren an unusual influence, on which was not conducive to a full enjoyment of the spirit of the Lord. At the conclusion of the evening meeting, District President Palmer called upon Elder Durfey to offer the closing prayer. As he arose in response to that request, he was seized with a power which so weakened his system that he could scarcely stand at the pulpit. With considerable effort he pronounced a brief benediction, at the close of which he immediately left the hall in which the meeting was held and went out on the side-walk hoping that he could free himself of the disturbing feeling. As he walked back and forth in the narrow passageway at the side of the Church, rather than obtaining relief, the darkness seemed to become more dense. He felt certain that he was possessed of an evil spirit and struggled desperately to call upon the Lord to relieve him of it. He was conscious of the presence of his father, who had been dead some years, walking at his side vainly attempting to assist him in his determination to gain control but failed in this effort.

Elder Durfey entered the home at the rear of the church building. Going upstairs to his bedroom, he knelt down and attempted to offer a prayer. After exercising all the power in his being, he concluded a few words. Leaving the upper room, he again went outside and was leaning against the rear wall when Elder Johnson found him. After explaining his condition Elder Johnson assured him that he too had felt this same influence, though apparently to a lesser degree. As they talked together the tension became even more severe. Entering the house, they met Elder Palmer, Duncan, and Jensen, and there discussed with them the unusual conditions which were now felt by all of them.

In describing developments Elder Johnson writes: "We, having previously planned a trip to Gawler to do missionary work there, were to leave immediately after the meeting. Elders Duncan and Jensen were sent to call a taxi; Elders Durfey, Palmer and myself were left in the room by ourselves. There was at this time a loud, dull tone whistle blowing at the freight yard about a mile away, which added to the dismal feeling. During this time the evil power was gaining a stronger hold on our goodies. It became so strong that my whole body was cold and trembled with a power that I could not control. My face became pale and as I looked into Elder Durfey's face, I saw it was twitching, and that he had no power over his chin. Elder Palmer, in seeing the conditions said, "Something is going to happen." We all felt the same way and had experienced the dull feeling coming on a week before hand.

Elder Palmer then said, turning to Elder Durfey, "Come we will administer to you," and we went into the other room. I was so weak I could hardly stand up and as I was anointing his head with Holy Oil, there was some power trying to hold me from doing it. I stood cold and shaking from head to foot for about

one-half minute, but at last a little new life entered into my body that seemed to loosen my tongue and lips so that I could speak, but my words were broken and I was so weak I could scarcely finish. All the time I was anointing, my hands seemed to be knocked from off his head as if done by some human power. The anointing was finished, and the room was black to my mortal eye.

The cold dull feeling seemed to paralyze my body. It became almost stiff. Then Elder Palmer and I, with much courage, placed our hands upon his head to seal the anointing. Again, the bones and nerves of my body began to tremble, and the cold stunning feeling went through my system as if it were being carried by a high voltage of electricity. As Elder Palmer rebuked the evil spirit the first time, I felt it leave the head of Elder Durfey, go up through my arms and out of my body. At the same time, I heard the door of the room give a dull rumble. The sealing went on for nearly ten minutes, during which three distinct times were the evil spirits rebuked, and three times did I feel the terrible overwhelming power let loose of my body, and three times did I hear the dull rumble at the door. The third time the spirits were rebuked I felt new life enter into my body and I became calm and very quiet, yet I was very weak, and just as we said, "AMEN" to the sealing of the Administration, that dull sound of the whistle stopped."

We went into the other room, all being greatly relieved of that evil influence. We found that the other Elders had returned from calling the taxi. They had entered the house just at the close of the administration, and we explained to them what had taken place while they were gone.

At this time while all were seated in the room, Elder Durfey who had been in the Mission field four weeks, arose and said in a calm, clear voice, "For one month I have been asking the Lord in prayer that he would use me as an instrument through whom the power of the Priesthood might be made manifest. I know that is the gospel of Jesus Christ."

We were all very weak and continued to feel that we were in some danger, so we decided to have a circle prayer. As we knelt with our arms about each other's shoulders, Elder Palmer offered the most heart-touching prayer I have ever listened to in all my life. Never in all my existence have I felt so humble and so in need of God's blessings as I did at that time. Our heads were together in circle prayer and tears were dropping from my eyes, but all the time my heart was centered on God's laws and commandments. Never was I more desirous in knowing what to do as I was then. After the prayer was over, we arose to our feet with weakness of body, but strong in the assurance that we know God would free us from all evil.

I was in hopes that Elder Palmer would tell us not to go to Gawler. I feared something would happen to us while on our journey; something that might result in the death of one of us. But trusting in the divine care of God we bid goodbye to Elders Palmer and Duncan. One hour later found us safely at our destination. I know that it was only by the power of God that our lives were unharmed.

I bear testimony to all that may read this that it is true. I know that God hears and answers prayers and acknowledges the administrations that are performed by the power of the priesthood; that the divine priesthood holds the power to rebuke evil spirits. I seal this testimony to all that read it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior."

The trip to Gawler mentioned was the first trip I made into the country to perform missionary work. We stayed there until August 2<sup>nd</sup>, without much success, except distributing tracts and other missionary materials. We returned to Adelaide on August 3<sup>rd</sup>.

This was a distance of 300 to 400 miles from Adelaide where we made another country trip to Mt. Gambira on September 9<sup>th</sup>. We went to a little village called Kalangadoo, which was in the old sheep country, in the southwestern part of South Australia. It was a very beautiful village of 300 inhabitants. We stayed at a sheep station called "Wattle Range." This consisted of a large ranch of several thousand square miles.



***Mission photo Album and journal are in the possession of Diane Stokoe***

It was while I was here that I spent a few days helping to round up the sheep. We also went kangaroo hunting for a couple of days. While at the sheep station I also helped tear down an old shack which was used for a dining room for the sheep herders. I help rebuild it and it became quite an orderly place for feeding those who worked at the station. While doing this work we had many wonderful gospel conversations, and these people became acquainted with Mormonism. I think there was much good accomplished. However, I never had any further contact with them to know what was accomplished.

I enjoyed the kangaroo hunt very much and was successful in killing three. I had the hides tanned, made into rugs and brought them home with me. I also shot many rabbits on this trip.

We left the Wattle Range on September 20<sup>th</sup> and returned to Adelaide. There I continued with my labors until October 27, 1930 at which time I was appointed District President of the South Australian District. I served in this capacity until October 12, 1931, at which time I was transferred to Victorian District with headquarters at the city of Melbourne. I was also appointed President of this District. I remained in this position until my release from the mission field.

This district included two other branches besides the city of Melbourne. One was organized at a town called Balleret and the other at Bendigo. These districts lay one hundred miles or more from district headquarters. I made several trips to these districts to help reorganize them and establish the church there on a more firm basis. At Bendigo we organized the first Sunday School that the branch ever had.

Before leaving Adelaide, I assisted the Hennesy family in procuring their passports and the necessary legal documents for their emigration to the United States. Two months after my transfer to Melbourne, the family passed through the city prior to their embarkation to the United States. I was very happy to visit with them. Since my return we have kept in contact with each other almost continuously.

About three weeks before my mission was completed, I received word from Velma that our engagement was broken and that she did not know where she would be when I returned home. Previous to this, we had written constantly, and our affairs seemed to have proceeded satisfactorily. Our intentions had been, prior to this, that she would meet me in Hawaii where we would be married there in the Temple. This was quite a shock to me and somewhat of a disappointment and it worried me a great deal, so I sought my Father in Heaven again pleading for his help that events might happen and our marriage could take place as planned. By now I was closing my prayers with "Thy will be done not mine!" I received an honorable release on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1931.

I can truthfully say that my mission experience had been the happiest days of my life. It was there I learned the good life and the true meaning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I drew nearer to my Father in Heaven again pleading for his help, that events might happen so that our marriage would occur. By now I always closed my prayer with the phrase, "Thy Will be Done and not Mine."



***Clarence H. Tingey, Australian Mission President with wife and son. Elder Dean Johnson, 2<sup>nd</sup> from end.***

My honorable release from the mission Field on January 3<sup>rd</sup> reads:

Elder Dean A. Johnson, this certifies that you are honorably released from service in this mission. Your willing response to the missionary call, your faithful and diligent labors in the ministry, and your constant devotion to the Gospel of the Lord, Jesus Christ, entitles you to the gratitude of all whose lives you have been instrumental in bringing the light of truth, to the just commendation of your brethren,

and to the blessings and reward which our Heavenly Father bestows upon those who serve Him with fidelity.

May the supreme joy that comes from the performance of a noble work well done be yours, and may your future life be enriched by the fruits of past experiences and by enlarged activities in the cause of human redemption. Clarence H. Tingey, Mission President. January 3, 1931.

In reviewing my log, I discovered I had spent 606 hours tracking, 595 hours visiting Investigators, 2,219 hours studying gospel subjects, 1,987 hours visiting the saints and 951 hours attending meetings. I had traveled for 1,310 hours and spent 1,533 hours teaching 124 different investigator families. I spent 998 hours having other gospel conversations.

Due to my duties as District President, I did not tract for eighteen months as I needed to spend a lot of time traveling to the outlying branches. I sold 790 Books of Mormon and loaned out 42 others. I sold 12 copies of the church's standard works. I performed two marriages, blessed one child, and assisted in sixty-two administrations for the sick and afflicted.

All financial matters and practically all the letters from my family were handled by Francis, my stepmother. I came to better understand the great responsibility she assumed when she became the mother of our family. I admired her for her courage and am ever grateful for her kindness and help. She always had an even temper and never raised her voice to criticize us.

The total cost of my mission was \$1,533.00. Dad provided \$1,240, my friends \$28 and ward members donated \$265 to cover my fare from Salt Lake to the mission field. I had performed four baptisms. I felt sorrow at bidding goodbye to the people of this far-off land, but gratitude that I had the opportunity to serve a mission. I came to realize and better appreciate the help and sacrifice my dear father and stepmother had rendered in keeping me in the mission field.

Prior to our departure, we were given a farewell party at the Mission Home in Sydney. Many presents were given up by the Saints who wished us bon voyage and a happy return home. I returned in company with two of the elders who had gone to Australia with me - Therice Duncan and Neil Davis. We sailed on the ship S.S. Sierra. When I arrived in Hawaii, I met Elder Ray Gammon from Vineyard who was serving a mission there and we took a tour of the island together and I had the privilege of going through the Temple at Laie on the Island of Oahu.

I also read in a paper about the marriage of my former sweetheart, Velma Nelson. This was a sudden surprise but released from my mind my great anxiety as to what our future might hold. I arrived in San Francisco on January 22nd and made this entry in my diary: "Tuesday, landed in San Francisco, went shopping, went to the Fox Theater. Called up the folks. What a wonderful thrilling experience to hear the voices of my father and Francis again."

Two days later we boarded a train for Salt Lake City, Provo, and home. I arrived at about 6:30 p.m. on January 26th and was met by father, Francis, Nathan, Leila, and Ted. What a happy reunion to again be home with my family. When we returned to Lake View my brother Harold, his wife Lola, Uncle August and Aunt Ruth, and Grandpa Johnson were there to spend a happy evening. We talked far into the night and I told them of my missionary experiences.



Even after the company had departed and the family had gone to bed except Francis and I, we continued conversing until about 2:00 A.M. I now became more close to her, and felt that she had indeed taken her place in becoming a real mother in our home.



*Arriving in San Francisco*



*Francis and Dad*