

Epilogue

Corinne Johnson Young, eldest daughter, concludes his history with a talk given at a Stake Youth Conference on June 3, 2000 entitled “Understanding Those With Disabilities”

My Young Brothers and Sisters,

What a privilege it is for me to be here this afternoon. I am humbled by this opportunity and want you to know that it is because of my thankfulness to my Heavenly Father for all he has blessed me with that I am addressing you today.

I am here because of my faith in Jesus Christ and our Heavenly Father. I'm sure that any of you could take my place and do just as well. President Marcov stopped by my home about a month and a half ago and asked if I would accept this assignment. President Marcov is such a kind, wonderful man. How could I turn him down? He asked if I would tell you about my life and the experiences I've had through the years.

I'm sure that many of you have thought, especially the girls, if only I could be taller, shorter thinner, prettier, or more popular. Now boys don't dwell on these kinds of things. Perhaps you young men wish you were better at athletics or had nicer car. I asked two male members of my family what they would change if they could. One said he wished he had more lenient parents when he was growing up. The other said he wished he had been heavier in high school.

My advice is to be happy with what you have and with who you are. Be glad you have bodies that function. Be thankful for kind, loving, parents who want the best for you and who teach you to have faith in our Father in Heaven and the Church of Jesus Christ.

I grew up in Lake View which is on the lower Geneva Road just west of this very chapel. My father was a dairy farmer. He raised milk cows and all the food which they required, as well. I was the oldest of three sisters. I milked cows from the time I was seven years old until I was eighteen. When I dated in high school the boys used to say - we can always tell when we get to your house - or the farm, because of the smell. At the time, I did not think this funny. I had no brothers and so my father made sons out of his daughters. In the summer we hauled, hay, hoed corn, milked the cows and worked very hard on the farm. My mother was one of the kindest women I've ever known. She would do anything that anyone and she did it with a smile. My father had enormous faith, had enjoyed many spiritual experiences throughout his life. He had a strong testimony of the gospel, a sure knowledge of its truthfulness and great faith in the hereafter.

I know these understandings have helped me throughout my life. My father was also one

of the hardest working men I have ever known and he expected all of us to work just as hard as he did. We grew up in a wonderful home, with loving parents. We always attended church and our ward activities. I was taught to believe in the teachings of the church and in the unconditional love of my Heavenly Father.

After I graduated from high school, which, by the way, was Orem High, *that other school in the area that we hear about now and then*, I attended BYU for a year. Then I decided I'd rather work as a secretary than go to college. I worked in Provo for about a year and then had the opportunity to be transferred to Phoenix, Arizona. I lived in Phoenix for about two years. It was fun to be out on my own. I wasn't as active during those years and became one of those young people that slipped through the cracks. I still believed in the church and knew that it was true but I did not associate with the kind of people that I had in my younger years. I know that my parents worried about me. I continued to write to let them know that all was well.

A week or so before Thanksgiving of my second year in Arizona, my parents called. They thought it would be fun for us to meet half way between Orem and Phoenix and enjoy the holiday together. Since Las Vegas was about half way, that is where we agreed to meet. My parents brought along my aunt and uncle. I invited my roommate to join me so I would not have to travel alone. We never reached our destination. We were involved in a serious traffic accident which changed my life forever.

Upon reaching Kingman, Ariz. I asked Rose Mary if she would like to drive. She said "Yes," and took the wheel. The accident occurred about thirty miles outside of Kingman. I'm not sure what happened. Did she take her eyes off the road? I was looking out of the passenger side of the car and enjoying the scenery. As I turned to look out the front window, I realized we were veering off the highway to the left. I did not stop to think. I just reacted. I reached over and grabbed the steering wheel to bring the car back on to the highway. Of course, the car overcorrected and crossed the highway to the right. The Mustang rolled three times and we were both thrown from the car. We were probably traveling about sixty or seventy miles an hour. It's a miracle we were not killed.

Another driver called the police and stopped to help us. We were taken back to Kingman and admitted to the hospital there. Rose Mary had a few small cuts and a large bruise on her leg. Everyone knew my spinal injury was very serious. All of the doctors were out of town due to the holiday. When my parents were finally reached and arrived at the hospital they wanted to have me immediately flown back to Utah. But those in charge said "No," I needed surgery as soon as possible and I could not be moved.

"Daddy, I can't move my legs." I said to my father when he came into the room,

They tried to reach the neurosurgeon in Las Vegas but he was also out of town due to the holiday. So I was taken by ambulance back to Phoenix. I was not operated on until the day after the accident.

If they could have operated immediately there may have been a possibility that I would have been able to walk again. I will never know. They operated and took out the crushed vertebrae which were pressing against my spinal cord. I was in intensive care for two weeks. I do not remember much about that period, only that I was in quite a bit of pain. I was then transferred to another section of the hospital where I was put on a bed called a striker frame. Every two hours I was turned. I was like a sandwich. It was a cot like bed. They would put a top over me and strap the top down and then I was turned so that I would be on my stomach. This was to prevent pressure sores. Not a fun thing as I remember. My father had to return to Utah to take care of the farm. He was serving as bishop at the time. My mother stayed with me continually. She arrived about 6:00 in the morning and stayed until 11:00 at night. She was so worried about me that she hardly slept and barely ate. Now that I am a mother I can understand this now.

At this time I knew that my back was broken but your mind will not let you accept things you do not want to believe. I was intelligent enough to know that this was serious but I believed that I would walk again. I was very optimistic and just felt that it would be a matter of time and that everything would be okay.

About the middle of December I was flown by air ambulance to Salt Lake City. My doctors thought I would need a spinal fusion. Upon arriving at the hospital there we were met by the head resident. He took me into a small room, examined me and then said "I guess you already know that you will never walk again and you'll be lucky if you can sit up on your own." I was stunned - I was in shock. I didn't say a word and when he left the room I cried. My parents came in and they wondered what had happened. I told them what the doctor had said. I couldn't stop crying for hours. My parents had been told in Phoenix that I had a 50/50 chance of walking again. My parents had not told me this and none of the doctors had spoken to me about walking. What a terrible dark time.

About the week before Christmas they decided that I would not need further surgery and I was then transferred to the Utah Valley Medical Center where I could be close to my family. I was not angry at my Heavenly Father, I believed in him. I knew that if he wanted me to walk again that someday I would. Christmas was terrible that year for our whole family. My sister told me that we did not have a Christmas tree that year. I remember every member of my family came to the hospital Christmas morning and brought gifts. My mom had gone out and bought seven different night gowns all different styles and colors. When I took them out of the boxes to look at them they were all neatly cut down the back like hospital gowns - I cried.

This was a terrible time for our whole family. My sister later told me that my mother would come home at night cry in her room for hours. I never saw Mom cry at the hospital. Not once.

As I mentioned before, my father was bishop at this time and many prayers were offered in my behalf, not only by family members, but friends, ward members, and even a stake fast day

was held. Everyone was so kind to me. I remember my father and mother coming to the hospital one night and I was having an especially bad time. After everyone else had left my dad said “Corinne, do you know how to pray?” I said “Yes,” and he said, “You pray and I know it will make you feel better.” I did pray earnestly for help. And did feel the comfort of my Heavenly Father.

I would like to take some lines from my father’s journal at this time - this has given me great peace and strength “These lines were from a talk which he gave to his ward. It had been approximately one month since the time of my accident:

“I would like to express my thankfulness, gratitude and appreciation for my family for the many acts of kindness, lovely letters and faith and prayers of all of you. I know that you are concerned about my daughter. I’ll explain that she is here. She is home, as near home as we can get her. I’ve had terrible conflicts in my mind and in my heart for the last four weeks. I feel much more settled now. I have peace and serenity and comfort in knowing that she is here in our midst.

After a process of twelve different doctors and four hospitals, she is now where I can get to her in just a few minutes. I can call her on the phone., I am grateful for the spirit that dwells among Latter Day Saint people. The spirit of our hospital here and our church is far different from that in other places.

Christmas, this year, is much different in our home. I am more appreciative of the gospel of Jesus Christ than I have ever been in my life. When my daughter asked me, ‘Dad will I ever walk again? You’ve got to tell me. Will I ever walk again?’ I could answer her with absurdity and firmness being directed by the spirit of the holy ghost. ‘I know you will walk again. I don’t know where or when but you will walk again.’

That is the answer I gave her. After two or three days of fasting and prayer, I desired further assurance that our prayers would be answered. The night before last in the middle of the night, I saw my daughter standing in the middle of a room. She looked beautiful, she didn’t wear braces or have crutches but she was standing. And I asked her

“Can’t you walk?”

“Not yet Dad!”

But that was assurance for me. Probably we have a long wait and a long time. I know not where or when but she will walk. Jesus Christ answers that for me in the gospel that I have and I am forever grateful to him for that”

I prayed - I thanked my Heavenly for my life I pleaded that he would help me. Also at this time Elder Henry Taylor was visiting my father’s ward as he had a brother living there. My

father knew him and asked if he would come to the hospital and give me a blessing. This was a great help to me - we went to a quiet room on the main floor of the hospital. He gave me a blessing - he didn't promise me that I would walk again but he told me after the prayer that he knew that I would be better. I did get better and was able to finally come home after about two and a half months in hospitals.

While I was in the hospital I went to physical therapy almost daily. I have a great love for physical therapists today - they helped me more psychologically than I think they did physically. They were so kind to me and made me feel that my life wasn't over and that I could have a happy and fulfilling life. They thought I was wonderful because I could press all those weights - I was the strongest young woman that they'd ever seen - I told them it was because of all those years of throwing around that bailed hay and working on the farm that I was so strong. They taught me to walk with leg braces and crutches, and how to get in and out of my wheelchair.

There were some funny things that happened while I was in physical therapy but wasn't funny at the time - every other day I was lowered into a whirl pool bath - I was transferred from the Gurney onto a hammock type thing which was raised and then lowered over the tank. They had you wear little terri cloth type top and bottom. Well, one day as they were helping me get back onto the Gurney - my top fell off - I was humiliated - not funny at the time but I can look back now and laugh about it.

A few weeks before I left the hospital I met a fellow there who was visiting a friend he asked me if I'd like to go to a BYU basketball game. The doctors thought it would be okay to leave the hospital for a few hours. Well I went - it was horrible - I felt like everyone in the building was looking at me because I was in a wheelchair. When I got back to the hospital that night my mother was waiting anxiously to hear how it went. I told her that I felt like everyone was starring at me and that if this was the way I was going to have to spend the rest of my life that I'd rather be dead. Well, I didn't die and I couldn't.

After coming home it was still very hard. I would not leave the house, not even to go to church. It wasn't that I was bitter toward my Heavenly Father, it was because I was so embarrassed to have people see me in this situation, and I had to learn how to do everything all over again and in a different way. Finally after about six months I did start getting out some but it was still very hard. I was so thankful for the gospel at this time - for what we believe - for the knowledge that we as members of the church have. That this is only a temporary thing and that some day we will return to God and that someday I will be able to walk again. That was what I had to hold on to at that time.

About a year after my accident I got a job working at BYU. I was a secretary in the library. Not long after getting this job I got a car! I was so excited. We had hand controls installed. My dad called to tell me the car was ready: "I'll be up on

your lunch hour so you can take a drive.”

I said: “Dad, don’t you think we ought to practice at home?”

“No, he answered, you will be driving on campus and in the city.”

So he picked me up we drove through down town Provo. It was sort of terrifying at first as I kept thinking I needed to put my foot on the brake and my foot wouldn’t move. You really have to concentrate on which way to push the hand control. Anyway, when we got back to campus, I tried to park and drove up over the curb. I was still trying to remember what to do, since this was the first time I had ever used hand controls. A couple of guys were sitting on the grass and noticed this stupid girl driving right up over the curb. They smiled at each other but when I got out of the car and climbed into my wheelchair their smiles vanished.

Thank heaven for my hands and that I could use them - if you have your hands you can do almost anything. Anything except walk.

I enjoyed working in Special Collections at the library very much and made some good friends. I met a fellow on campus who was also in a wheelchair. He had seen me come and go - I used two wheelchairs then. I kept one at home and one in the back of my car. When I got to work someone from work would meet me and get the chair out of the trunk for me. When I left work, someone else would escort me to my car and load the chair.

One day he said: “Why are you having all these people wait on you? You need to learn how to do this yourself.”

I said: “Okay - teach me!”

So he came by my house and taught me how to get the wheelchair in and out of the car by myself. It was a blessing - now I could come and go whenever I wanted and do what I wanted. This gave me a lot of confidence and a great feeling of independence. I could go to the mall shopping or anything that I wanted to do.

Four years after my accident my mother died of cancer and five years after that my father also died of a brain tumor. The two people who loved me most were gone. I had two married sisters and they loved me but they had their own lives and their own families.

Throughout this time I still continued to pray, and I always prayed that one day, if it be the will of my Heavenly Father, I would find someone to love me and care about me. I tried not to keep this at the top of my thoughts.

After my parents passed away I did not attend church regularly. I lived with my step-mother, Phyllis Farley Johnson, and she encouraged me. But I felt like “What’s the use? No

one needs me! Why try?"

We had moved to a new home a few months before the death of my father so I should have been attending a new ward but my step mother and I continued to attend our old ward in Lakeview. After my father died our neighbor invited me to visit his Sunday school class and speak to the young people there. I guess that was my first experience in the new ward. It was still hard for me to go to the new ward - I didn't know the people that well and I didn't make an effort to get to know anyone.

A few months later, I got a telephone call from the bishop. He asked if I would come over to the church and talk with him. I had made up my mind before I left home that if he asked me to do anything I would just say "No". I kept the appointment - and visited with this kind bishop. He asked me if I would teach the Laurel class and work in the young women's organization. I couldn't believe it when I said "Yes."

Well, this calling turned out to be a great experience in my life. The girls were so fun to work with and they were very good to me. I felt like one of them. We had many things in common despite my situation. Because of this calling, my life became more fulfilling. I felt closer to my Heavenly Father and I was able to receive the blessings he had in store for me.

Finally I did meet a young man and we dated for several months. Things did get serious, but in the end, it did not work out. This was another great disappointment in my life. During the time that we were breaking up, I fasted and prayed that things would work out - if it was our Heavenly Father's will. I felt a great need to talk to my parents and wished, so much, that they were here and could help me. Finally the night before the young man was to come down and talk to me about his decision concerning marriage, I drove to the cemetery. I prayed. I cried. I talked to my parents and told them I needed help.

The night after I did break up with this young man, I felt calm, and at peace, as I went to bed. The next morning was a Saturday. I woke at 6:00 a.m. I know because I looked at the clock and then I went back to sleep. I dreamed that I was in our old home in Lakeview. I was sitting on the couch and my father walked into the room. I said: "Oh Daddy, where have you been? I've needed to talk to you for such a long time!"

He said: "I just couldn't come until now."

I told him about the young man that I had been dating and described what had happened. I put my arms around his neck and he put his arms around me and I cried. Then he looked into my eyes and said: "Wait a year!"

I said "A year?"

Again he said: “Wait a year!”

That is all I remember. Upon waking from the dream I looked at the clock again. It was 9:30 a.m. I felt like my prayers had been answered. I want you to know that this is a very sacred and special experience that I have shared with you today

The next day was Sunday. I was a little late getting to church. The congregation was singing “I Stand All Amazed At the Love Jesus Offers Me.” Now every time I hear that hymn I am reminded of this sacred experience.

All that year any time a guy on campus smiled at me, I’d smile back and wonder to myself - “Is this the one?” People probably thought I was crazy - all that smiling.

I had never gotten my patriarchal blessing when most young people do. I had always been afraid that it would say I would never marry. After breaking up with John, I felt like I really needed this special blessing in my life. I needed the direction it would give me. I did go and receive one and what a comfort and joy this brought to my life. It was a very special blessing - promising that if I was faithful, I would find someone who loved me very much and that there would be little children that would come into our home and our lives to love us and bless us.

I met Everett almost one year to the date that I had the dream. He was here, on vacation from California, visiting friends. We met through some mutual friends at a birthday party. At the time, I never thought anything serious would happen. I rationalized - “My father would never send me a Chinese - Hawaiian Catholic to marry.” Well, some of you know the rest of this story.

Everett asked me out while he was here and after he went back to California, we wrote, talked on the telephone and I went down and visited a few times. He was not a member of the church when we met. But he was a good person and it was not hard for him to become a member. He had no bad habits to give up. Everett began taking the missionary lessons and was baptized before we were married. I know that he has a strong testimony of the gospel. And that he is a special man. I knew that if I ever married that it would have to be to someone who was very special. We were married here in this very church since we could not get married in the temple as Everett had not been a member long enough.

After our wedding we moved to California, where he was finishing his schooling at San Jose State. We lived in Redwood City which is about forty miles south of San Francisco. A year later moved across the bay to Newark where we bought a home. On our first wedding anniversary we came back home to Utah and were married in the Provo Temple. We were also sealed to our beautiful baby daughter, Nicole at that time. What a wonderful occasion. David our second child, was born in California a year later.

After Everett’s graduation, I asked my stepmother if we could move back into the basement apartment of her home. She agreed. So our second and youngest son, Michael,

was born in Utah.

I can't tell you how blessed I am. Heavenly Father has sent me wonderful children. I know that he saved them especially for us. They have never given us any trouble. They are a light in my life, and I am so proud of their accomplishments. Nicole was married two years ago to a wonderful young man, Reed Rowe, a returned missionary, and a wonderful addition to our family. Nicole just graduated from BYU in April and is everything that I ever hoped she would be. David completed a mission to Ecuador and returned home last summer. He has attended two years of college at Ricks and hopes to graduate in December. Michael, our third child, is now serving in New Zealand on a mission.

Even though I have been in this wheelchair for many years, I have been able to accomplish many things. I've taken care of our home without help, taken care of new babies with only the help of my husband, gone shopping, taken the kids to their activities and attended all of the activities that they have been involved in. I don't feel like a handicapped person. I may not be able to do stairs but I can do everything else.

We have been blessed to be able to travel to Europe with my sisters and their husbands. I've had people ask me, "Which one of these men is your husband?" as my brothers-in-law have loaded me off and on buses, carried me over walls to get me in to bathrooms. My sisters have drug me into restrooms where the doors have not been wide enough to accommodate a wheel chair. Where there's a will there's a way. I have been able to go many places and see this beautiful world.

In the early years of our marriage there was not much wheelchair awareness. I had to sit in halls next to the dressing rooms in the department stores when I tried on clothes. I got lots of funny looks from customers wondering, I am sure, about my funny underwear.

Everett and I with members of my extended family went to Cancun Mexico a few years ago. We traveled by bus into the interior - Everett drug me in my wheelchair through the jungles and I was able to see the pyramids and ruins of buildings built by the ancient Americans. I even went para sailing in Mexico. Sort of terrifying at the time, but I did it! My sisters and our families had the opportunity to travel by car across the U.S. visiting the church history sites, Washington D.C. and on to New York City and the Hill Cumorah.

I am so thankful for my good husband my wonderful sisters and their husbands, and the special children in my life. From the time of my accident until the time I was married fourteen years went by before I and received these wonderful blessings. I'm sure than in my Heavenly Father's time span, this was not long or maybe it took that much time for me to prepare to receive these choice blessings.

In D & C 88:68 it says: "And it shall be in His own time, and in His own way, and according to His own will. Elder Neil A. Maxwell has said: "The Lord will customize the

curriculum for us in order to teach us the things that we most need to know. He will set before us in life what we need, not always what we like. What therefore may seem now to be mere unconnected pieces of tile will someday, when we look back, take form and pattern and we will realize that God was making a mosaic.”

In Ether 12:27 it says: “And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness. I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.”

Young people, you are a chosen generation - you have been told this many times in your lives, but you will not be able to get through this life without trials. Our Heavenly Father has placed us in this risk filled world to learn and grow. In order to learn the lessons of life, we have to undergo many experiences that may bring us unhappiness. Some of these experiences may even include sin. They may also include undeserved pain, disappointment and adversity.

In our April Ensign these wonderful truths are given: “Part of the purpose for our moral sojourn is to learn by experience the lessons and principles that are for ‘our good’ and for the development of our character.”

President Brigham Young said: “One day, in the celestial kingdom, we will look back on the difficulties of our lives and say, ‘But what of all that?’ Here: The trials of life will yield to the joys of eternal life, God’s greatest gift.”

We are not always free to choose the tests that come, but we are free to choose our responses. The Savior knows all things. While He may not always remove the trials from our lives, His grace can bear us up against all the pressures surrounding us, regardless of the kinds of bondage we may find ourselves in. As stated in Mosiah 7:33: “But if ye will turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart, and put your trust in him, and serve him with all diligence of mind, if ye do this, he will, according to his own will and pleasure, deliver you out of bondage.” He knows how to help us and how to lead and protect us, if we will but exercise faith and trust in Him.

There have been times in my life when my children have asked: “Mom, if you could have one wish would it be that you would be able to walk again?” I tell them: “No my wish is for good health and happiness.” I know that because of my being in this wheelchair it has made me a better person, has made me more aware of other people and their physical problems. It has given me compassion for others and taught me to have extreme faith in my Heavenly Father and his teachings. He has strengthened me to be able to do the things I needed to do and be what I need to be.

Young people, be happy for all of the things that you have. Live so that your testimonies

may grow and that in times of trial you can rely on the Lord and his love for you. Stay close to the Savior, read the scriptures - they will help you to have the light of Christ in your lives and will sustain you in times of adversity.

In 1987 Elder Vaughn J. Featherstone made this statement to the Utah South Area of which this stake is a part: "God bless the Utah South Area. The Lord has planted and is planting giants in the land. Apostles and prophets are being born in your homes. Some of your youth will walk in the Highest places in this kingdom. Your sons who are on missions will return and fill the most sacred callings. You do not know who your children are. Your children will see visions, our leaders will dream sacred dreams. Angelic and unseen beings will watch over and protect you and your children. Our people will walk in holiness protected and blessed as the "children of light". This Utah South Area will be the fountain head of blessings that flow to every people on this earth. Let us fulfill our divine destiny to prepare for these promises".

You young people are who Brother Featherstone was speaking of. I have seen the young people in my own ward. Have witnessed their incredible testimonies and I'm sure that it is like this throughout our stake. Stay true to your teachings. Thank you for letting me spend this time with you I have a testimony of this gospel. Heavenly Father does hear our prayers and answers them in the way which he knows is best. I thank Him and his Son, Jesus Christ, publicly for all that I am and all that I have. I say all of this in Jesus' name. Amen