

PURE RELIGION

The Milk Depot

In 1932, when I was a senior in high school, our Pioneer Stake presidency was thinking of ways to help the people of our stake who were in dire need. Our stake president assigned the Relief Society presidency to contact the local dairies in the city about donating milk to destitute people.

The stake Relief Society presidency contacted a large dairy, which was not willing to help because they could not afford it. They then approached a small family-owned dairy nearby with their plan. At the time, skim milk was not used for human consumption but was given or sold at a very low price to farmers who fed it to their pigs. The sisters knew that skim milk was nutritious for human consumption. The owner of the dairy agreed to give the stake milk on condition that anyone could have it and not just members of our Church. The dairy agreed to give four five-gallon cans of milk twice a week, Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings.

Our home was chosen as the milk depot. It was announced that people could come for milk starting at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and 9:00 a.m. on Saturdays. My sister Helen was working, and my sister Shirley was too young. So I was appointed to ladle out the milk.

And the people came—young children, mothers with small children, older women, and old men—all ages, all bringing their containers to hold the milk, be it pitchers, fruit jars, lard buckets, coffee cans, anything that could hold that precious milk.

One Saturday, a little boy about eight or nine years old came to the door for milk. He was as neat and clean as a pin. His overalls had patches on the patches, and he had what I call a “homemade haircut.” He was late, and the milk was gone. When I told him, he just stood there with big tears in his eyes. I think I was as hurt as he was that the milk was gone. As he started to walk away, I called to him and told him to wait a minute. I went into the house and told my dad about it. He came out and took a quart of milk out of the old ice box and poured it into the little boy’s bucket. He told him the times the milk was available and to be early. That little boy came every Wednesday and Saturday, and if he wasn’t the first in line, he was the second.

One day, the boy’s father came with him, wanting to talk to the person who was responsible for giving the milk. I went in and got Dad, who invited the man into the house. Several months later at the Sunday dinner table, Dad said, “Remember the man who came with the little boy for milk?”

Yes, we remembered him.

“Well,” said Dad, “he and his whole family have joined the Church.”

Over the years, I have often thought of the “milk depot,” and I have told and retold the story many times to my children and grandchildren.

