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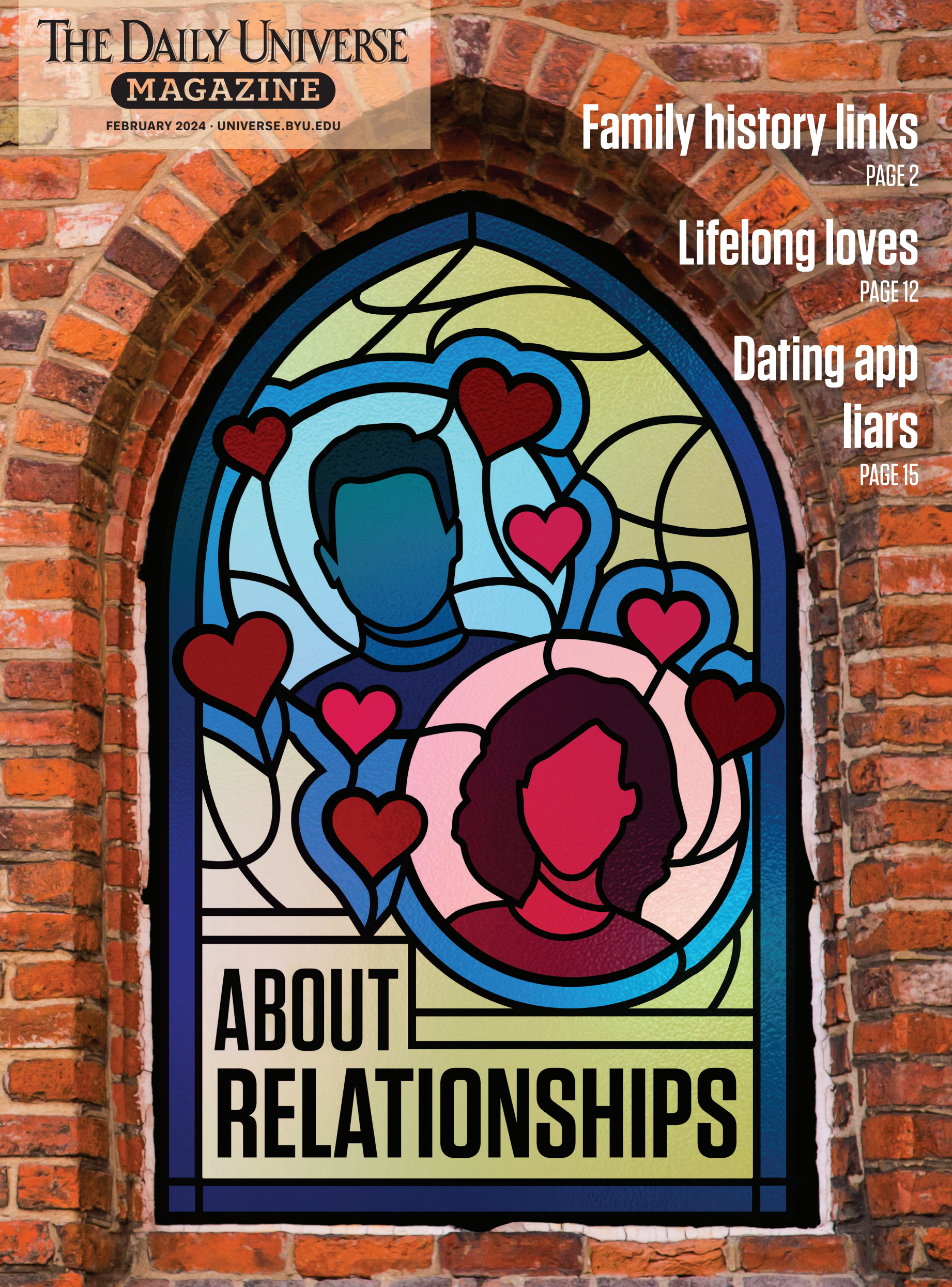

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Family history

Not just for old people

By Ashly Larkin

For many young people today, family history work just becomes another task to put on an already full to-do list.

There's school, work, social life, sleep and rest, and relaxation and it's hard to even fit most of that in a single day. So adding family history work on top of it all seems overwhelming.

But it doesn't have to be as hard or as complicated as we make it out to be sometimes.

For Katie Barker, who's 23, she isn't logging on everyday to fulfill her family history duties.

"The way that it manifests is me getting on like, once every three months. And so I get on the app and I'll do a couple tasks, and I can, sometimes, find a name and try to take it to the temple. But it's super simple. And my knowledge of it does not go crazy into like the stories and all that kind of stuff."

In 2016, Barker and her family decided they wanted to do temple work for 1,000 names in the temple. This is where she got her first taste of doing family history work.

This taught her the importance of strengthening the chain, a reference to President Gordon B. Hinckley's quote, "Do not become a weak link in the chain of your generations."

"We're connecting everybody that we can to Heavenly Father and to the gospel. I had an experience recently, when I went to the temple and I was like, 'why do I go to the temple?' Sometimes it's just so hard because the endowment session is so long and it's like I fall asleep every time, like why am I going? And I was sitting in [the temple] and I just felt Heavenly Father was like, it's not about you. It's about the people that are waiting for their work to be done, because you've experienced the blessings of the endowment and of making this covenant with me, but people on the other side of the veil haven't yet," Barker said.

Family history work is about blessing other people, serving other people. And service can be hard, long and taxing sometimes. But we also get blessed in return.

"I [remember hearing] a promise that as you do family history work, Satan's power over you in today's world will not be as strong. I think it's easy in today's world to get distracted, deceived and discouraged by Satan. And I'm constantly looking for ways to not fall into those things. And so most of the time, like every three months, I hit this low. Then [I feel] I need to do family history. And it does hold me over for the next three months," Barker said.

Another reason Barker does family history work is to remember.

"I think about my grandparents and how much I love them and all their stories. Then I think about, [is anyone] gonna remember these stories? No, they won't, unless we write it down and put it in family history. And then hopefully, someday, someone will go back and study it. It could almost be like a social media. You get to learn about people in the past," she said.

Amy Harris, a professor of History and Genealogy at BYU, wrote a talk titled "How Family History Changes our Hearts and Minds."

Just like the history we learn in school, there is so much to learn from our own personal background.

"The refining influence of family history work can increase our own capacity for love. If we grow to love people long since dead, who lived very differently from us, then will we not come to realize how loving and merciful God is toward us? And can we not then love our families and neighbors and be compassionate with their shortcomings?" Harris said.

Morrow was adopted from an orphanage in Ghana, Africa, when she was six years old. So family history means a lot to her.

"I, personally, want to know where I'm from. Family history gives me purpose in life. It gives me a background, it gives me an identity, knowing who I am, where I'm from, what my ancestors did to get me where I am today. It's like a footprint, right? It's a part of my DNA. I came from somewhere," she said.

And in a world that has become so divided and lonely, why wouldn't we all want to search for belonging?

Doing family history work has given Morrow strength during the hard times.

"This life is hard and it's gonna get even harder," Morrow said. "And we know that, we've been told that. So knowing who I am as a person, knowing who my ancestors were and what they did, because of them, I can become more than I am today. It's like standing on the shoulders of giants, right? It just gives me so much purpose."

For Morrow, family history work is more difficult because there aren't many records kept in Africa. This proves the importance of family history work and record keeping. How are you to know who you are when there's nothing written down?

"I think sometimes our generation focuses on things that are happening right in front of our face," she said. "Like school, boys, girls, dating, relationships, [all] important things because families are forever. But the work at hand right now is family history. It is the most important work happening today. And if we want to be a part of this great work, we have to intentionally involve ourselves because it will move forward with or without us."

Simply looking at ourselves in a mirror can remind us of our family history.

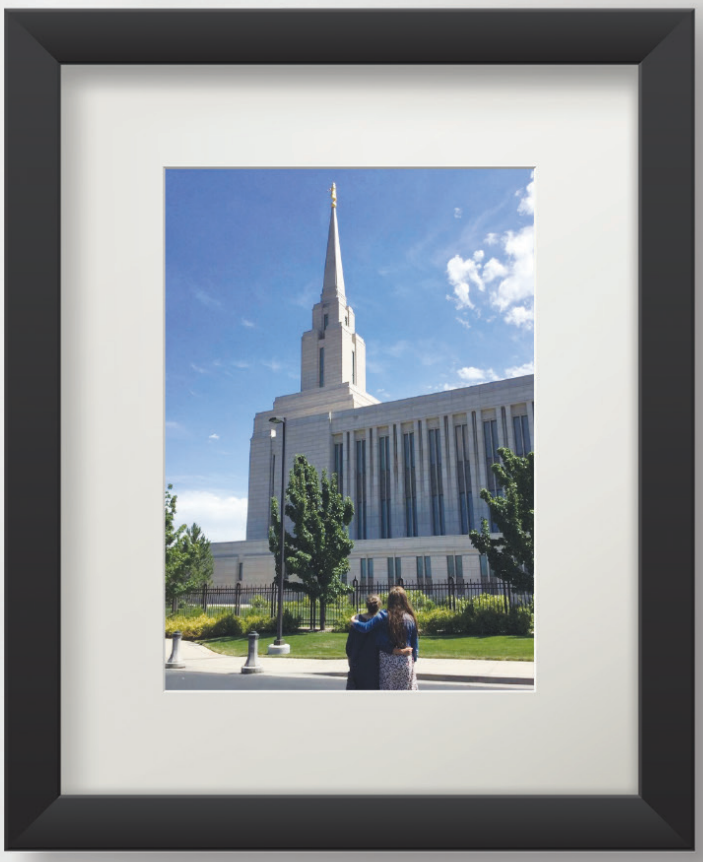
"When you look in the mirror, you should be happy to see your face because it was made from a generation of people that fell in love," Morrow said.

Morrow's passion and love for family history work should remind us all of the importance of learning about your history.

"This great work is actually this great blessing," Morrow said.

ARE TITUS

Wendy Morrow, 23, recently changed her major from Marriage and Family Therapy to Family History Work.



Katie Barker and her sister in front of the temple after completing ordinances for 500 deceased family members in 2016.
KATIE BARKER

Learning my mother's history

By Ashly Larkin

My mom converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1982 when she was 16 years old. Although the decision was easy for her, the process was not.

My mom is from South Korea, with a mother who was a strong Catholic and a father who was a Buddhist. Back then, it was more difficult to get baptized if you were a minor in Korea. In order to do so, you had to have your family stamp marked on a piece of paper you gave back to the missionaries saying you had their approval. My mother, loving the Church and believing in its teachings, decided to take the stamp, without permission, and mark the paper herself so she could get baptized. She was the only member in her family of eight to join the Church.

Years later, in 2013, my parents were inspired to do the temple work for my mom's family. My mom's father died in 1993 and her mother died in 2004. My siblings and I never really got to know them because our grandpa died before we were born and our grandma died when we were very young.

Soon after my parents made this decision, the Church announced the missionary age change from 19 years of age for men to 18. My brother Paul was 18 at the time and it came as a shock to all of us. The plan was always for him to have another year before he left on his mission.

However, my brother went along with the changes the Church made and started his preparations for his mission. This would mean he'd go through the temple and get endowed.

Because the timing coincided, some of Paul's first experiences going through the temple were for his family members.

"I remember when we went to complete the sealing, that might have only been my second or third time in the temple after I was endowed," Paul told me recently.

Doing your family's temple work can help you feel connected to them.

"When we went to do the temple work for our grandparents, I thought it was so cool! Not having really known my mom's parents, it always felt like a small missing piece in my life and being able to do the temple work for them filled in the piece and helped me feel connected to them. It's one of the highlights of my life and is a pillar of my testimony," Paul said.

My sister, Angela, felt similarly.

"I have never had the opportunity to meet any of her side of the family, having not yet been able to go visit, and unfortunately some of them died before I was born. I have only been able to hear a few stories. So, when my parents came to my siblings and I and said we were going to be able to do some family history work for her side of the family, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to learn more about her family and their history," Angela said.

This experience gave my mom the opportunity to share more about her conversion story and her family. Things we had never heard before.

"I remember, as I learned more about them, feeling more like they were also my family instead of just my mom's. I could literally feel that gap closing and they didn't feel so much like strangers and more like family," Angela said.

My mom, Hwajin, considers this experience to be one of the best days of her life.

"Every one of my family was involved for my parents and grandparents, it's just the best experience, the best part of the whole thing, and I'm really grateful for that," Hwajin said.

Thankfulness seems to be the overarching emotion for my mom.

"Overall, with Paul going out on his mission and you and Angela being involved to do my grandparents' baptism and confirmation, it all made me really grateful that I have the gospel and that I can do the work for my parents and grandparents," Hwajin said.

After more than 20 years, in 2007, my mom used social media to find the missionary that baptized her.

She wrote a message to that missionary and re-introduced herself saying that he taught and baptized her. She wanted to let him know that she got married in the temple and raised her kids in the gospel and that she was grateful for missionaries.

Her motivation was wanting to express how grateful she was.

"I think when you hear from somebody you met and taught from your mission, it's worth it to let him know that what he did as a missionary mattered. His efforts brought somebody to the gospel and because of that, I got blessed," she said.

ABE TULLIS

Hwajin Larkin with her friends from church and the missionaries in 1982.
HWAJIN LARKIN

Hwajin Larkin and her best friend on their baptism day, June 6, 1982.
HWAJIN LARKIN

Ashly Larkin and her family in front of the Las Vegas Temple in 2019.
ASHLY LARKIN

Preserving family legacies

By Cate Ferraro

We will all leave behind a legacy someday. A legacy shaped by our efforts and others' perceptions. A legacy that will hopefully be remembered by our posterity and generations to follow.

But, our memory can only live on for so long before it is lost to the course of time. That is unless we take the steps right now to chronicle our experiences — with our future family in mind. It's worth considering how your legacy, and your family's legacy, will live on.

Why document family stories?

Family stands at the forefront of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and family history is a tool to strengthen these bonds even further. From an eternal perspective, family history work is vital to salvation. Latter-day Saints are responsible for providing saving ordinances to ancestors who did not receive the opportunity to find the gospel in their lifetimes. Delving into your family history not only holds eternal benefits for your ancestors but can also bring blessings to you and your descendants.

Highlighting family history advances our mental well-being. A 2023 study done by BYU professors Kelly Summers, Barry Lunt and David Wood found that increased involvement in family history work is linked to higher self-esteem and decreased anxiety. The study sampled two groups of BYU students, one group that was enrolled in a family history course and another group that was enrolled in many different non-family history courses. The study's findings showed that family history, especially examining records relating to one's ancestors, is a way to increase psychological well-being.

"If you preserve something, then your posterity will have it, your children will have it… your grandchildren will have it," said Summers, BYU professor of family history. She explained that many of her students express a longing for their ancestors to have left behind more personal artifacts, like journals, to provide a better understanding of their lives. "I tell [my students] make sure you're leaving the records that you wish your ancestors left for you," Summers said.

Ancestral narratives, especially those that show connection and relatability, offer a valuable advantage to future generations. Summers explained that including emotional reactions and challenges within family stories offers a benefit to younger and future generations. "If we portray ourselves as never having a challenge and having a perfect life, that's not very relatable to most people," she said.

Family stories are especially impactful on children. "The more we love and share our family stories, the more we bless the lives of those who hear them," said Ted Black, a family history leader in the Provo Utah Parkway Stake. He encouraged members to make a record of stories that have been passed down through generations, "Go home and take a few minutes from time to time and write your family stories. Don't make the stories too long," he said. "As you write your stories, compile them into a book which you make accessible to your family."

Robyn Fivush, director of the Family Narratives lab at Emory University, and a colleague, psychologist Marshall Duke, developed a scale to record how much children knew about their family history after decades of research. They conducted a study that began just before the 9/11 attacks and continued for two years.

"We found that in families that talked in more coherent and emotionally open ways about challenging family events with 10- to 12-year-olds, the children coped better over the two-year period than in families telling less emotionally expressive and coherent stories about their challenges," Fivush said. Results from the study communicated that children in families that told more coherent family narratives manifested higher self-esteem, higher social competence, higher quality friendships, less anxiety and stress and fewer behavioral problems.

How do I document family stories?

There are many ways to record family stories. Journals, photographs, recordings, and artifacts are some methods of keeping your family narrative alive. However, family stories are often told through word of mouth, and can easily be lost when a family member passes away.

You may want to reach out to older family members to preserve these oral histories. In the NPR article, "Every family has stories to tell. Here's how to document yours," Sylvie Douglis and Simran Sethi advise beginning the documentation process with a brainstorm. Make a list of family events or mysteries that you are curious to learn more about. Then, track down the storyteller—you'll want to interview them to get the full narrative.

Interviews with family members can be awkward, as we don't usually interact with them in a formal setting. Douglis and Sethi recommend initiating the conversation with some warm-up questions such as "What is your favorite childhood memory?" to ease into the discussion. Approach any sensitive topics that may arise with care, as your interviewee may be processing difficult emotions upon memory recollection.

Yowei Shaw, host and producer of NPR's Invisibilia, urged audiences to prioritize the preservation of their family history. "Take advantage of the time you have now, so you don't have regrets later," Shaw said.

ABE TULIS

A letter, a conversion and me

By Kate Hjorth

Have you ever received something unexpected that came at a seemingly perfect time? Maybe a raise at work or a text from a distant friend? For me, it was a hand-written letter from my grandpa that I received about 15 months into serving a mission in Washington, D.C.

My 80-year-old grandpa is not tech-savvy, to say the least, but he spent the time to type up a letter and address it to me, all on his own. The letter started out describing the scenery surrounding his home in South Jordan, Utah.

"It's a beautiful Monday afternoon here in South Jordan. The leaves are starting to turn colors. The flowers are starting to die and soon all the leaves will have fallen, but this is still my favorite time of year," he wrote.

After giving a brief update on my grandma and their upcoming vacation plans, he went on to write what all loving grandpas write. He told me how proud he was of me and that he prayed for me. He then started to talk about his mother, who I never had the privilege of meeting: my great-grandmother Johnston.

"I am grateful for the two lady missionaries that tracted out my mother in Superior, Wisconsin, in the winter of 1949," he said. "I just printed and read her conversion story so that I can send a copy of it in this letter. I was crying the whole time that I was reading it and am so grateful for her strength and resolve to be strong her whole life."

He attached "My Conversion" by Helen J. Johnston. As a missionary, seeking out people just like my great-grandmother, this letter came at a precious time. I remember quickly finishing my dinner so that I could read her conversion story during some remaining free minutes. Tears filled my tired missionary eyes as I read about my great-grandma Johnston's search for truth.

One late October afternoon two sister missionaries knocked on my great-grandmother's door. Up to this point, Grandma Johnston was a Lutheran, but since her mother's death, she started to develop some spiritual questions. The sister missionaries were in the neighborhood taking a poll on various beliefs on fundamental doctrines. In an out-of-character decision, Helen let the sisters inside her home. They began to tell her about Joseph Smith, golden plates and a Book of Mormon. They asked her about her belief in God and his power. Unable to deny his power, my great-grandmother accepted the invitation to read the Book of Mormon.

"Everything I read just pierced my soul with truthfulness," she said. "I was delighted with what I had found and of course, I wanted to tell this good news to my husband. I was unprepared for what happened. My husband was visibly shocked by my news, and I had never experienced such opposition to anything like this before. (I later learned that strong prejudice against the Mormons existed with my husband and his family long before our marriage.) My husband told me to have nothing to do with these people. … I was torn because I did not want to displease my husband. But I also had received some of the most important spiritual truth of my whole life."

With two children at home, my grandpa being the younger one, my great-grandmother grappled with this decision. Her husband told her to pay for the book but to never speak to the missionaries again. With time, the missionaries returned and answered more of her questions. She was certain she had found the truth.

After continued contention in the home, my great-grandmother gave up contact with the Church. With great surprise, a couple of weeks later my great-grandfather came to Helen and told her she could be baptized, but she had to make a promise. She was not to bring the children to the "Mormon" church. She kept her promise and was baptized shortly after. After a while, my great-grandfather found it difficult to manage the children during his church service. Their children, including my grandfather, eventually started to attend church with their mother. They too were baptized, and all eventually married in the temple each with extensive posterity in the Church. I am one of them.

There's a lot more to the story, but what stands out the most in all of this is the timing. Those sister missionaries knocked on my great-grandmother's door at the perfect time. My grandpa sent me a letter in the mail during my mission at the perfect time. We often get promptings to do certain things out of our daily norm. We should listen to those promptings; it just might be a perfect time. Those sisters may never know the influence they had for generations, and my grandpa probably doesn't know how dear I hold his letter. Each of us has great power to influence the world for good, and it begins with the unexpected.

My family's conversion

By Angela Hernandez

The answer to life's existential questions can be found anywhere, even in a school classroom.

As the teacher began to ask the questions, "Where did we come from?, "Why are we here?" and "Where are we going?", my aunt's eyes started to open wide.

Juana Fernandez had the desire to know the answers to these questions while sitting at her desk in high school. After her teacher continued, Juana got the courage to talk to her and ask why she was different.

The answer was that her teacher was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. With her curiosity Juana was able to learn more about the truths of the gospel and learn from missionaries that would later teach her entire family.

Through her desire to learn more about these questions, Juana eventually introduced the gospel to her sister, my mother. My mother, Angela, later taught her own family and we experienced the gospel of miracles too.

As my mother began to grow in her new be-

liefs and standards, she was eventually baptized at age 8 and then followed her sister's example of living a righteous life. My mother saw her sister as a pillar in her life.

"She was the foundation of the truth in our home, she was an example to all in our family and she helped throughout my entire life," my mother told me recently.

Our family's conversion and learning experience was one of patience, love, kindness and dedication through our mother. Though my mom grew up in the gospel, she married my father in 1998 even though he was not then a member of the Church.

"I married my husband, Damian, because he was such a wonderful and loving person, who I know would be a great father and leader," my mother said.

Though my father was a great and loving person, his views were different from those of the Church on occasions.

My childhood was filled with lots of conflictions of who I was and what my destiny was to become with regard to faith. My mother made it her duty to fully immerse all her children in the gospel of Jesus Christ just as my aunt Juana did.

"My sister helped me know the importance of having the gospel in our families, she taught me about who I am, the potential and love that comes from a loving Heavenly Father," my mother said.

My mother taught her seven children the ways of the restored gospel, despite not having the full support from my father until later in our lives. Eventually, my oldest sister, Stephanie, desired to serve a full-time mission for the Church. This caused some changes in my father.

"From a young age, I knew that I wanted to serve a mission, there was never a doubt in my mind," Stephanie said. "I told my father that the gospel is the most important thing in this life and that our family would not be able to progress if he never changed."

As my father began to have a change of heart, our family was able to have opportunities to grow in the gospel. His change and conversion in the gospel led our family to have increased faith in Jesus Christ and develop a gospel-centered home of learning.

The change in our home was not the flip of a switch but it was one of love and patience.

"My husband's conversion was one of true charity and patience, our family struggled to have a centered gospel home for over 15 years," my mother said. "I am grateful for my children's efforts and their patience and dedication to the gospel."

There were many tears shed during those 15 years, but they were also filled with love and faith in Jesus Christ.

As my family grew closer to the gospel, we eventually had the privilege to be sealed together on Aug. 24, 2018 in the Houston Texas Temple. That same day my father and sister, Stephanie, received their endowments together.

"The gospel is one of families," my father said. "I had to learn that lesson myself, though it took me time to realize it. I am eternally grateful for my eternal family and all the individuals that helped my family get to where we are."

With all the hardships and trials my family endured, we are grateful for the journey that allowed us to receive eternal blessings. Those eternal blessings all began with some simple yet profound questions.

Getting to know my great-grandmother

By Emma Everett

Irene Helene Exner Everett—my violin-playing, Pepsi-drinking, four-foot-eleven inches tall German great-grandmother—died the day after my fourth birthday.

I remember being too small to look inside of her oak wood casket at the viewing. I remember a Simpsons pinball machine in the basement. I don't remember her.

In the years since Irene's been gone, I've gotten to know her. I feel that she knows me. Sometimes I wish I could have said goodbye to her.

Irene was born in Görlitz, Germany, in 1908, the only child of Paul Hermann Exner and Anna Koerper to survive to adulthood. She was well-off and a little spoiled. She had ice skates and violin lessons and porcelain dolls. But her childhood was also colored by war.

"Six of the seven melodious church bells were taken down and melted for ammunition," she said in a personal history. "Hundreds of people gathered in the square to hear the bells toll for the last time."

Everyone has "lasts" in life, but Irene's came earlier than most. She was only 25 years old when she said goodbye to her parents for the last time—she had decided to marry Edward Ellis Everett from St. George, Utah.

Ellis was a missionary turned district president in Görlitz when he and Irene met. They crossed paths often in church service. Irene was a convert of only four years and was eager to pitch in with music, Sunday School or activities.

"Basically I liked her energy!" Ellis said of Irene in his journal. "She was so energetic, always doing something."

They harbored secret feelings for one another for weeks. Occasionally they'd lock eyes and feel something electric. This went on until the night before Ellis was going to be transferred.

At a church meeting, he told Irene to give her friends the slip so they could walk home alone together. She nodded, but she was so surprised that she played the organ with stumbling fingers for the rest of the meeting.

That night, Ellis kissed her square on the mouth and promised he'd come back to marry her in a year. She said yes.

They exchanged letters across an ocean for a while. Ellis was trying to find work in Southern Utah during the Great Depression. Irene was hoping for things to work out but wasn't exactly sure how she felt.

Until one day in June 1933, when Ellis showed up on her doorstep, like a letter come to life.

Irene didn't know what to do. She went for a walk by the river where she had been baptized on "a beautiful moonlit Sunday evening" four years before. She prayed.

"I did not hear a vision nor did I hear a heavenly voice, but the Spirit's prompting was so strong that I knew what path I must take," Irene said.

This was heartbreaking news for Irene's parents. Their only daughter was leaving them for a distant desert, all-in on a new religion. Her romance with Ellis had been brief and mostly via letter. It was unorthodox, but Irene said she knew it was the right thing to do.

Still, goodbyes are hard. She said goodbye to her mother and friends. She looked for her father, but couldn't find him.

"At first, I thought saying goodbye was more than he could face, but when we came to the railroad station, there he was. I tried to be brave and smile, but when he put his arms around me and kissed me—for the last time—I couldn't hold back the tears," she said.

I can relate. When I left home for my first year at BYU, my dad ran after the car until I turned off of our cul-de-sac. We were both smiling and crying and waving.

Though I didn't know it for almost four years, later that week I would meet my future husband. The first time he saw me, I was playing the piano at church—just like Irene.

There are ripples of her life in mine. We know each other in part.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ... For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known," Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13.

According to family lore, 94-year-old Irene was resuscitated on her deathbed by a sip from a can of Pepsi. She lived three more years, though she openly confessed that she'd have rather gone the way of all the earth—the way of her parents, Ellis, and her son.

It's OK that I didn't get to say goodbye to 97-year-old Irene before she died. There's an invisible thread connecting us, and I know I'll see her again.

PROVIDING REFUGE

Local efforts to support the refugee community

By Ashly Larkin

There are currently 108.4 million people in the world who are forcibly displaced.

Thirty people are newly displaced every minute.

Fifty percent of refugees, worldwide, are children.

We hear so much about people fleeing their countries for safety. Some recent examples include the Ukrainian crisis which started in 2022 and the Israel-Hamas war – and those are the ones we hear about. There are so many we don't.

It's difficult to fully understand the scope of what refugees go through on their journey to find safety.

Kelli McCullough, who served and worked with refugees in Utah County and Washington, D.C., has gained understanding of the refugee experience through her service.

While in D.C., McCullough read files containing the journeys of refugees. She got to read about their stories to get to America.

"Our kids were coming from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. And they were desperate. All these kids' stories were like they left mom. And you can't go back [to your family] because of immigration and that means they were so desperate," McCullough said.

McCullough shared a story of some young girls who left their mother to find safety in America.

"A lot of the stories were girls who were walking to school and gang members were harassing them and the parents were like if we call the cops they won't come and there's not much we can do to protect you, so you just got to go. So these girls would just have to get to the border. And the moms would insert birth control into their daughter's arms when they sent them off because they knew they would probably get raped by the time they got to the border," McCullough said.

The journey to get from one place to another for these refugees is full of trial, tribulation, and trauma.

"It's terrible that these kids go through such trauma. First being in their country, trauma on the journey, and they get to the United States and they get taken away from the people they journeyed with," McCullough said.

A simple act McCullough did to help serve these refugees was learn their language.

"I wanted to help learn their language because anytime I would say a sentence in their language it was like their eyes would light up and immediately you're their best friend, they trust you and they want to talk to you. They're so appreciative of the fact that someone like me is trying to care about their language and learn because they're expected to just come to this country and learn English and be American and I like showing respect to them, of being like I'm making an effort to learn about your culture," she said.

Kennedy Call was raised in a military family and has lived all over the world. Because of this, she has some firsthand experience serving refugees.

When the Ukraine war broke out, Call was living in Germany and saw a huge influx of Ukrainian refugees.

"We did a bunch of drives to help make sure that they got the supplies that they needed and clothes and just helping them feel welcome in a new place. Because not only did they come from Ukraine, then they were moving into Germany, but then that's not where it ended. They moved into American homes. So they were learning German to be able to work, but they had to learn English to be able to communicate with the people who were hosting them," Call said.

Another way Call helped was by handing food to these refugees through a fence. They were on a military base during COVID, so there were many rules and regulations in place at the time.

The most difficult part for Call when giving food to these refugees was having to send some away.

"These kids would come back through the line hoping that they could get more food or get food for their mom and their little brother and we just couldn't give it to them. And it's just so hard to have to turn them away because you just want them to feel like their needs are being met or that they're able to go and help their mom do that. But we needed the mom to be able to go through the line to mark her bracelet to show that she got her meal for the day. These little kids were just pleading for more food for their families, for themselves. [But], we

had to make sure that everybody got food," Call said.

As difficult as some of her experiences were serving refugees, Call shared many heartwarming ones as well.

"One of the biggest takeaways that I took from working with the Ukrainian people was that they just have so much love. They're in the middle of a war, but when the Ukrainian saints would say their prayers, they would always include for the safety of the Russians, and they would pray for the Russians and other civilians that they would be okay.

"I learned that even though they were going through such a hard thing, and that they could feel angry about the war that was happening, most of them really decided to take a very positive look and say, 'Okay, this stinks right now.' But what can I do is pray to be able to love these people and then to pray for their safety," said Call.

Another experience she shares was while she was living on the Ramstein Air Base in Germany where there were more than 76,000 Afghan refugees trying to reach safety.

"We got to learn a lot about their culture, and some people in my ward noticed that the ladies would wear their husbands' shirts over their heads to pray because they had lost their hijabs. And so [the members] started learning how to sew hijabs and made them for them so that they could be comfortable while praying. And that was just a really neat experience to see how grateful they were to have somebody care enough about them to make them these hijabs so that they could comfortably pray because that's important to them. And so it was important to us. And that was just a really neat experience," Call said.

Jody McOmber had the opportunity to serve refugees while on her mission in McAllen, Texas, which is right on the border of Mexico. This was a major hub for asylum seekers and other displaced persons.

She shares how difficult the process is for refugees to stay in the country.

"We were in the very, very south of Texas and these people would have to appear in New York or Washington state within one or two weeks [for their court appointment]. And add in these people don't really have the financial means to get there. So it was really eye opening for me to really see how difficult the system is for asylum seekers," McOmber said.

Similar to Call, McOmber saw how much need there was for these people, but there was only so much one could do.

"People would constantly be asking if they could get something or something else. And so you deliberately would have to avoid eye contact with certain people because you only had so many resources, and there was only so much time. And so you kind of learn how to detach yourself, which is really hard, because these young people need emotional connection and these things to help them get through," McOmber said.

Refugees suffer in their country, on the journey to safety, and even once they've reached refuge, their journey doesn't end.

Though there are many who have seen this firsthand, there are many that haven't. But learning, reading, and understanding the journey refugees go through is the first step in helping them.

KELLI MCCULLOUGH, JODY MCOMBER

Clockwise from top left: Kelli McCullough and her coworkers in Washington with copies of the Church's self-reliance personal finance manual.
Kits prepared and given to refugees.
Boxes of food and other items were provided for the refugees in McAllen, Texas.

How to create LIFELONG LOVE

BY MEAGAN PINCKNEY

Romance novels, love songs, and rom-coms are all that's needed to prove that love really is what makes the world go round. From elementary crushes to first dates and kisses, love seems to be a fascination that is universal across the human board. And while we all enjoy a good love story, there is one group that seems particularly admired: long-term lovers.

Grandadjoe has 534,000 followers on Instagram who adore his relationship with his late wife.

The kind of love that lasts beyond infatuation and teenage years, even beyond your 20s and 30s and 40s. We are talking, the kind of love that lasts long into the time your hair turns silver and your skin begins to wrinkle. The love that lasts a lifetime.

With social media reaching far and wide, the younger generation looks upon older couples on social media with adoration and hope.

Comments flood posts of elderly couples with things like "I hope I can find a love like this" or "This is so wholesome. I love you two!"

With divorce rates in the US between 40-50 percent of first-time marriages it prompts the question: What is the secret to finding love that lasts a lifetime?

I did some digging, and here is what I found.

THE STUDY OF LOVE

This quest is not new and has been studied and researched by many scientists through the years. One study of long-term marriage found that there are many factors involved in successful couples including commitment, respect, communication, compromise, togetherness, posterity, humor, and support of one another.

In this study, doctoral student Mark A. Nimtz noted that his research highlighted that children and grandchildren were a significant part of satisfied long-term marriages.

BYU student Kaylee Corbridge studied age at the time of marriage as associated with successful marriage. She found that the group that got married between 20-24 had less conflict, more effective communication, higher sexual satisfaction, and overall more satisfied relationships than those who delayed marriage until their thirties and beyond.

Looking at other articles, there were many similar conclusions. Marry young, have kids, and have a long list of positive attributes in your marriage and you should be set, I guess. But these statistics and descriptors glaze over the infinite combinations of personalities and life circumstances.

So I took the opportunity to meet a few of these beloved and admired long-term couples.

1 LEONARD AND SIDNE O'REILLY: A NEURODIVERGENT RELATIONSHIP

Below top: Leonard and Sidne O'Reilly dancing at their wedding September 1964. The couple has been married 59 years.

Bottom: Leonard and Sidne O'Reilly now. Together they have 6 children, 28 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren.

Leonard and Sidne O'Reilly met in December of 1963 and were engaged by the end of January a month later. Leonard was 26 and Sidne was 19 when they married in September of 1964.

In their 59 years together, Leonard and Sidne have had many ups and downs and have learned a lot about love and marriage.

Sidne said she wrote down notes of what she thinks could contribute to a long-term marriage.

"The first thing I think that's important is … there has to be two whole individuals that have a secure attachment style … a person knows who they are and they love themselves and they care about themselves," she said.

Leonard said in recent years he has been diagnosed with Aspergers which puts a whole different filter on their relationship.

Sidne said in a neurodiverse relationship it's helpful to know your own and your partner's limitations and then adjust your expectations and compensating for the limitation.

She said she's had to realize, "there's lots of ways I can fulfill my own needs." When she knows she will be in a situation where Leonard might not be able to give her what she needs she will make sure she knows what resources she has and where she can turn.

"In a neurodivergent relationship, the person who's neurodivergent has special interests and you're probably not one of them," Sidne said.

She said you need to have things you can anticipate together and have a vision of your life together.

Leonard said most of their marriage they had date nights almost every Friday and it was very important in their relationship.

Sidne said there are a lot of things they don't have in common, but they do have a large posterity in common which has been important to them. Together they have 6 kids, 28 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren and counting.

2 JO ANN AND FRED JACKSON: LIVING AFTER LOSING YOUR SOULMATE

Jo Ann and Fred Jackson were married 51 years, 2 months, and 17 days before Fred passed. They met Halloween of 1968, were engaged by the end of December and married 9 months after meeting, in August 1969. Together they had 5 sons.

Jo was 19 and Fred was 26 when they got married. Soon after their marriage Fred began to have health issues and was later diagnosed with MS and then prostate cancer which later led to more and more side effects.

"Before we got married, even when we were dating," Jo said, "I always knew that there was going to be something and I was going to have to take care of Fred, that there were going to be health issues … the Lord was just prompting me and I didn't realize how soon in our marriage that it was going to happen or how long it would last."

Jo spent most of their marriage caring for Fred even when she was diagnosed with cancer herself. With five children and so many medical needs between the two of them, Jo said they never had much money.

"When we were going through rough times I would always say to myself 'You've made a covenant with the Lord and you gotta keep your covenants.'" Jo said that keeping covenants and loving the Lord were critical to their marriage and her life still.

Jo said that Fred would often say, "That's life!" and that's how he dealt with the seemingly non-stop challenges that came their way.

Together they worked hard and did their best to care for each other and their children. Jo said that it was very difficult when Fred passed away and that she loved him very much.

She said that she devoted so much of her life to caring for him and still has lots of life to live. At almost 74 years old Jo Ann says she has a bucket list and would love to experience life. She has plans to travel, hopes to go in a hot air balloon and many other fun and exciting things.

Jo said that a piece of advice she would give to everyone is, "Love and care and let people know that you love and care for them."

CREATING LASTING LOVE

3 FERN AND HAROLD NEUBERT: 67 YEARS AND COUNTING

Fern and Harold Neubert have known each other since they were little but really met in high school. Fern, a sophomore at the time, approached Harold, a senior, while the school was broadcasting a baseball game on the TV.

They chatted and gradually started dating. Five months after Fern graduated they got married. Fern was 18 and Harold was 21. They have now been married for almost 67 years.

"You're always learning," Fern said. "If you want to be successful, you learn how to work," Fern said you learn more about each other, how to be patient, how the other thinks, and you continue to learn as you age together.

They both agreed that "togetherness" was a large component of their marriage. Each year they planned a vacation as a family.

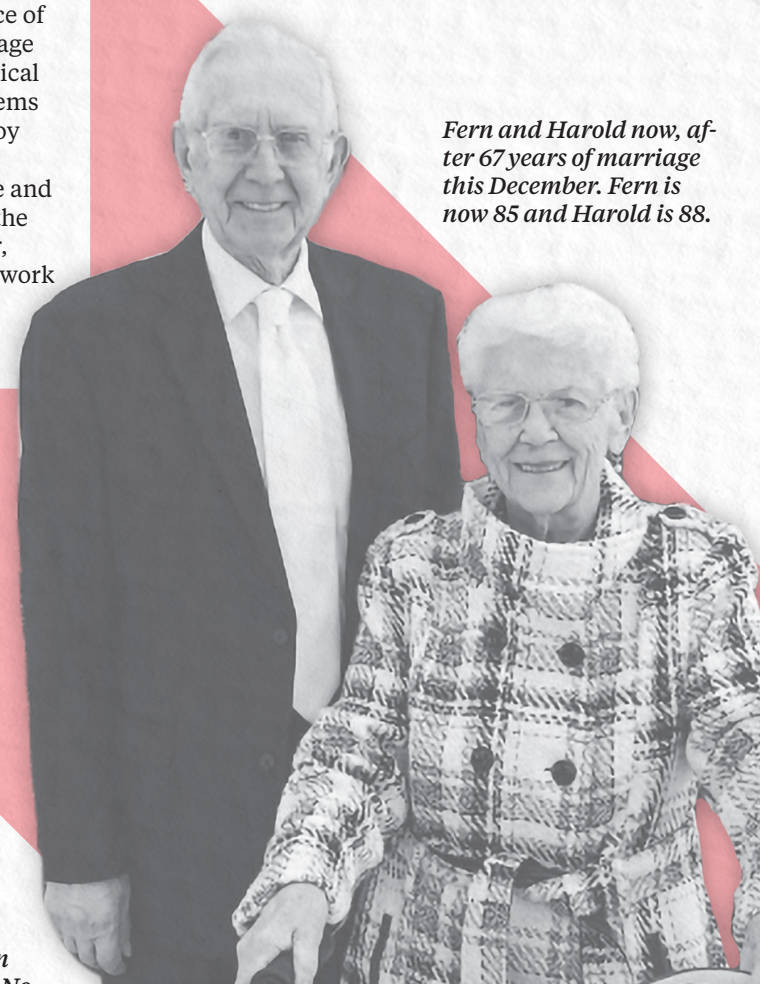
"We really didn't go on expensive vacations we just went somewhere, even if it was just camping," Harold said. Looking forward to something together and planning trips together with their children was something Harold and Fern both said was very important. They said having a large posterity together was very bonding.

Harold and Fern have 6 children, 21 grandchildren, and 41 great-grandchildren.

Fern said through the years she's learned to focus on three things: "Prayer, Patience (and that's what I'm still learning) … and perseverance. Prayer really is first. It takes all 3 to be married and have a family and doing everything you have to do."

All three of these couples married young and had 5 or 6 children, worked hard, and expressed the importance of commitment. Whether your marriage is neurodiverse, plagued with medical struggles, or started at age 18, it seems that there are ways to love and enjoy love for long lengths of time.

While marriage ages seem to rise and much of the world looks down on the institution of marriage all together, there are couples that make it and work hard to build a life together. Love can truly last a lifetime.



Fern and Harold now, after 67 years of marriage this December. Fern is now 85 and Harold is 88.

Fern and Harold on their wedding day November 24, 1956. Fern was 18 and Harold was 21 years old.

Tales of Dating App Dishonesty

By Kaitlyn Schreiner

Dating. It is no secret that students at BYU, and college students everywhere, often feel pressure to date both seriously and leisurely in the hopes of finding their eternal partner. Although the pressure of dating has been around for generations, the methods of dating have drastically changed in the last 15 years.

With advances in technology, online dating has become one of the most popular forms of dating. With apps such as Mutual, Tinder, LDS singles, Facebook dating and so many more, users are able to see dozens of profiles a day of potential relationships. Being able to "shop" for a possible partner through pictures, bios and conversations is both empowering and terrifying.

Although these apps have yielded hundreds of successful relationships, they have also produced thousands of awkward and uncomfortable interactions. Imagine you match with who you think is the perfect person for you, you talk for weeks and decide to finally meet up, only to find out that they are *nothing* like they said they were.

Unfortunately these situations have become so common, that online dating is now known for fake or dishonest profiles. The lies seep into several aspects of an online profile. I remember my first experience with hearing about someone lying on a dating app.

My freshman year my roommate, Amber*, and I were anxious to hop into the online dating scene. I came home from class one day to find her getting ready for a date. Our conversation went a little like this:

Kaitlyn: Aww you look so cute! Are you excited for your date tonight?

Amber*: I mean kind of

Kaitlyn: What do you mean "kind of"?

Amber*: Well it's a first date which is always awkward, and it's with a guy from mutual so that adds to the awkwardness and ... He wants to go hiking, I HATE hiking!

Kaitlyn: Well why don't you tell him you would rather do something else?

Amber*: Because my mutual profile says I "LOVE" the outdoors and I "LOVE" hiking! So now I'm stuck hiking!

Kaitlyn: HA HA

*name has been changed

We both broke into uncontrollable laughter as my very non-adventurous roommate headed off on a hiking expedition. Although lying about hobbies or interests may seem harmless it can lead to several challenges. I interviewed 30 BYU students about what they have lied about, or been lied to about when it came to online dating. Here are some of my personal favorites:

She said she was ready for a relationship ... when she was not.

A guy lied to me about his height. He said he was 6' and when I got there he was shorter than me ... and I am 5'2".

Someone lied to me about their career status and their living arrangements.

A guy lied to me about his literal ethnicity.

Someone was MARRIED ... his profile said single ... the lie was OBVIOUS!"

He lied about his age. He said he didn't want to be passed up by a girl in their 20s just because he was like 42.

The pictures on her profile were so outdated that when we met up in person ... I didn't even recognize her.

Her profile said she wanted a relationship, ... she just wanted a make out buddy and was mad when I said I didn't want that.

She told me she had graduated, we went on a couple dates and it was going well ... until she transferred into my Spanish class.

Someone lied to me about their height and their job.

Interviewing all of these individuals really made me think about why lying on these profiles is so common and almost expected.

Jeaninne Jones, a senior at BYU, commented on this reality saying, "I think people lie in their online profiles because people are scared of being vulnerable. Being vulnerable is a really scary thing, you are opening your deepest flaws and insecurities to someone. And people are afraid about how they are received."

So it seemed to spark the question: are we, as a generation, more concerned about portraying perfection over authenticity? And can a successful relationship be built if it starts on a dishonest claim? Honesty seems to be a requirement for a stable, healthy relationship.

Jones continued, "If I find out that someone has been lying about who they are, whether it be about height, job, hobbies, background, etc., it's an immediate no, because I want someone who is comfortable enough in his own skin to be vulnerable and honest with me from the start. I don't want someone trying or pretending to be someone who they 'think' I want them to be. I want them to be themselves first and always."

A relationship should be based on honesty and authenticity, and lies force you to pretend to be someone that you are not. Katja McClendon, a music major at BYU, commented saying, "If you lie on your profile, you have to keep the lie going and that's a lot of work."

What happens when the day comes that you can't keep pretending? Or is pretending a kind of facade that you can keep up for your entire life?

Ikaika Jenson, a senior at BYU, commented on this possibility saying, "I think that it is possible to have a relationship with someone who lied on their profile as long as it is superficial; if it is something more serious that they lied about it might be indicative of habitual lying."

To put it simply, people lie on dating apps because they care about the way they are perceived, over taking the vulnerable risk of being honest and authentic. If you want something to last, it needs to be built on the proper foundation, which is honesty, no matter where you choose to date.

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