

" Remember When" Mrs. Jeanne Bireley

How many times through the years have we heard the words, "I remember when," and someone goes on to give an account about some experience they have had in our church that was memorable to them? Or something happens, and its been said, "That's just like old Linwood," as you see a look of remembrance on their faces?

Each person can only speak for themselves, as I can only speak for myself as I remember so many dear old saints that down through the years had an influence on my life. Mrs. Lorena Jones and her daughter Sara Willis were the first ones I met, and we became lifelong friends.

They got me involved in this church, and, I soon found myself teaching in the Beginners Department, where Sara was the pianist. Anyone who teaches children soon learn, that as we study to learn answers for their curious little minds, we also learn, and when you get old and gray, it's the precious memories of some of your experiences with them that can brighten your day when you are alone with your memories of the past.

Kids are funny and I began to notice they didn't always like the combination of words and music we were using, so the Lord led me to write words and music that both had a message and were catchy, and the kids seemed to love them.

I could hear the music and

feel it in my heart, but I couldn't put it down, so Sara and I worked out a code between us. We both lived in Ogden and our yards joined, so whenever I would get an inspiration, I would run across the backyard and sing it for her. It was amazing how quickly she caught on and we put it down so she could play it.

Fortunately for us, Chris gave us free reign with the music and we were always ready with a new song. When I listen to old tapes of those children singing, I close my eyes and picture them as they were then. So many years have passed and those children are scattered all over the country but I still hear from many of them from time to time, and it thrills my heart when they speak about their faith.

Sara and I branched out into another phase of music. I only knew four chords on a guitar and we found out our voices blended, and somehow we made those chords fit just about any hymn there was, and we sang a lot in church and for group meetings. Even today whenever I hear "Mansion over the Hilltop," "It is no Secret," or "Where Could I Go," it brings back a lot of good memories.

Sara was my first friend here in Linwood, and it was a friendship that lasted until she joined the "Church Triumphant" a few years back. She was a friend who was always there for you in good times and bad. She was the type of person who would literally give you

the shirt off her back she thought you needed it - she was a true friend - the kind you find in Linwood Church.

As the years have passed there have been many more Saras in my life. I couldn't even begin to name them all, but I know I never would have made it through the many trials that have come my way if it wasn't for my church family.

There are so many people in this church who quietly reach out to others in so many helpful ways - they don't brag about it, or draw attention to what they are doing - they just do it. And to me they are truly the arms, the feet, and the voice of God as they serve Him in this very special way.

When God called our son home on July 4, 1967 on a battlefield in Vietnam, it was the love and caring of our church family that helped us through. It was out of that love that I was inspired to write my articles. They aren't great masterpieces - they are just basic, simple messages that God lays on my heart. If you look closely you will find threaded through them messages that are born out of my experiences of being a part of this family of God, words that really come from God, not me.

As we celebrate our 90th anniversary, we know we aren't perfect, and we aren't the big congregation we use to be, but look around you and think - Where are all those people who once filled these pews? Most of those who were the heart of our church, are now a part of the "Church

Triumphant, and we are encompassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses as they watch over us. I know when I close my eyes and sit quietly in church, I can still feel their presence there. Most of the children I taught have grown up and moved away and are a vital part of other churches that nurture the seeds that were once planted here.

I can only speak for myself as we begin another year in our Church, but I thank God for all the lifetime friends I've made here. No, we aren't as big as we use to be, but the future of our Church lies in those little ones who gather for the "Moments with the Children: Listen closely to their answer and the comradery they already have and you will see the beginning of new,

forever friendships being formed friendships that could last their whole lives.

I'm not a leader, a speaker, or an organizer but I know God has a place for all of us in His service, and through this church I found God could use me through my articles and I will be eternally grateful for the freedom to express myself that I have been given to serve my Lord in this Simple way.

As we celebrate our 90th anniversary, take a trip down memory lane yourself, and I am sure your heart will be blessed, like mine is, as you remember those who have made a difference in your life.

For me, my relationship with this church began, not because

someone pressured me, but when Mrs. Lorena Jones simply said to me, "Would you like to come to my church with me this week? I think you'll like it." And you know what - I did. That was 1951 and I've been here ever since.

As we celebrate this special anniversary, may God continue to bless this church and keep us ever true to His Holy Word.