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The Happiest "Pace"  
By Nathan Zollinger

It was dark outside. But morning was coming. And our van was waiting. We kids were excited. We were leaving on vacation. To Disneyland. I was particularly excited about the Swiss Family Tree house – especially for its lookouts atop a colossal staircase. I thought then as I did recently, that a vacation's value really began when you arrived at your magical kingdom; in my situation, it would begin when I climbed the many stairs of the Swiss Tree house and took in the beautiful view of the Disney Theme Park. I now know differently. I have considered another, much smaller Swiss Family Tree house, in Denver, with an ordinary, carpeted staircase. There are only 14 steps that lead up, not to a wonderful view, but to a rather boring hallway closet. But these were special stairs to observe. Not the stairs themselves. But for someone who walked on them.

Two farmer arms picked me up from my bed that morning we left to visit the happiest place on earth. Thick hands wrapped me in a blanket while two long legs descended our ordinary staircase – I still remember bobbing up and down with each step before being placed carefully into the van. My Dad completed this same trip five more times that morning, upstairs and downstairs. Upstairs. And downstairs. Upstairs. Downstairs. Upstairs. Downstairs. Upstairs. Downstairs. It was that trip down the stairs, I have realized, not the trip to California, that made that vacation, and so many others, so worthwhile.

That staircase was my father's lungs. That stairway was my father's heartbeat. Upstairs. Downstairs. Upstairs. Downstairs. As long as he could move along that stairway heaven itself could not stop him from working, from loving, from worshipping.

All of us lived upstairs. It was a happy place. Dad often grabbed us kids by an arm and a leg and swung us over the top of the stairs for an exhilarating ride. Or just before tickling our feet he would make a deal with us that if we didn't laugh we wouldn't have to go to school. We never missed school. Though often joking with us, his humor was always backed with a desire to help and uplift. On one occasion upstairs my father tried to dissuade my youngest sister from painting her bedroom. "Let's not paint your room green," he told her one afternoon. "Just pass out some green tinted sunglasses to your friends when they walk in your room." The room was painted green shortly thereafter.

Upstairs was also where Dad tended the crestfallen and taught us to always act in kindness. One evening upstairs my father listened to an irate daughter who had been bamboozled by a car mechanic earlier that day. After listening, my father quietly mentioned that she should take a step back and consider that even this dirty repairman was a child of God. For another daughter, Dad could always sense a broken heart and would walk slowly up the stairs towards her door, a signature shuffle that seemed to say, "Help is only a few footsteps away." Humor always followed help and sometimes my Mother participated in the fun. One evening as my parents were getting ready to go out for the evening, my Dad approached my Mom as she was getting her makeup on. "Thelissa," he teased, "your hair has no body." To which my Mom curtly responded, "Gary, your body has no hair." About our Mom Dad often repeated, "Kids, you know how much I love your mother."

Upstairs was also an important place where Dad nurtured his family in faith. Every morning we woke up to read Holy Scriptures, say family prayer, and study one of thirteen Articles of Faith. Dad explained that these thirteen articles of faith were much like small steps to understanding God's plan for us. They were written by Joseph Smith, a man called of God and who is honored in the song following my message. I mention two articles of faith as my father would have stated them:

"I believe in God the Eternal Father, and in his son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost."

"I also believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men..."

Doing good to all men? That was downstairs. Downstairs was where Dad could run out the front door to assist friends, neighbors, and strangers alike. Perhaps it would be a neighbor with a leaky shower

