

He helped Rhea onto the step, then said, "Oh — do you have a nickel?"

She gave him car fare from her purse. The bell clanged and as the car moved away he waved farewell, a big smile on his

face and the borrowed nickel in his hand the only money possessed by a man who had just yesterday come into five thousand dollars.

LEAVING UTAH

Yesterday the Wardhouse

Mary L. Bradford

Mary Lythgoe Bradford lives near Washington, D. C., with her husband, Charles, and three teenage children. She is a traveling consultant in English for the U. S. General Accounting Office and teaches a creative writing class for her Stake Relief Society (they hope to publish a book from their efforts). She did a master's thesis at the University of Utah on Mormon author Virginia Sorenson and would like to write a biography of a Mormon pioneer woman.

When I was a girl our Wardhouse appeared in booklets showing architectural oddities of Salt Lake City. We were proud that it looked so little like a Church. It was squat and white with a round, tower-like appurtenance on the front. It was once mistaken for a dairy, but I think now it may have been a true community center.

There was always a wedding reception, and I was always a bridesmaid. I was always appearing in some play or other, or serving at a dinner, or waiting around hoping (or fearing) to be danced with. I recited scriptures of my own choosing, by heart, every Sunday morning for three months straight-running. Standing just in front of the choir seats, I recited "The Waltz" by Dorothy Parker. I sang *Elijah* with a crowd of other monotones at Stake Conference. I was thrilled one day when David O. McKay himself put his arm around me as he stood there in a silver tie that matched his hair. I won first place in "Untrained Scripture Readings" at the speech festival. I wore a drop-shoulder dress in the Roadshow. As Secretary of the Sunday School I sat in front of the whole congregation, taking illegible notes and caring for my little sister, who always sat beside me. Once I wound a maypole in a Queen Contest. At the end of one lucky streamer was a box holding the crown. I didn't win the crown, but I did learn to waltz.

I recall that ward carnivals, held outdoors on the parking lot, were gambling affairs. We pitched pennies and paid to vote for

royalty. In Fast Meeting I stood and thanked God for saving my mother's life in direct answer to my personal prayers. The bishops in those days were always uncles or cousins of mine and suitably benign and distant.

My fantasy life was bounded by the "Ward Show." In our neighborhood I collected for the "budget," which meant that with each contribution each family received a white card entitling it to free movies every Friday and Saturday night. I myself always arrived a half-hour early and saved the front row. If the show was especially good, I saw it both nights. High up in the back of the Amusement Hall (as it was unashamedly called in those days) were three little holes atop a painted built-in ladder. I envied the brother who climbed that ladder every weekend and disappeared through a ridiculously small trap door.

Although the Ward Shows were family outings, they were not "family" movies. They were often horrendous affairs which scared me for years. I don't recall those characters so stylish today — Laurel and Hardy, W. C. Fields, Charlie Chaplin — but if Louis Hayward, Robert Donat, and Tyrone Power ever come in again, I shall be much in demand. How I ached for Louis Hayward whose beautiful face was shut up in that terrible iron mask simply because his nefarious brother (also played by Louis Hayward) had tricked him. I cried my own canal over the sufferings of Power as he built the Suez Canal, despite the death of his faithful Annabella. My

throat choked up over Beau Geste and the Four Feathers, which somehow run together in my mind as a double bill. My loyalties seemed equally divided between the prisons of France and the sands of Arabia. And nobody ever thought to tell me that the sufferings of Monte Cristo would disturb my dreams. I remember walking home after the Ward Shows, watching the shadows, listening for stealthy footsteps, running the last cowardly steps to my door.

Primary was primarily arts and crafts and singing. After school I always stopped in at home, cut a lemon, divided with a cousin, and strolled on to Primary where we sucked the lemons and flipped the seeds under the benches. One day when our teacher, for some obscure reason, asked us to make faces, we just took an extra slurp.

We were larks and bluebirds and seagulls, which names seem to me less dated and more soaring than Top Pilots and C.T.R. Pilots. I learned to bake bread, to embroider (I put a lily on my dish-towel), and to babysit (at 25 cents for the evening). I don't recall lesson material except as it touched on the Lost Tribes. We decided they were on the North Star. Given today's urban blight, I think that a felicitous idea.

M.I.A. seemed mainly social. I'm sure we had lessons there too, but the only one I remember was given by a young woman who later had nine children. She told us it was better to be born into the world without any shoes than not be born at all.

Arriving early has always been one of my vices. Often I arrived early at M.I.A. where I would perch on a step reading a nitty-gritty tome by Joseph Fielding Smith or Oscar McConkie. One of the boys in the Ward, an older and wiser man of fifteen, grew alarmed at my fanaticism. One day he presented me with his personal copies of *Lad, A Dog*, and *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*. I read them dutifully, never thinking to ask why, if he was that concerned over my potential spinsterhood, he hadn't chosen something racier.

Some of us used to meet at M.I.A. in order to ride to the Tabernacle where we sang in the All Church Music Festival. As we waited, we danced in the streets, while some turned cartwheels and bayed at the sky. When dating days arrived, I dated boys in the Ward. I remember that when one of them left for his mission, I gave

a memorized scripture. I told the audience quite sincerely that as the spirit without the body is dead, so are works without faith.

All my cousins either married members of the Ward or brought their husbands to live there. They built houses in vacant lots retained for the purpose by their parents. My parents still have their vacant lots, for none of us settled them.

It seems to me that the Wardhouse saw me lovingly into womanhood, turning me graciously over to the Institute of Religion, which took up where the Wardhouse left off.

Our Wardhouse today is treated with more respect, beginning with its name. We usually call it The Church, and we are warned to keep our kids from tearing the phones off the walls. My children sit with folded arms learning "reverence." I don't recall hearing much about reverence in our Wardhouse, but I think I felt it, even while the little ones munched goodies in the aisles during Sacrament Meeting. Nowadays, after Sacrament meeting, we march out, row by row, with an usher to guide our steps. The foyer is always jammed with members loath to leave until the strain of being reverent has worn off.

The Amusement Hall (see Recreation) is now the Cultural Hall. We have "Programs" there, candlelight dinners, and art festivals. This year the Primary children gave the Christmas program instead of the teachers, and it showed considerable polish. We had a Ward Show once, and I sat on the front row just for old times' sake. The panavision nearly ruined my eyes, and our children found the Brothers Grimm pretty grim.

The doors to our church are usually locked against the marauding hordes, and, of course, my children can't walk there. I must deliver them and then must hover about waiting to sweep down and rescue them from the dark parking lot and swerving street. The urge to run through the Cultural Hall is as strong as ever, and sometimes spills over into the Chapel, which is separated by a folding door.

My Wardhouse was mine, as much a part of me as my home and family, and I gave it as little thought when I was young. That joy and comradeship is with us today, and yet, it seems the nuclear family must build a nuclear shelter out of home evenings and family outings. What will my