

# Autobiographical Notes

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## The Bicycle Ride Home

Elder Dwight A. Burford

[www.hisworkmanship.net](http://www.hisworkmanship.net)

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A major change in my life came by way of sports. Participation in sports, particularly in high school – cross-country in the fall, basketball in the winter (except my senior year), and track in the spring – gave me a new set of friends. More importantly these programs offered me a welcomed variety of disciplines and a sense of progress. I wasn't just getting by like I had with my old friends in junior high. I liked the character these programs were building in myself. They, along with the success I had with machining, gave me a sense of purpose and accomplishment by the time I completed high school. But participating in sports programs challenged my moral convictions as well.

Along with the comforting presence that guided me back into the varsity locker room, as described above, another incidence relating to sports taught me that the Lord was mindful of me as I was growing up. Several of the other athletes on our ninth grade football team told me how some girls really liked me and had unofficially voted me the best looking guy in our class. Although that served to positively influence my self image, I was dubious. After a particular hair cut I looked in a mirror and discovered that one of my ears was larger than the other. Consequently, I decided to grow my hair out so I could cover my ears up. Everybody seemed to be preoccupied with how each other looked and I did not want to give anyone another reason to pick on me. Unfortunately my hair tended to be curly on the limp side. So I had to try and keep it flat, otherwise it never looked combed. Apparently the way I was preparing my hair was working. Not only was I not getting picked on for my lopped-sided ears, at least a few others actually thought I looked okay.

But success brings new challenges. While traveling on a bus for a ninth grade football game in another town I learned that some of the cheerleaders and football players were planning on going out after we got back to the school from our trip. And I was told that one of the cheerleaders really liked me and wanted me to go with them. I knew what they were planning on. The guys had talked in the locker room earlier. I was torn. I wanted to be liked and accepted, to be respected by the popular crowd. But what they planned on doing was wrong and I knew it.

For some foolish reason, however, by the time we got back to the school I had decided to go with them. Perhaps it was all their talk of how great this would be and how much fun they usually had. Perhaps it was simply because a girl said she liked me. Whatever the reason, by the time the bus let us off at the school and I had put my gear in my locker I was ready to go with them.

In the end that's not what happened. Instead, I got on my bicycle and headed straight for home. Confused that my actions defied my decision, I struggled with my thoughts and emotions as I rode the two miles home. I kept asking myself "Why didn't I go on with them?" I couldn't figure it out. Only years latter would I come to realize that it was the prayers and instruction of my parents and members of the church that had put me on my bike and brought me home that

night. Even now, as I review my life, I thankfully acknowledge that on many similar occasions God has caught me away from temptation on the wings of the prayers of others.