

Friend to
Friend

Be Kind

And be ye kind one to another (Ephesians 4:32).

I grew up in Provo, Utah. My grandpa had a 60-acre farm, where he grew hay, corn, wheat, tomatoes, and other vegetables. He also had cows, pigs, and horses. My dad, my Uncle Stan, and I helped Grandpa on his farm. When it was time to gather the hay, I stood in the wagon and tromped down the hay as my dad, uncle, and grandpa loaded it into the wagon. When I helped do the milking, my grandpa sometimes gave me a squirt of milk straight from the cow.

My grandpa was not a member of the Church, but he taught me to be fair and honest with everyone. I remember being in the field with him when storm clouds quickly came up. Grandpa unhooked the horses from the wagon so that they could run back to the barn. Then he and I got under the wagon. As we lay there, waiting for the storm to pass, my grandpa told me all about his parents and brothers and sisters.

I was five years old when World War II started, and I made many small model airplanes. I dreamed of flying airplanes. When I grew up, my dream came true. In high school I joined the Utah National Guard. Then I went to the Air Force Academy and became a pilot. Eventually I became a four-star



From an interview with Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy, currently serving as President of the Africa Southeast Area; by Jan Pinborough

general and the commander of United States Air Forces in Europe.

During my years in the military, I took many classes about how to be a good leader. But the most important lessons I ever learned about leadership were from my mother, who taught me how to treat people. As she washed dishes and I dried them, we talked. She taught me to always treat people kindly and to treat them all equally. This is what it means to be a good leader—treating others kindly and honestly.

She also taught me a poem about friends. It is called “Two Little Boys,”* and I have taught it to my own children. It tells about two good friends. One day, when they were riding their stick horses, one boy’s horse broke. His friend invited him to share his own stick horse, saying, “Did you think I would leave you crying when there’s room on my horse for two?” When the two little boys grew up, they became soldiers. The boy who once shared his stick horse was hurt on the battlefield, and his friend rescued him, carrying him to safety on *his* horse.

It is easier to treat people kindly if we always look for the good in them. One of my favorite scriptures says, “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45). *Virtue* is everything good, so this scripture means that we should always think about the good things in people and in situations. When you think about the good things that are in other people, instead of thinking about what they lack, you will find it easier to love them.

We should treat all of our friends kindly, but especially the members of our own families. Two of our sons are 18 months apart, and they have always been best

friends. They did almost everything together when they were growing up. In every photograph we have of them, one has his arm around the other. Heavenly Father has given us mothers and fathers to teach us and brothers and sisters to learn from, but most of all to love. Our families are our greatest treasures. We should treat them in a special way because they are going to be our eternal friends. ●



1. At age 10 (standing) with his parents, Ann and Charles, and his brother Richard

2. With his wife, Gloria, and his son Barton after flying a B-52 mission with Barton

3. With his wife, Gloria, at the Air Force Academy

*Author unknown, see *American Ballads and Songs* (1972/1922), 45.