



CORNUCOPIA

SUNSTONE invites short musings: chatty reports, cultural trend sightings, theological meditations. All lovely things of good report, please share them. Send submissions to: <SunstoneED@aol.com>

Righteous Dominion

BLESSED LEEWAY

COLUMN EDITORS' NOTE: We are honoring the request of the writer of the following story to remain anonymous. Please continue to send in your stories of leaders who have touched your life through their understanding that people are more important than programs, leaders who are true exemplars of the love of Christ. Email your stories to: <StewartSLC@aol.com> —Alan and Vickie Eastman

LIFE HAD BEEN VERY HARD FOR ME THAT YEAR. MY husband wasn't working, so the entire burden of supporting our family had fallen on me. Because my earnings were so meager, my family was receiving food through the Church's welfare system so our cash could be used for utility bills and car insurance. For the first time in my life, I was unable to pay tithing and had let my temple recommend lapse. I felt like an outcast, having lost entrance into God's house just

when I most needed the spirit found there. And now it was the end of the year—time for tithing settlement.

I really went only out of duty, and I went alone, with no support from my husband. My bishop had been a friend for many years, which only added to the pain I knew I would feel when we confirmed together that I was not a full tithe payer. I just wanted to get the formalities out of the way and get out of there.

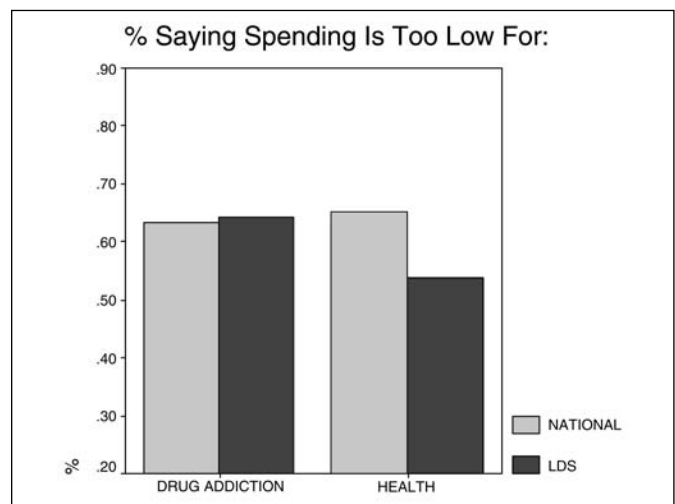
But then a moment came when I saw my bishop clothed in the garments of a true shepherd of God. In the middle of the interview, he paused and was silent for a moment. He then said to me, "You are not really here about tithing settlement. You are really here for a temple recommend."

He had read the wish of my heart, and I asked him how he had perceived my desire to return to the temple. He replied that the Holy Ghost had whispered it to his mind as we had talked. He got out his recommend book and suggested we start through the questions. When I reminded him that I would surely say "No" to the tithing question, he replied, "Bishops have some leeway in these things." I left with a recommend and a lighter heart. I count myself very lucky to have had a bishop who could hear the voice of God in his mind and had the confidence to follow the inspiration he received.

Peculiar People

DOES THE "PENNIES BY THE INCH" TRADITION LIVE ON?

MORMONS ARE MORE FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE than the rest of the nation on some issues, but similar to or more liberal than the national average on other issues. Results are based on the General Social Survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center on an annual or biannual basis between 1972 and 2000. Roughly equal percentages of Latter-day Saints believe we are spending too little to fight drug addiction (63 percent nationally compared to 64 percent of Mormons), but Latter-day Saints are less likely to think we are spending too little on improving and protecting the nation's health (65 percent nationally compared to 54 percent of Mormons).



Mormon Media Image

WHEN PIZZA'S A "WILD TIME"

"WHAT'S A DRUNKEN PAGAN LIKE YOURSELF DOING IN A PLACE LIKE this?" That was the question posed by comedian Dave Attell to himself during a recent visit to Salt Lake City. Attell is host of Comedy Central's popular Thursday night show, *Insomniac with Dave Attell*. Each episode is virtually identical: Attell performs his semi-raunchy brand of stand-up comedy at a club and then hits the town, visiting bars and other hot night spots from around 11:00 p.m. to 4:00 or 5:00 a.m.

After stops in cities like New York, Honolulu, London, Austin, and Las Vegas, Attell pulled into Salt Lake City on 19 June. The show opened with a very quick montage of the comedian visiting "wholesome" locations such as the state capitol, an indoor playground with slides, a Twister game, and ball cages. But after just a few moments, Attell insisted it was time to get to the "good stuff." Other visits included clubs and bars, one called X-Wife's Place, a restaurant where he shared a drink (a *real* drink) with Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson. After Attell tossed the mayor a few jabs about Salt Lake's squeaky clean image, Anderson responded, "Salt Lake City has one of the best nightlives of any city in the country." Truly the term "best" is a judgment call.

Attell also dropped in on a popular pizzeria that stays open late, where he asked a group of employees, "Are you guys Mormons?" When they answered yes, he commented excitedly, "So a piece of pizza is a wild time to you!"

He wrapped up his trip to Salt Lake City with a wee-hours walk through Gilgal Gardens, home to a sphinx with the face of Joseph Smith, and then took a ride down the Olympic bobsled track with bleary-eyed members of the U.S. team.



Dave Attell

"And a time to dance . . ."

CHEEK TO SHOULDER

MANY YEARS AGO, THE COWBOY BAR IN JACKSON Hole, Wyoming, had a dance floor located where the pool tables are now. On Friday and Saturday nights, a band composed of musicians from the town played Western music.

Every time I went there, I watched an older couple dance together, oblivious to the other dancers, even to the rest of the world. The woman always wore a long black dress and black shoes with a strap over the arch. A long Spanish shawl seemed to flow around her body, setting off the color of her white hair, which was held in place by a tortoise shell comb. Her partner wore a dark suit, white shirt, and black string tie. He stood tall and straight, his face revealing a tan and the marks of a leathered life.

Whenever they stood to dance, the band played more slowly so they could do their long, slow step. The musicians would often change songs, launching into the couple's favorite: "Blue Spanish Eyes." The beautiful team would dance close, and when the music stopped, she would touch her cheek to his shoulder.

I would often go to the bar just to watch them dance. I

would sometimes fantasize about their lives, their love story, but I was never so forward that I would speak to them. Our forty-year age difference and my cowardice kept me from acting on my impulses.

The last time I saw her, she was sitting at their same table, but this time, alone. She looked the same as always, except up close where I could see a deep sadness in her eyes. I learned she was now a widow.

I sat alone with my memories while the band played slowly and smoothly. Then something booted me from my chair. Without a conscious desire to dance with her, I felt a strange feeling taking over my body as I walked slowly to her table, took off my hat, and asked if she would honor me.

She nodded and took one step to the dance floor, turned and flowed into my arms. The band saw this scene unfold and immediately started to play "Blue Spanish Eyes." Slowly, with long steps and gentle turns, we danced, never talking. The band played the song twice in a row. When the music stopped, without a word, she touched her cheek to my shoulder.

As I returned her to her seat, she said, "My husband thanks you. I'll be dancing with him again soon." Her sweet tears told me I should leave. I picked up my hat, bowed farewell, and uttered a soft, "*Vaya con Dios.*"

ROBERT GALLAGHER
Salt Lake City, Utah

*Mormon Media Image*HUNKY HERO OF THE
BOOK OF MORMON

WHEN PRODUCERS OF THE SOON-TO-BE-RELEASED *BOOK OF Mormon Movie* wanted to cast the part of Nephi, they went looking for someone “large in stature.” They found hunky Canadian actor Noah Danby, whose rugged good looks and godlike body are sure to have LDS women swooning in the theaters.

They’re not the only ones. Word is out from several sources that Danby has made two appearances in the racy, gay-themed Showtime series *Queer as Folk*, including a bedroom scene that leaves virtually nothing to the imagination. On the movie’s website <www.bookofmormonmovie.com>, Danby declares that he and Nephi are “kindred spirits.” Perhaps so. Depending on how forgiving Latter-day Saints feel about the news that “Nephi” has been baring more than just his testimony, Danby might have reason to echo the Book of Mormon prophet’s lament: “Oh wretched man that I am!”



Noah Danby in his role as Nephi

*Twenty Years Ago in Sunstone*THE WORSHIP OF
HOUSEHOLD GODS

The following musing by Kira Pratt Davis, now deceased, was published in the May-June 1983 SUNSTONE.

HOUSEHOLD GODS WERE ONCE CLAY OR WOOD or stone; but the images were broken long ago and the god-ghosts set free to dissipate into the general element, to vest themselves in couch, curtain, or condense behind a picture, or to breathe into any one or other household fixture and so incarnate themselves.

The Cat, I think, inhaled some part of this household deity—the “yang” part, the voluptuous, the anti-matter, the Perpetual Enigma. . . . Other gods seem lodged behind pictures and in flower pots, in the hundred hopeful green faces turned upwards toward the window; they hum and whirr with the furnace and the outside rush of cars and in the refrigerator’s orisons. They are watchful—somehow they sway us, gently demanding their proper rituals: the bed must be made or the bedrooms grimace all day; the kitchen whines and scowls when dishes lie sticky in the sink and dried pools of milk lie blue and fissured on the table; the living room pouts when piled coats loom over flung socks and stacks of miscellany. There is joy in the household rituals—a hearty satisfaction in vacuuming a clean swath of straight-napped lintless triumph down the middle of the room; there is new vigour in tightsheeted, lumpless beds and slick cupboards, and integrity in having picked away the very cobs from the corners and gurbelage from behind the stove; there is serenity in ironed shirts, redemption in an ordered drawer, glory in a file.

Beyond the outward performances of household worship,

there are the meditations, mild psalms of inattention, moments when we slip into the very house, caught in the hums and whirrs of furnace and fridge, the low rumble of the dryer with the occasional clink of a button on the metal drum, moments when we absently brush table tops and stare at window locks, of patterns of light on the formica. Our devotions are in lull, in the softness of 3:30 afternoons and the light dissolving in shafts of dust from the window. Our particles filter down, sifting into sleep, and the mild gods preside—allowing the sun through the curtains one thread at a time, whirring, humming the afternoon long.

After the rites, after the meditations, after the patient testing of the hours come the communications: clanks, hums, drips, flickers of a bulb, whirrs and shudders, gusts up out of the vents, an occasional spider like an angel from the Presences, hopping sideways, furred and knobby-legged, across the stove-top; once or twice a mouse, long-ribbed tail dripping like a shoelace over the grill—a bright glance and then gone with a skitter into the closet, the rejected prophet of hollow walls and yellow mitts behind the stove, hunted by the slit-eyed Baal, the Cat-god under the house.

In the evenings, the gods, pacified by the day’s offerings, smile and call all things home, breathing out simmering onions, radio voices, and a blue clarinet, reflecting back on warm lights and faces in black panes between the half-closed curtains. Babes sing out their last sleepy haloos, and wild trains come churning by and away, bleating long and lonely down the night. We exorcise the chaos, putting out the cat, heavy-bellied and clawing the air. . . . The deadbolt clicks with a slight heave of the door, and we are sealed, sheltered, folded in the arms of the gods that own us in sleep, that chart the night away with fluorescent hands, that guide the house headlong through the galaxies, and waken us again with a fierce buzzing in the tenuous light to perform again their rituals.