

Brought Back by Prayer^{*}

by Julie Jolley

March 3, 1991, started out like any typical Sunday, but ended as one our family will never forget. It was after dinner and Brad was headed outdoors when I asked where he was off to. "Just outside," was his reply. Later in the hospital, Brad told us what had happened next. In the camp trailer he had noticed matches in the cupboard. Out of curiosity he wondered how fast fire could spread. Finding the near-empty gas can for the lawn mower he poured out the remaining fuel. From the burned grass it appeared he poured out about ten feet. Then he went back and lit a match. When he saw how fast the flame travelled, and realized it was heading for the gas can, he ran to kick the can out of the way. The fire reached the can at the instant he kicked it and it spewed flames all over him. The back door flew open and in came Brad screaming and engulfed in flames. My husband Gary grabbed a blanket and started rolling Brad in it. When this didn't help, he finally laid on top of Brad and smothered the flames. We drove Brad to the Lovell, Wyoming hospital and after they cut away his clothing and packed him in ice he was eventually flown to the Intermountain Burn Unit at Salt Lake City. There a doctor explained to us the severity of his burns and through a hazy daze I seemed to recall him saying something about 43% of his body having deep second and third degree burns. Not long after his arrival at the hospital, we finally accepted the fact that maybe Brad wouldn't make it. I don't know when we have ever prayed so much. I was joined by some of the nursing staff. It would be several days before we would know whether Brad would survive. It would take months of skin grafts and physical therapy before he could leave the hospital. Gradually information emerged from him indicating something else had happened to him in those first days in the burn unit.

One such occasion was on May 5 when we finally returned Brad home to Lovell. During the trip Brad told my son Gary Lee and me that the only two things he could remember about Salt Lake during his first weeks there were my sister Clarlyn reading to him and watching his body. When I asked him what his body did he replied, "Oh, it didn't do anything. It just laid in the bed and I sat in the room and watched it."

Then about a week later, as I finished a physical therapy session with Bradley, I told him I was so glad he hadn't gone to live with Heavenly Father after his accident. He looked at me like he could see through me and with tears in his eyes said, "If you had left me alone, I could have stayed with Him but you and the nurses kept talking to me and I had to come back. Why did you do that to me Mom?" I was dumbfounded. I couldn't believe what I had just heard. "Who would you have stayed with Brad?" "With Heavenly Father." "You don't really mean that do you? Do you mean that you would rather be there than here with me?" "Yes, Mom, but you and the nurses kept talking to me and I had to come back." "But why would you want to stay there?" "Because it was so nice there."

Another time we were driving to Cowley to pick up a puppy, and talking about the different designs we saw in the clouds. As Brad sat on the seat beside me he looked at me with an expression in his eyes that told me he was about to tell us things that would make my insides feel like jello. "I remember heaven. I remember the clouds and how soft they were to walk on." The kids that I had with me in the car were as much in shock as I was. We bombarded him with questions. "What were the people dressed like?" "They wore white." "Was there anyone there you knew or recognized?" "I didn't know anyone there except Great-Grandma Jolley down the road." This in itself was strange since Gary's grandmother had lived a half mile down the road from us and had died before Brad was a month old. "Well, Brad, how did you know it was her?" "Because she stood on the cloud and waited for me and when I got to her she told me who she was and I knew it was really her." Brad then went on to tell us of the resemblance between Gary's father, Gerald, and Grandpa. In detail he told of the glasses she wore and the color of her hair. He thought she looked a lot like Gary's father, which she did. Grandpa Gerald did resemble his mother. "What was it like there?" "So nice and lots and lots of light. One of the neatest things was at night. It was like Heavenly Father did magic to make it dark." "Did you see Heavenly Father?" "I don't think I saw Him, but I heard His voice and I know what He sounds like." "What did Heavenly Father sound like?" "Just like He does on the videos at the church." "Do you remember anything else about heaven?" "I remember a man with reddish brown hair and a beard. I didn't know him, but he knew me and all about me. Even my name. He put his arm around me and said everything would be alright, but that I couldn't stay. I could only stay for a little bit and then I would have to go back. Who was he, Mom?" As the days passed and Brad thought back to this man, it really had him mystified. Finally I said, "Brad, do you think it could have been Jesus?" The look on his face was as if someone had flipped a switch to light a darkened room. "Mom, I think it was." "Was there anything else you can remember?" "No, because I didn't get to go past the clouds. I had to come back. Why, Mom?"

Then my father died, and Brad's older sister Jennifer came from Illinois for the funeral. The day she arrived, she decided to take Brad for a walk. As she and Brad talked she mentioned that I had told her of his heavenly visits. Was there anything else he remembered? "Well, I remember playing hide and seek in the clouds with Darry. I hid under a cloud and he couldn't find me and I had to show him where I was." Darry, the little boy that Bradley referred to, was my father's little brother. He and a little sister, Angie, had both died in 1938. Jennifer thought this was odd since to her knowledge he had never known anything about Darry or his sister. "What about the little sister, did you play with her too?" "Oh, you mean Angie? No, she stayed in the gates and didn't come out. You know what, Jenni, she was big!" "How old was Grandpa's little brother?" "Oh, he was about my age." Later,