

Missionary Story of Kay Berry



TRACTING ON GASOLINE HORSES

3,200 Miles Across South Africa -- Without Purse or Scrip

An unforgettable highlight of my mission was a 3,200 mile trip on motorcycle across the vast open space of South Africa. It was President Dalton's idea. There was to be a missionary conference in Capetown in two months and all the elders were to be there. Capetown was a thousand miles south of Johannesburg. Why not obtain some motorbikes and make the trip through the small villages and out-of-the-way places that had never been tracted by Mormon missionaries? He even suggested that we travel without purse or scrip, just as the disciples of Christ had.

We looked up some scriptures in the New Testament where Jesus said, "Go your ways; behold, I sent you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse nor scrip, and into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'" (Luke: 9:4-5) President Dalton said he had heard the Church was about to discontinue the practice of going without purse and scrip, as some complaints had been made about the elders "being like beggars."

My companion, Elder Byron Cutforth (of Blackfoot, Idaho), and I eagerly accepted the challenge and sent home for money. Asking for money was hard to do because it was depression times back home and the folks were real poor, like everyone else in the country. Several relatives contributed to my fund.

I purchased a used Scottish bike, a Chater-Lea, and my companion rode an English Matchless. We took only a blanket, raincoat, toilet articles, a change of shirts and garments, a lot of tracts, and several Book of Mormons. Each bike had a flat platform over the rear wheel, so we made everything into a bundle and tied it to the rack.

Our plan was to sell books to purchase the necessary petrol (gas) and depend upon the charity and compassion of the people for our food and lodging. We could get forty to fifty miles

per gallon, and each imperial gallon (about five quarts) cost almost exactly the same as one book.

We were well filled with petrol and oil on November 13, 1929, the day we left for the great unknown. We inquired the way out of town. A storm had been brewing all morning which broke just as we were leaving town. Outside of Johannesburg all of the roads were dirt and although I had practiced riding the motorcycle on the paved roads of town, almost as soon as I hit the dirt roads, crash, over I went. Well, we both had lots of little spills and falls.

Potchefstrom

The first day we rode to Potchefstrom, a typical Dutch town, about seventy miles into our journey. It was quite large and very pretty. Nearly everyone was riding about the streets on push-bikes, from the old gray-haired men to the pretty young `flappers.'

Sister Mary Krueger had written us a letter of introduction to a friend -- who kindly fed us, but wouldn't buy a Book of Mormon. Elder Cutforth had dinner first, while I was tracting. He didn't think I was coming back so he slipped a piece of bread and cheese into his pocket while no one was looking.

I had the good fortune to sell two books, one to a lady in a fruit shop and one to a fine young garage-man. Afterwards, I returned and had some fried eggs.

Klerksdorp

We headed out of town at 6 a.m., and headed toward Klerksdorp. As night came on we tried a farm just outside of town without success, so instead of trying any more farms we stopped and made our beds on the veldt. The next morning Elder Cutforth said that he enjoyed it, but it was the most miserable night I have ever spent. He had the advantage over me as he had been sleeping on the floor in `Joberg' for a month or so.

For breakfast the next morning we had our smuggled piece of bread and cheese. After repairing my carrier, we hit the road.

Each day brought hardships and joys. We felt we were doing the Lord's work and that we had divine help whenever needed. As we worked our way south, zig-zagging through villages as we went, the roads were rough and unpaved and seemed to get worse as we went along.

We Promised Them Blessings

One night we tried every house in town, everyone refused us. About 10 p.m. a big railroad-man answered the door, speaking good English. We told him we had come all the way from America to leave blessings in their home. "Come on in," Mr. Oliver said, "come on in." He got his wife up out of bed and she fixed us some fried eggs. Then they took us down to the basement to sleep in their bed, and just treated us royally.

We had just taken our clothes off and were going to bed when we heard a knock on the door. The man said, "I hate to disturb you, but our two children are very ill with high fevers. When you came in you said you could leave blessings in our home; we could sure use some blessings. We were on the spot -- we'd promised him blessings, and here he was to collect!

We got dressed and went upstairs, laid our hands on the children and they just had burning fevers. Well, we said a prayer of faith, then went to bed. The next morning the man came downstairs all smiles. "Both children are better. Their fevers are gone and they both had a good nights' rest!"

Then the hardest part of all. I had to sell him a Book of Mormon to get the things needed to go on to the next town.

We Put Our Case Before the Lord

Every night it was either high or low. Somebody would take us in and treat us royally or we'd sleep out on the veldt, the hardpan. We had just one blanket each, all we had room for. One night high, the next night low. We'd just talk to the Lord.

A few nights later nobody would take us in, and we had been two days without eating, so we knelt beside our motorcycles and said a humble prayer. No results, so we slept on the veldt. The next morning we prayed again, sweet, humble missionary prayers, but God just didn't seem to hear us or recognize our plight.

I spotted a hill not too far away and suggested, "Let's climb that hill and talk to the Lord. After all, it was on a hill, the Hill Cumorah, that this whole thing got started." We got about two-thirds of the way up and stopped. I said, "Let's go all the way to the top, that's where Moses talked to the Lord." We climbed to the very top. I stood at the highest place and while holding my arms up, like Moses did on Mount Sinai, I prayed with a loud voice, something like this:

"Oh, God, where art thou? Dear Father in Heaven, in case Thou don't recognize us, we are Thy servants. We are desperate and need Thy attention and help. We are hungry but we do not ask for food. We are thirsty but we do not ask for water. We are tired but we do not ask for a place to sleep.

We have come half-way around the world to do Thy work. We feel we have done everything we can for this cause. Now we need and must have help. All we ask is that Thou soften the hearts of these people and inspire them to purchase at least one Book of Mormon so we can acquire petrol and continue our journey. We expect Thy help and must have it. Thank thee, Lord. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen!

Afterward my companion said I shouted at the Lord, that he was frightened -- afraid that God would answer us with a bolt of thunder and lightning!

We descended the mountain, entered the village again, went to two houses and sold two Book of Mormons. Elder Cutforth said later in a talk that when they saw Elder Berry's face, they didn't dare refuse.

I testify to all: if you really want something in faith, climb a mountain and put your case before the Lord. It has happened throughout history and it will happen again. If you must have divine help, try it.