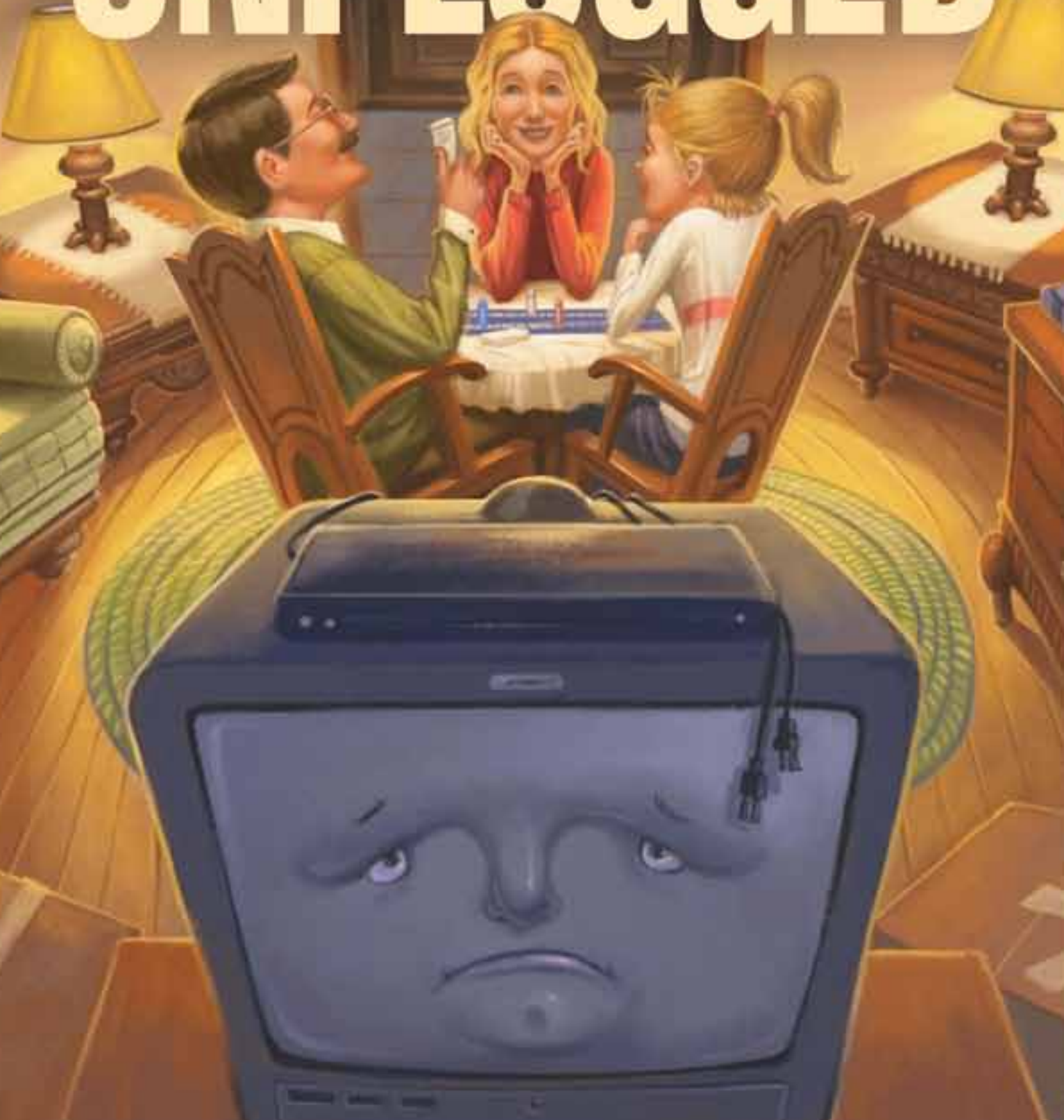


UNPLUGGED



Going without television for a few weeks opened our eyes to what we had been missing.

BY ANNETTE CANDLAND ALGER

When we were building our new home, our electrician wired the house for a satellite dish. But he wasn't sure where to drill the hole for the cables, so he coiled them up and laid them on the rafters in the attic.

The insulation company came the next day and blew thick layers of shredded paper and fiberglass into the attic and walls of our home. The wires were deeply buried.

After we had moved in a month later, we began looking for the cables. My husband emerged from the attic covered with insulation and disappointed about his unfruitful search.

"I guess we'll have to do something else tonight," he announced.

I shrugged my shoulders, thinking of the boxes we needed to unpack and the towel rods we needed to install. There would be plenty of things to do that night without watching TV.

The next night we dusted off some of our board games and played with our daughter. I checked my watch. It was 8:00 p.m., and my favorite home decorating show was on. I was missing it. The night seemed to drag on.

For the next two weeks I spent my evenings completing half-finished projects from Relief Society enrichment nights, helping my daughter with her Young Women Personal Progress projects, writing letters to friends and missionaries, and even entering a recipe contest.

The weekend of general conference was coming up. Now more than ever we wanted to get the television hooked up so we could fully enjoy the broadcast. We finally got in touch with the electrician, who told us where we should be able to find the wires. Once again my husband scoured the attic but was still unable to locate the lines.

We listened to general conference on the radio. When

I heard Elder M. Russell Ballard speak about the sleazy and evil entrapments of the media,¹ I thought, "Maybe we shouldn't hook up the TV."

Another month went by without television. I finally read my ancestors' journals. I visited the library and read more books than I had in years. I read the current issue of the

Ensign well before the new issue arrived. I spent time visiting with my husband and daughter. I finished a quilt for my new grandchild. My husband and I did extra sessions at the temple. We made a pathway in the yard with our leftover bricks. We recommitted ourselves to daily scripture study.

I suddenly seemed to have the time to do projects I had put off for years because I thought I was too busy. Had television really robbed me of these important activities?

As I began to add the hours in my head, I realized the price I had paid. The television stayed off during the daytime hours, but it usually remained on the rest of the night. At four hours a day for six days a week, we watched 24 hours of television each week. At the age of 54, I had spent almost eight years of my life watching television. Eight years!

After I discovered this, one of my married sons said he thought he could find the cables. He rummaged around in the attic and reappeared triumphant, calling out: "I found them. I found them!"

I quickly reflected on my TV-free life for the past two months. My health had improved because I got the sleep I needed. My relationship with my family had improved because I was spending more time with them. My spirituality had increased because I was doing activities that invited the Spirit.

My husband and I looked at each other and arrived at an instant agreement: "Bury those wires!" ■

NOTE

1. See "Let Our Voices Be Heard," *Ensign*, Nov. 2003, 16–19.



HELPS FOR HOME EVENING

Have family members total the hours they spent last week watching television. Share the story from the article. Ask family members what things they wanted to do last week but didn't because they didn't have time. Discuss the advantages of limiting television time.