

By Elder LeGrand Richards
(1886–1983)

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles



UNCOMMON BOYS

I received a letter from a missionary in California. He said that one of the women's clubs was putting on a luncheon at the hotel. The lady in charge had an extra plate placed at the table, and she said, "When the next soldier comes along, we will invite him to occupy this place at the table." Well, he happened to be a Mormon boy.

When they passed the coffee around, he didn't touch the coffee. You see how easy it would have been for the boy to say, "Oh, shucks, Mother isn't here. Father isn't here. My bishop isn't here. I am the only man with all of these women. A little cup of coffee won't hurt me."

But he had to show forth the praises of the Lord who had called him out of darkness into the marvelous light, and he wouldn't touch it. They offered to get him tea, and he didn't want that. Then they wanted to know all about him. That opened the door so he could tell them about how he was raised. And then when they were through eating, they lighted their cigarettes and passed them around. Of course, the young soldier refused. Well, right there one of those women decided, "If the Mormon elders ever call at my home, I will let them in. I want to know more about a people who can raise a boy like that boy who sat at our table today."

Another Mormon boy was sent east to an officers' training school. A new commanding officer came into the camp, and they put



"Why did you toast me with a glass of milk?"

on a banquet to honor him. There, by every plate, was a cocktail glass. When the proper time came, every one of those potential officers stood up with his cocktail glass to toast that incoming officer. All but one boy, and he raised a glass of milk.

Well, the officer saw it. He made a beeline for that boy after the entertainment was over, and he said, "Why did you toast me with a glass of milk?"

"Well, officer," he said, "I've never touched liquor in my life. I don't want to touch it; my parents wouldn't want me to touch it; and I didn't think you would want me to either. And I wanted to toast you, so I thought you would be satisfied if I toasted you with what I am accustomed to drinking."

The officer said, "You report at headquarters in the morning," and told him what time.

I suppose that boy spent a sleepless night, but when he went into the officer's quarters the next morning, the officer assigned him a place on his staff with this explanation: "I want to surround myself with men who have the courage to do what they think is right regardless of what anybody else thinks about it."

Isn't that wonderful! He was an uncommon boy, wasn't he? I hope you are all uncommon. I hope that if you are ever in a situation like that you will make the proper decision. ■

From "Stories from the General Authorities: An Uncommon People," New Era, Feb. 1974, 28–29.