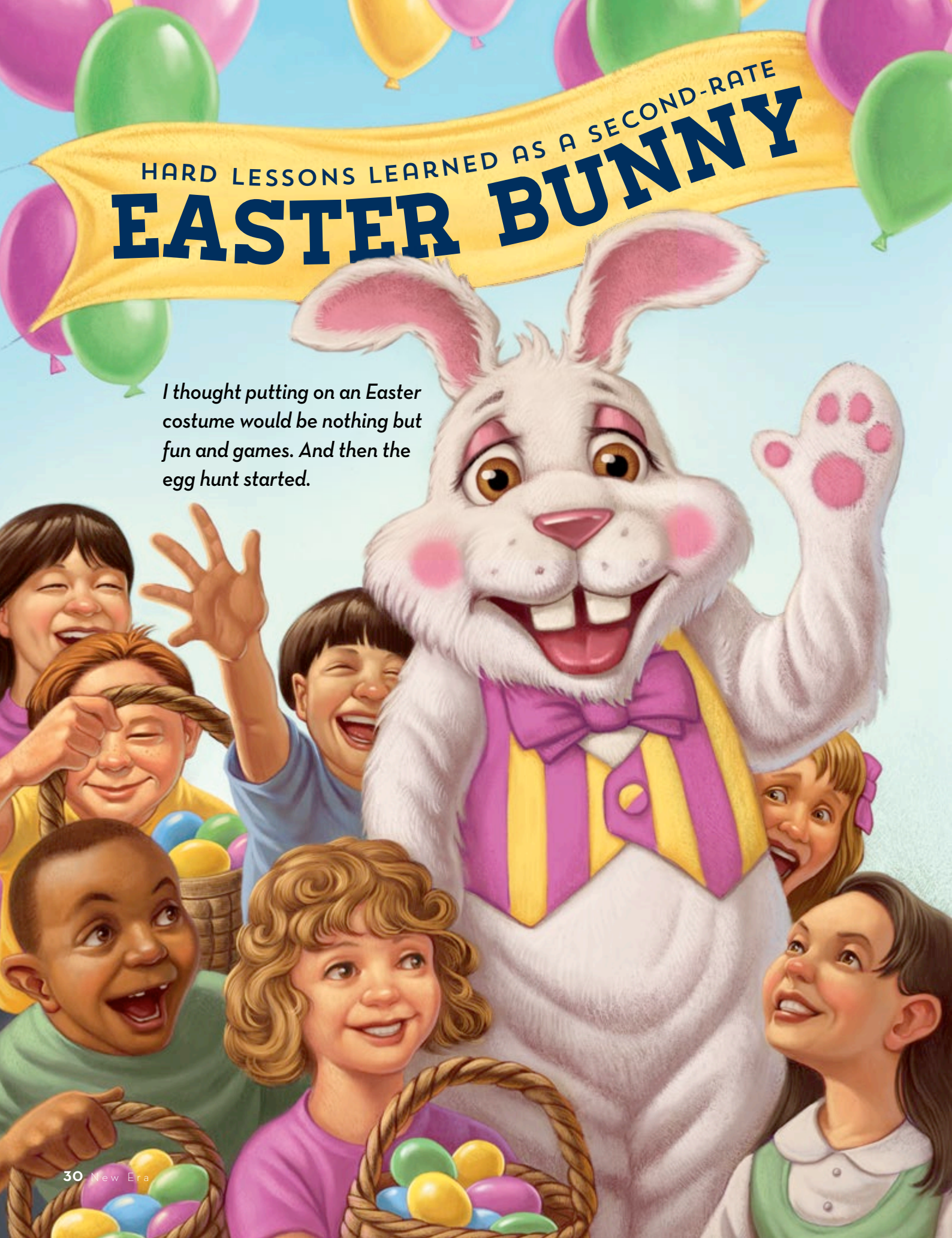



HARD LESSONS LEARNED AS A SECOND-RATE

EASTER BUNNY

I thought putting on an Easter costume would be nothing but fun and games. And then the egg hunt started.





By David Dickson

Church Magazines

I was excited to don the costume of the Easter Bunny at my school's Easter egg hunt. I'd always loved children, so when a volunteer was needed to wear the rabbit suit for the event, I raised my hand. Setting aside for a moment the idea that a bunny isn't the manliest animal costume you can wear (after all, there's no such thing as an Easter Alligator), I knew I could make the most of it.

And I did.

I had dance moves. I had charisma! I passed out high fives by the dozen to the children. Kids of all ages wanted to take pictures with me while they waited for the hunt to start. I was a rock star.

That all changed about 90 seconds after the whistle blew to start the candy grab. What happened next has been seared into my brain ever since.

A tidal wave of older kids swept across the grassy hill we'd chosen for the hunt. The eggs vanished almost instantly while several dozen younger kids were left behind with nothing

more to collect than candy wrappers, their young faces filled with disappointment.

I felt *awful*. Watching the excitement fade from their eyes was enough to make me want to sprint to the store and buy them buckets of chocolate eggs.

But then it got worse. These younger kids, the very ones who had been high-fiving and taking pictures with the Easter Bunny, all turned to me as if the whole thing had been my fault. I can still hear their voices: "I didn't get any caaaaaaandy!"

Never mind I'd been their best pal only minutes earlier. Something had gone wrong, I was the guy in the rabbit suit, and that made me the main culprit.

BLAME THE BUNNY

The egg-hunt tradition at my school improved after that first year. For one thing, it became better organized so that different hunts were held for different age groups. And the

person in the rabbit costume always had a basket of candy to hand out at the end, just in case. So at least the inaugural hunt proved to be a good learning experience.

For me, however, the big take-away that I've thought about ever since was realizing how differently the children viewed me because of the uniform (costume) I wore. Never mind that there were plenty of other people running the event. Fair or not fair, the blame fell on me in the kids' eyes because I was dressed as the Easter Bunny.



THE UNIFORM

The truth is, just like I wore the rabbit costume, we all wear uniforms—both literally and figuratively—more often than we might expect. We certainly wear a uniform as full-time missionaries—and not merely in just the name tag and clothes. In *Preach My Gospel*, missionaries are given the following counsel: “You are called to represent Jesus Christ in helping people become clean from their sins” ([2004], 2).

Of course, being a full-time missionary isn’t the only time our actions are watched closely. We wear different uniforms or identities that we’re recognized for every day: sister, brother, son, daughter, priesthood holder, Church member, neighbor, or friend, just to name a few.

EVERYDAY EXAMPLES

And because of that, as Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Whether full-time missionaries or members, we should all be good examples of the believers in Jesus Christ” (“Be Thou an Example of the Believers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2010, 47).

Do your friends know you’re a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? If so, chances are good that they watch you closely. Each day you have an opportunity to influence such friends with your small and simple positive choices.



That’s why you should, as the Savior taught, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

BETTER THAN CANDY

In the years since the egg hunt, I’ve done my best to live up to whatever “uniform” I might be wearing at the time. Sometimes that’s been an actual uniform, such as at a choir performance. At other times it’s been more figurative, like somebody knowing I’m a member of the Church. Either way, I’ve had a responsibility to live up to the person I represent.

“Always remember that people are looking to you for leadership and you are influencing the lives of individuals either for good or for bad, which influence will be felt for generations to come” (President N. Eldon Tanner, First Counselor in the First Presidency [1898–1982], “For They Loved the Praise of Men More Than the Praise of God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1975, 74).

So while a basketful of Easter goodies—and perhaps a chocolate Easter rabbit now and again—is certainly a treasure worth celebrating, when it comes to eternal matters, such as those daily choices that can influence others, it’s worth putting forth your very best effort every single day. **NE**