

FRIDAY NIGHT

TOMATOES

BY JAYNI DOWSE

Who knew that canning tomatoes would help preserve family togetherness?

I was living at home and commuting to Brigham Young University every day, but I still didn't have as much time with my family as I thought I would have. Between school, work, and my Church calling, I rarely found time at home to help around the house, or be with my Mom and my three younger sisters. As a single parent, my mom was constantly finding new and ingenious jobs for us girls to help out around the house. It was her way of keeping on top of things and to get us to work together with "cheerful" attitudes.

One Friday afternoon, after I came home from school completely exhausted, my mother announced that we were all going to bottle at least five jars of tomatoes each before we could do anything else that night. I had already made plans for the evening. Although my mother noticed my annoyance, she quickly told me that all my sisters had plans too, and nobody was getting out of it. Upset glances from my sisters let me know that they were feeling the same way as I was right about then. Knowing that I wasn't getting out of anything without an ugly scene, I accepted my fate and decided to get to work quickly.

"Hey Sally," I shouted to my sister across the room, "put on some music, would you? We might as well have some tunes while we resign ourselves to our Friday night doom," I muttered under my breath. With the music playing, I tied on an apron and seated myself at the kitchen counter.



Anger continued to boil as I started peeling the tomatoes. What right did my mom have to tell me I couldn't see my friends until I had bottled some dumb tomatoes anyway? I was the one who needed to relax after such a crazy school week! The negative thoughts continued coming as I sliced and peeled more tomatoes. The dirty work seemed endless.

Suddenly I heard my sister Katherine start to sing. Out of nowhere she began to belt along with the music and even added her own dance moves as she continued bottling tomatoes. Livvy, the youngest, began giggling and soon joined in. Sally, always one for light-

hearted fun, quickly gave up her bad attitude and

began to add dance moves of her own.

I sat and watched as these

girls, whom I loved so

much, began laughing and

singing together. They acted as if

they were having the time of their lives. It occurred

to me that I wasn't spending the quality time with these girls as I should have been.

Was I just the older sister with a bad attitude? I suddenly felt an incredible need to be with my sisters more, and to feel the amazing energy they had to offer to our family. It dawned on me that I wasn't setting the example. I knew that in order for change to happen, I needed to change.

Without another thought, I joined in the chorus. With prune fingers, I began dancing alongside Sally, adding my own harmony to the music. I began laughing and felt the horrible evening of bottling tomatoes suddenly turn into a fun-filled tomato dance party!

Moments later I spotted my mother with a video camera. Even she felt that she needed to document this hilarious moment! I couldn't believe my sudden change

of attitude. I suddenly felt free from my burdens during the week. I was surprised that doing one of my most dreaded chores could be so much fun! It was then that I realized how important

family time was and the incredible influence I had on my own family, as well as the influence they had on me. Although I still

have my very busy schedule, I have now found that my first priority has

become my family. Who knew that

bottling tomatoes could teach me so much about life? **NE**