

A WHITE HAND-TATTED TABLECLOTH

By Barbara Lavick Van Cott

An unexpected need at church made me realize that our treasured tablecloth had a higher purpose than I originally thought.

As a Jewish convert to the Church, my knowledge of Jesus Christ was very limited. After embracing the gospel, I grew to love my Savior.

While attending Brigham Young University, I met my sweetheart and we were married in the Salt Lake Temple. Shortly after, we opened our wedding gifts. A Relief Society sister in my husband's home ward had given us a beautiful white hand-tatted tablecloth. The pattern was elegant. It represented hours of labor.

I lifted it up and placed it over my heart. "Oh, Bobby," I said. "This is a treasure. I can feel the love from this sister in every stitch. Someday, when we can afford a dining room table, we'll display it in our home." I carefully wrapped and stored it.

Two years later, when Bobby graduated as a schoolteacher, he received a job offer in Vermont, USA. Without hesitation, we decided he should accept the position. It felt like the Lord was sending us.

Soon after arriving in Barre, Vermont, we learned that the

Latter-day Saints met in a dusty old event hall for men. Prior to Church meetings, members had to clear away beer cans and cigarette butts from festivities held the night before.

Ten months later, my husband was called to be the branch president. While conducting his first meeting, he glanced over at the sacrament table. He looked troubled. The sacrament trays were covered with a dingy, yellowing white sheet.

The following Sunday morning, Bobby pulled out our beautiful white hand-tatted tablecloth, still wrapped in its protective covering. "Barbie, what do you think?" he asked, with tender pleading in his eyes.

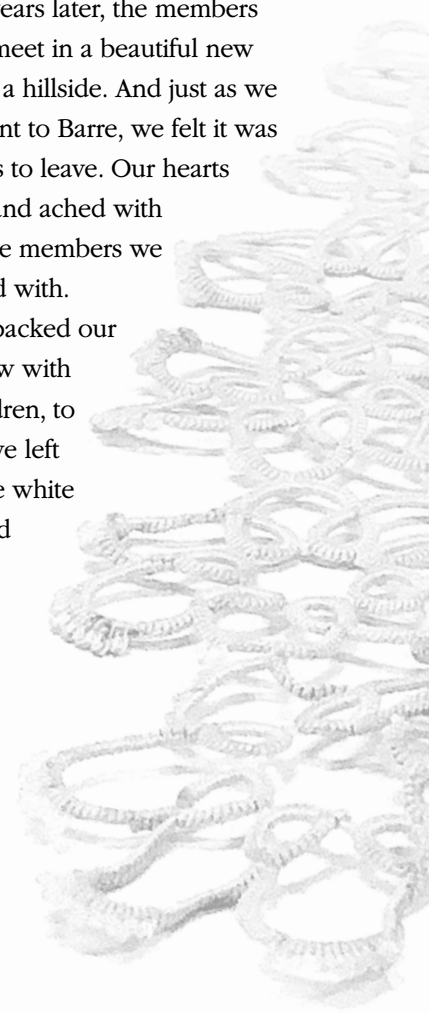
I knew what he was thinking. He wanted our tablecloth for the sacrament table—the very cloth I had envisioned on our dining room table someday. I bit my lip. "It's perfect," I said. "The perfect covering for the emblems of the sacrament."

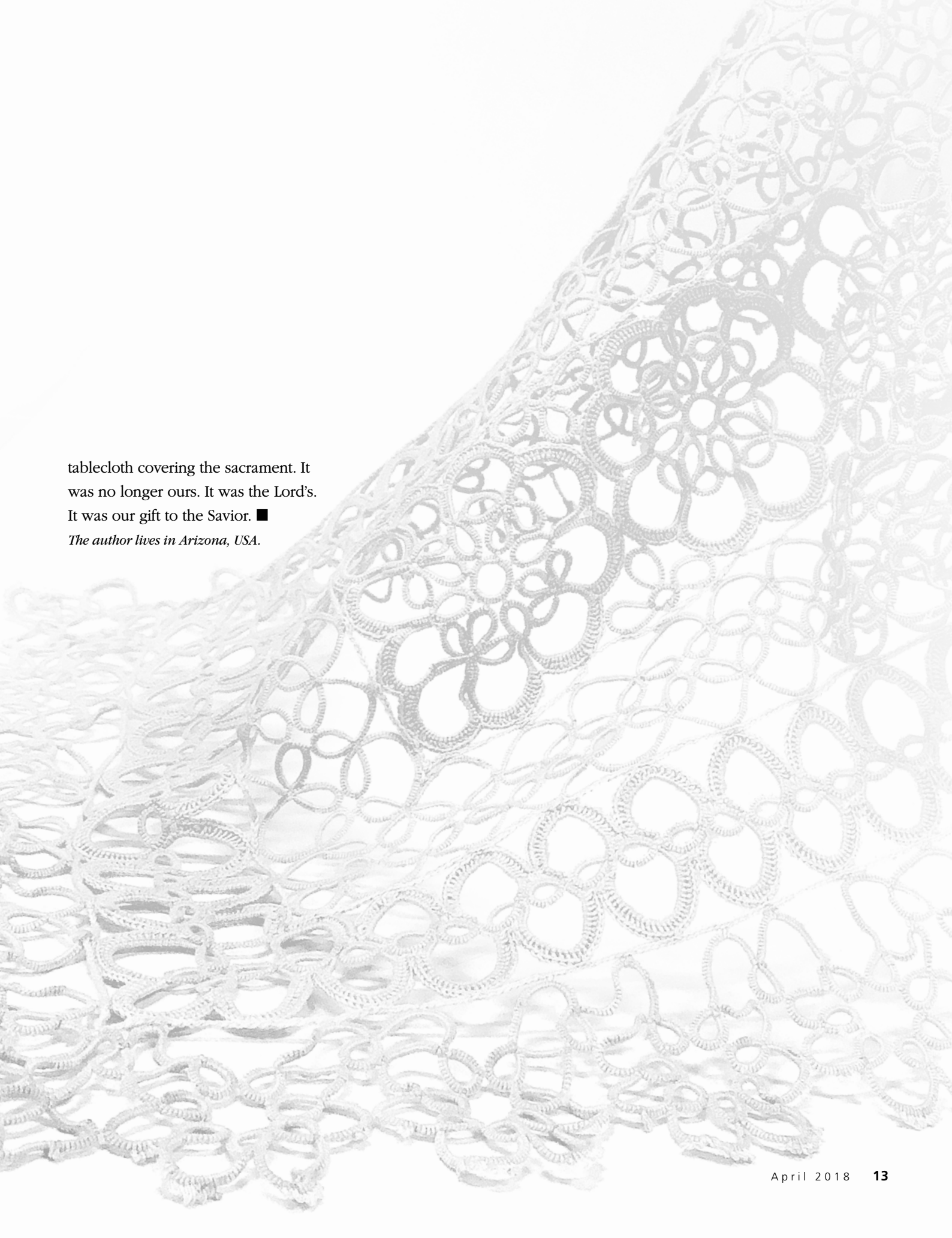
As a branch president, Bobby could have ordered a cloth, and it would

have been perfectly acceptable. But at that moment, we both knew we wanted to make this offering. It still wasn't an easy sacrifice, but my Savior had sacrificed for me with the gift of His Atonement. The cloth now had a higher purpose.

A few years later, the members began to meet in a beautiful new chapel on a hillside. And just as we had felt sent to Barre, we felt it was time for us to leave. Our hearts were full and ached with love for the members we had served with.

As we packed our things, now with three children, to go west, we left behind the white hand-tatted





tablecloth covering the sacrament. It
was no longer ours. It was the Lord's.
It was our gift to the Savior. ■

The author lives in Arizona, USA.