

# TWO WORDS

## THAT CAN CHANGE LIVES

By Alice Ruth Drechsel\*

**W**hen I was a young missionary in Ohio, I heard a sacrament meeting talk about saying, thank you. “Think of the things you are grateful for,” the speaker said. “Think of the people who have taught you, encouraged you, loved you, and made a positive difference in your life.” Then he said: “Now think back. Have you told them you are grateful for them and why? That is something we each can and should do. Tell them in person, by phone, in a note, or in a letter. We can start today. Let’s do it!”

So I did it. That night I thought about my life and asked Heavenly Father if there was someone I had never thanked who had really affected my life for good. To my surprise, a name and face popped into my mind immediately—Sister Mickelsen, my mother’s friend. I’d known her all my life. She knew me only as my parents’ youngest child.

Without waiting, I wrote her a letter. I thanked her for being an important, good influence in my life and for being a gracious lady, always well groomed and refined. I thanked her for her example to me when she would touch the shoulder of a young mother with several wiggly children during sacrament meeting, smile, and reach out to hold her restless baby.

Then I told her that when I was young I was a tomboy. Many times I heard my mother say, “It’s great to love sports and play ball, dear. However, remember that every girl who grows up will become a woman, but it is most important that she also learn to become a lady.” And then Mother would describe a lady to me.

I wrote in my letter, “I looked around to find a person such as Mother described. It was you, Sister Mickelsen. For years I looked up to you and tried to be like you. Thank you again for all you are and have done for me.”

I mailed the letter and then forgot about it.

When I returned from my mission, I gave a talk in sacrament meeting. Afterward, several people told me they liked my talk. And then I found myself in a tight bear-hug embrace from an older man who had tears on his cheeks.

I was amazed when I realized this was President Mickelsen of the stake presidency, for he was a reserved, dignified banker who rarely showed emotion.

Seeing I was shocked, he said, “Let me explain something. My dear wife died several months ago after being sick a long time. She became discouraged, feeling she had failed to make a real difference in anyone’s life.

“‘You have,’ I told her. ‘You’ve been a wonderful wife and mother and friend, and you’ve always served in the Church.’

“‘But everyone does those things,’ she said. ‘What have I ever done that I didn’t *have* to do, that I wasn’t assigned?’

“And then your letter came,” President Mickelsen said to me. “She read it and wept, and read it again and again. She kept it on the table by her bed so she could read it every day until she died. It was a great comfort to her. I can never thank you enough for writing her that letter.”

I am so grateful I wrote it.

Do you know someone you could thank? ■

*\*The author passed away just before publication of this article.*

Dear Sister Mickelsen,

I would like to thank you for being an important and good influence in my life. Your example of a graceful, well-groomed and refined lady helped me make the transition from a young tomboy to a young woman.

I remember watching you in sacrament meeting - listening a young mother with several <sup>or 22</sup> children - needed help, you would <sup>be</sup> <sup>on</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>shoulder</sup> and reach out to hold her restless baby.

Many times I had my mother say "He tried to love, spirit and play but, dear, please, remember that play and work grows up - will become a woman, but it is most important that she all learn to become a lady."

I looked around to find a person such as my mother described. It was you, Sister Mickelsen. For years I looked up to you and tried to be like you. Thank you again for all you have and have shared for me.