

The Two Years that



FLEW

By Janice Graham
(Based on a true story)



If ye have desires to serve God ye are called to the work (D&C 4:3).

I hope Matt doesn't forget me," Melody thought as she sat in the backseat of the van on the way home from the airport. Her brother would be gone for two whole years on his mission to Indiana. Matt had looked so grown up in his dark suit, white shirt, and tie. After he had hugged everybody good-bye, he walked away to board the airplane without even looking back. That's how excited he was to start spreading the gospel.

Melody took out her notebook and pen, and wrote,

*Matt will be gone two years.
There are twelve months in
one year.*

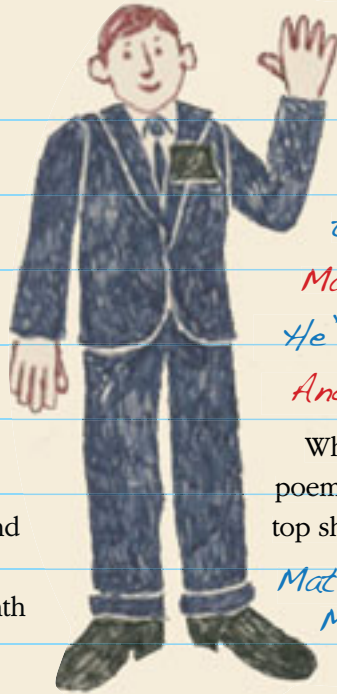
$$2 \times 12 = 24.$$

Matt would be gone for 24 months! That seemed much longer than two years.

Melody drew a picture of Matt in his missionary suit. Even though she was going to miss him, she wanted to help him be a good missionary. She began brainstorming in her notebook.

*What I can do for
Missionary Matt:*

*Something that will help
Matt be a good missionary
just from me
every month
small and sturdy so it's
easy to mail*



*My brother is gone
to Indiana,
Matthew is his name.
He's gone to serve the Lord
And others just the same.*

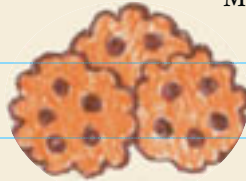
When Melody got home, she copied the poem neatly onto a sheet of stationery. At the top she wrote,

*Matt, this is your first
Missionary Poem of the
Month!*



Melody put a necktie on her drawing of Matt. What about ties? A tie was flat and small. But Matt had several ties already. A tie every month wouldn't be so helpful.

Cookies? Matt loved the chocolate-chip cookies without nuts that she made especially for him. But she didn't think her cookies would make it all the way to Indiana in one piece.



Jelly beans? Socks? Postage stamps? Those were things you ate up, wore out, or used up. Melody giggled. Some of her ideas were silly, but she was getting closer.

Each month Melody wrote a new poem. She wrote about the light of the gospel and fasting and the temple being built nearby. She wrote about making her chores fun to do, about the Book of Mormon, and about the seasons passing.

Sometimes when Melody sat down to write the next Poem of the Month, her mind was blank as the paper in front of her. But Melody thought and thought until an idea popped into her head. She decorated her poems with drawings, rubber stamps, and bright paper cutouts.

Matt wrote letters home almost every week. Sometimes he thanked Melody for her poems, but sometimes he didn't mention them.

"He's busy finding and teaching people the gospel, Melody," her mother said.

Melody kept writing her poems. Four. Eight. Twelve. And then she lost count. She wrote about Christmas and New Year's, and about trying her best in school. She wrote a funny poem called "Elder Ants" about how busy ants are like missionaries all over the world spreading the gospel.



*Something flat just
for Matt.*

"That rhymes!" Melody said.

*Something small,
though he's tall.*

*Something sweet,
but not a treat.*

Suddenly Melody knew. She would write a poem for Matt every month. Turning to a clean piece of paper, she began her first poem.

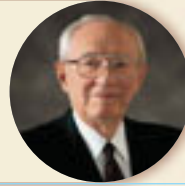
What rhymes with
"dressed in purple"?



"Took a slurple!"

"There are others whose lives are blessed when a missionary serves, such as the members of his family who . . . support him, pray for him, and try to live worthy of him."⁴

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)



When Melody turned 12, she wrote a poem about doing baptisms for the dead in the new temple.

At last it was time for Matt to come home. Melody began her last poem like this:

*It's now been 24 long, hard months
For our family and for you.
But it's been a great two years,
The big two years that flew!*

It seemed there was hardly time to get it in the mail before Matt was home. At the airport, Matt gave Melody a big hug. He looked taller than she remembered and spoke with a quieter voice, but he was still the same smiling brother.

At home Melody watched Matt unpack. There were worn-out white shirts, socks with holes in them, and a tangle of ties. There were journals Matt had filled with stories and testimonies. There were family letters and photos of people he taught.

"Now, where are those . . . ?" Matt rummaged in his suitcase. "Ah, here they are."

"What is it?" Melody asked.

"Guess. Here's a clue. They came every month. I loved them a bunch!"

"Is that supposed to rhyme?" Melody asked, laughing. "You need some help!"

"Well, I'm not as good at poetry as you are!" Matt said.

"You mean you saved my Poems of the Month?" Melody asked.

Matt handed her a large, puffy envelope. "Your poems really helped me whenever I got discouraged," he said. "You shared your testimony in those poems and made me laugh when I was sad. Melody, as long as your poems kept coming, I knew everything was fine at home."

"And I knew you were one month closer to coming home!" Melody said.

They dumped the poems out on the bed and read every one. Twenty-four poems that helped the two years fly by. ♦

