

By Marianne Dahl Johnson

(Based on a true story)

The Lord thy God is a merciful God; he will not forsake thee (Deuteronomy 4:31).

Margaret and Neil, take this wheat to the gristmill on City Creek, please," Mother said.

Neil smiled happily. He was only four years old, but he liked to help Mother as much as he could. He proudly took the small bag of wheat kernels in his arms.

"I'll carry it," Margaret announced, snatching the bag from Neil's arms. "You're too little. You might drop it, and you know we can't afford to lose any of it!"

That was certainly true! When the Gardner family had arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on October 3, 1847, they had rejoiced that they had reached this sanctuary for the Saints. But that didn't mean that everything was perfect. Now it was winter, and Neil was often hungry. Each family received a little wheat given out by weight. They ate sego and thistle

roots. Once in a while hunters brought meat to the settlers.

When they got to the gristmill, Neil watched carefully as the wheat was ground. When a handful of kernels spilled on the floor while it was being ground, he and Margaret sprang to gather it up. Margaret wrapped it in her handkerchief. That evening they would parch it on the top of the stove at home. No food could be wasted.

After that cold, hungry winter, spring finally came, and Neil's family moved to Mill Creek,

After a long winter, crickets attack the crops.

Can the wheat be saved?



SAVING T

"God is mindful of the fasting and prayer of all of His children, young and old."²

Elder Shayne M. Bowen of the Seventy



a few miles from Salt Lake City. They planted a small crop of wheat. When the grain came up, it looked so strong and good. How wonderful it would be to have plenty of flour next winter! But then the crickets came.

Crickets were everywhere. There seemed to be no end to them. They were big and black and ate everything in their paths. Everyone worked in the fields, trying to kill the insects. But it seemed useless. There were just so many crickets.

Finally a day of fasting and prayer was planned. Father and the other men went to Salt Lake to pray for help from Heavenly Father.

While Father was gone, Neil, Mother, and Margaret went into the fields again to fight the crickets. Neil was tired, and the thought of another hungry winter made him want to cry. As they

worked, it suddenly became darker. Neil looked up and saw thousands of gulls in the sky. Mother threw up her hands in despair. "What the crickets won't take, those birds will!" she exclaimed.

Mother sat down and cried. Neil cried too. He didn't know what would become of his family.

Too tired to fight the bird invaders, Neil and his mother and sister watched the seagulls.

"Mother, look!" Neil shouted. "The gulls aren't eating our wheat. They are eating the crickets!"

"I believe you are right!" Mother said.

Mother, Margaret, and Neil held hands and danced in a circle. They hugged and laughed. The gulls were saving their wheat!

Suddenly, Mother stopped dancing and dropped to her knees. "Come, children," she said. "These gulls were sent by Heavenly Father to save His children. Let us give thanks to Him."

The three of them prayed right there in the wheat field. Neil never forgot the miracle of the gulls. ♦



THE WHEAT