

TOO BUSY TO CARE

BY ANNIE VALENTINE TINTLE

*My father was counting on me.
But why worry about a bunch of cows?*

Basketball practice was more important than counting the cattle, until that terrible day when I had to face the consequences of my own selfishness.

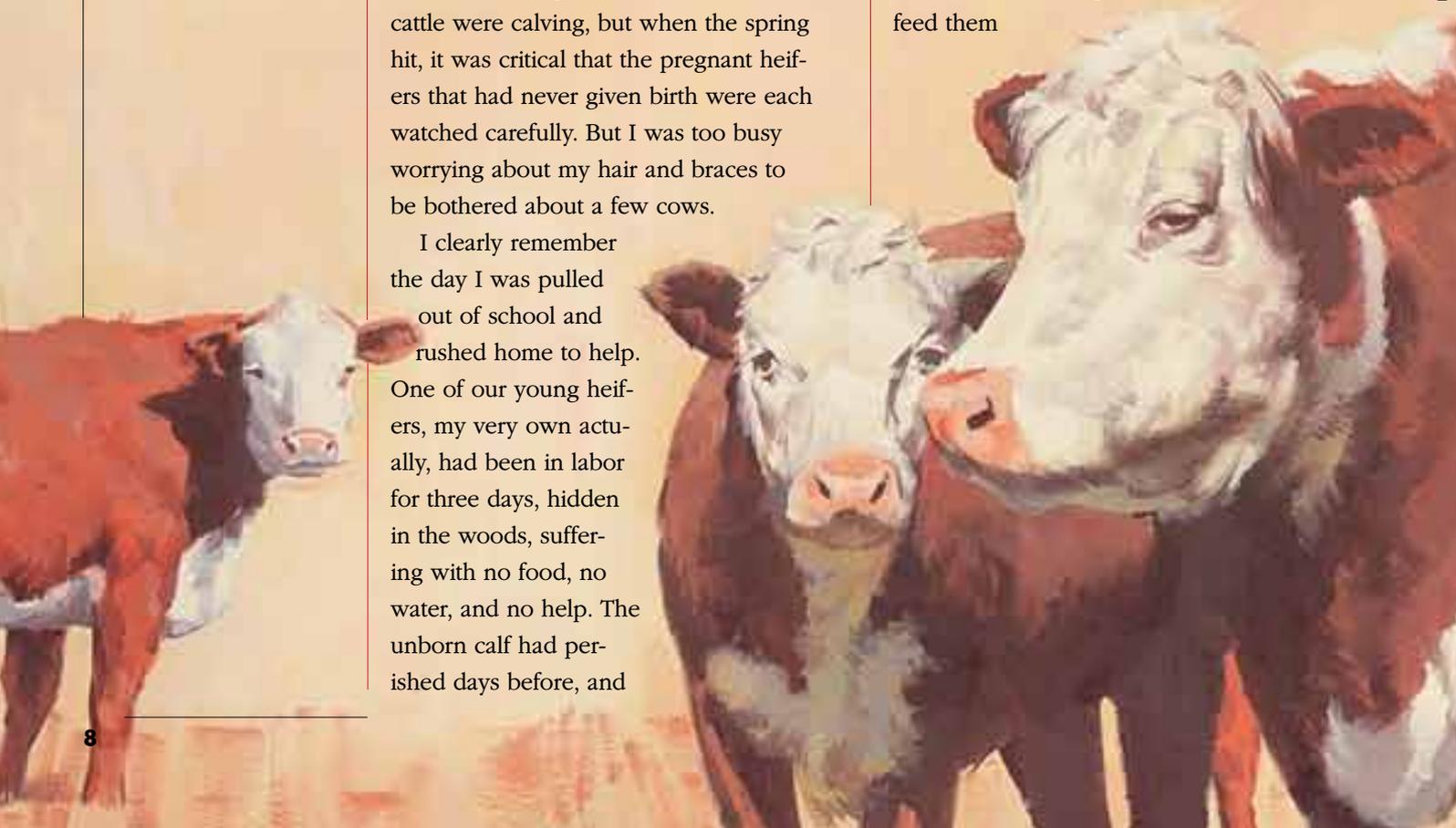
I grew up on a farm in Washington State, where my parents raised kids and cattle. I was the youngest in our large family, and at 14 I was busy trying to balance chores at home with my budding social schedule.

Each day after school it was my responsibility to feed and count all 60 head of cattle to make sure that each was safe. To a 14-year-old girl, this was a tedious chore, so I avoided counting them. In the winter it wasn't as dangerous because none of the cattle were calving, but when the spring hit, it was critical that the pregnant heifers that had never given birth were each watched carefully. But I was too busy worrying about my hair and braces to be bothered about a few cows.

I clearly remember the day I was pulled out of school and rushed home to help. One of our young heifers, my very own actually, had been in labor for three days, hidden in the woods, suffering with no food, no water, and no help. The unborn calf had perished days before, and

the cow had been unable to birth it. So, with the help of a vet, my father and I had to remove it from her.

When I pulled up in the truck and saw my father standing there, I was sure he would be angry with me. He had told me thousands of times to count the cattle, always asking if they were all there and all safe. But I was too busy to listen. I was too busy with things I thought were more important, like basketball practice. Or I would wait too long and feed them



ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL MANN

in the dark, making it impossible to count the herd. At the time, my own things really did seem more important. I didn't understand; I didn't have the big picture yet.

When I looked at that poor animal suffering from starvation, crippled and ruined, never again to bear a calf, I knew my father had been right. I had chosen not to listen to his simple instructions, and the consequences affected far more than my own life. I spent the next two months nursing the animal back to health, working her through the paralysis, and doing my best to repair the damage I had caused.

My father? He loved me. He put his arms around me and knew that I would never do it again. He knew that I had learned the lesson the hard way, but it was learned. If only I had listened. It was my own laziness, my own selfish insistence on my personal comfort that had kept me from following my dad's simple instructions that would have saved a life.

In order to hear the warnings from our Father in Heaven, we need to listen to His counsel. God is no stranger to us. He wants to communicate with us. He has given us living prophets to ensure that we hear the things we

must know to survive and be safe in these latter days. Our prophet gives us the simple instructions we need to return home safely, and we must listen. **NE**

Read a similar story by President James E. Faust in "Good Shepherds," *New Era*, Mar. 1996, p. 4.

