

# PURE RELIGION

## On Hallowed Ground

In September 2001, President Gordon B. Hinckley will dedicate a newly renovated Welfare Square. During the last seven decades, those 13 and a half acres have been sacred and hallowed ground, a powerful and shining symbol of a modern-day manifestation of the Savior's mandate to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and succor the weak.

Reed Durfee has been on Welfare Square for many of those years. When he was 19 years old, he started as a grocery delivery driver. Later, he managed the milk plant. Through four decades, Brother Durfee witnessed how the divine principles of welfare and the power of love and compassion transform people's lives.

One day, a Welfare Square employee rushed into the milk plant where Brother Durfee was working. "Help! We have a problem downstairs!" the panicked worker called out. Brother Durfee ran downstairs and discovered a man covered in paint from head to toe. The man, a transient who had come in that morning asking for food, had been put to work with a paint brush and a bucket of paint.

It was a mystery to everyone how the man could have gotten himself so completely covered. "He looked as though someone had taken him by the heels and dipped him in a vat of white paint," Brother Durfee said. The man was on his hands and knees mumbling over and over, "I can't find my glasses. I can't do anything without my glasses. . . ."

When the glasses were finally found, the lenses had been stepped on and were unusable. "They were as thick as the bottom of a bottle of soda," Brother Durfee recalls. Although the loss of the lenses was important, the immediate concern was how to remove the paint. Welfare Square employees lovingly cared for the needs of their visitor. They provided him with new clothes from Deseret Industries, saw to it that he

had a large bag of groceries, and arranged with an optical company to make a pair of new glasses.

That night, Brother Durfee drove their new friend to an old abandoned building where the man was staying. "The last thing I saw was his backside going into a hole in the building, dragging his groceries behind him."

Several years passed. One day, after returning from vacation, Brother Durfee's co-workers surrounded him. "You should have been here," they said. "You'll never believe who came to see us!" The week before, a man—clean, wearing a suit and tie—had come to Welfare Square. He had a missionary haircut and was accompanied by a lovely woman. His glasses were as thick as the bottom of a bottle of soda. He had come to Salt Lake City to be sealed in the temple. Following the sealing, he had come to Welfare Square to thank the employees there.

From the time he had left Welfare Square several years before, the man couldn't stop thinking about how he had been cared for. And as he wandered around the country, from one place to another, he kept asking himself why the people in Salt Lake City had treated him so kindly. Even though they hadn't known him, and in spite of how he must have looked and smelled, he felt as though the Welfare Square employees had cared about him.

Eventually, he located the missionaries. It didn't take long before he entered the waters of baptism, met a beautiful girl, and came to Salt Lake City to be sealed in the temple and to thank the people whose love and concern for him left an eternal impression upon his soul.

"I've got to be the luckiest guy in the whole world," Brother Durfee says today, "to have worked at Welfare Square my whole life and to have seen the gospel of Christ in action through the activities here."

