

PURE RELIGION

The World Has Need of Willing Men

It's Wednesday at the bishops' storehouse at Welfare Square in Salt Lake City, and 92-year-old Ed Erickson stands in his clean overalls and gray shirt, a shovel, broom, and wheelbarrow nearby. His job—the job he has been volunteering to do for the last seven years—is to sweep the sidewalks in front of the storehouse.

“Many of the people who come here have troubles and cares,” he says. “They're hungry and maybe even a little lonely. What I do makes the outside look a little more clean and beautiful for them. It may not be a big thing, but it makes me happy.”

Ed was born on Christmas Eve 1909. His premature birth affected the optic nerve in his vision and his ability to hear well. “I had to fight for my health ever since I was a little kid,” he says. “I couldn't go to school, I couldn't see where I was going half the time, and I couldn't play with the other kids . . . couldn't play ball or anything like that. I couldn't even see well enough to drive a car.”



Despite his many challenges, Ed always worked hard. He shoveled coal and cleaned brick. He worked for the city street department for 26 years. Additionally, he took care of the old Sixth/Seventh Ward building in Salt Lake City. He even volunteered at the Deseret Gym, giving Swedish massages to many prominent men of the city.

Ed never married. His father died when Ed was very young, and he watched over his mother until she passed away in a rest home.

Those who work with him describe Ed as positive, upbeat, and gentle. He doesn't have to be instructed on how to serve. He seems to know just what needs to be done and does it. Those who watch him feel that Ed really wants to be there. It must be true, because according to Ed, he'll spend the remaining Wednesdays of his life with a broom, a shovel, and a wheelbarrow in front of the bishops' storehouse.