

know, dear, it's only four months until school is out. . . . At least the longest part of this year is over and I'm sure these next four months will go by quickly."⁶⁶

During 1946, Wally missed out on some very important milestones in his family, such as Marion's first date and Carol's baptism.⁶⁷ But as time went on, he was finally able to find a mission home, a three-story villa in Prague that had all of Martha's requirements: a washing machine, an electric iron, a refrigerator, a stove, a sewing machine, and some toilet paper. In an effort not to leave anything out, she wrote him again to ask if she should take bedding, towels, dishtowels, soap, toothpaste, pans, kitchen utensils, pie plates, and cake tins.⁶⁸

In the spring of 1947, with the villa rented to serve as the mission home and as their residence, Wally was ready to have his family join him. Martha applied for visas in New York City at the same time that four new missionaries sent in applications to the Czech consulate in New York City. All of them received their visas at the same time, boarded the ship, and sailed across the Atlantic. In June 1947, at Le Havre, France, Wally met all of them on the docks, ready to serve in Czechoslovakia with his eternal companion once again.

66. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, January 26, 1947.

67. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, February 16, 1947.

68. Martha Toronto to Wallace F. Toronto, March 27, 1947.

12

"THE LITTLE SPY"

Martha and the children traveled by ship to Europe. They were finally reunited with Wally in June of 1947 at the port in Le Havre. They brought with them a brand-new 1947 Ford. They might have expected a typical harbor, but instead they were greeted by an artificial one made of floating docks. The original dock had been decimated by the war, as Wally had described in his letter the year before. Martha and the children watched people from the ship throw cigarettes down to those gathered below on the docks. Wally told Martha that he too had cigarettes on hand. He explained, "I took cigarettes and soap with me because you could buy anything with cigarettes and soap." From the docks, the Torontos went to the Le Havre mission home, where they were delighted to eat french fried potatoes, "nice little chunks of potatoes french fried." After the meal, they proceeded to drive across Germany in the new Ford. Bob remembered stopping in one of the main cities in Germany and seeing a statue, "riddled with bullet holes," in the middle of the square. Because of World War II, "there was nothing

as far as the eye could see except for destroyed buildings—[in] every direction.”¹

Martha was obviously a little older the second time in Czechoslovakia. The missionaries wanted to give her a nickname as they had in the past. She was still an attractive woman and not very old compared to the wives of other mission presidents. However, “Princess” no longer seemed very fitting. Instead, they began to call her “Dynamite” because of a lovely dress that she had with little rectangular patterns that looked like sticks of dynamite. They later shortened the nickname and simply called her Sister T.²

The work of the Church quickly began to take semblance in the Czech Mission once again. Missionaries arrived at various intervals: four with Martha in June and then six in August. They began to build a workforce that could learn the language and proselyte effectively. As the missionaries gained more experience and confidence, they were sent to other parts of the mission, taking younger companions with them. Soon, they had branches set up in small towns and regular meetings were being held in the cities. Church membership began to grow. Auxiliary meetings were held in the mission home as well since its rooms were big enough to accommodate crowds of twenty to fifty. Eventually, people from all over the city started attending the meetings, and “they enjoyed them very much.”³ And two young women entered the country as the first sister missionaries there. They had to stay in the mission home with the Torontos. Wally gratefully watched as they became quite effective.⁴

The missionaries followed a particular process in their work. After opening a city for teaching, they rented a hall. Then they went from door to door teaching people and trying to encourage them to go to the meetings in the hall. They put up flyers that encouraged people

1. Mehr, *Mormon Missionaries Enter Eastern Europe*, 83; Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 19–20.
2. Bob and David, Toronto interview, August 20, 2013, 25.
3. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 47–48.
4. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 47.



to “come and see [a] film about the Mormons and Joseph Smith.” As was usual for nearly all missionaries, they also tracted. They left the tracts, which were translated into Czech, with people everywhere they went. After the missionaries finished their preparations, Wally went to that town and shared a film and a presentation, which he had previously prepared about the Church. The missionaries followed the same process in virtually every town of Czechoslovakia.⁵ And even though his growing family required considerable attention, he “energetically visited every branch each month.”⁶ Because he and Martha were so busy with mission affairs,

Czechoslovak mission home as it appears today. Courtesy of Church History Library.

5. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013.
6. Czechoslovak Mission Manuscript History, June 20, December 20, 1936; September 20, 1937.

they hired a very “motherly nursemaid” named Marenka to care for Carol and Bobby.⁷

The three-story villa in Prague that they used as a mission home from 1947 to 1950 served as Wally’s office and as the residence for his family of five children, ages two to thirteen. It had a huge yard of orchards and trees as well as a pool with little frogs in the water.⁸ A total of twenty-seven rooms surrounded a two-story foyer with a beautiful balcony. Sometimes when Wally was gone, Martha helped her children take the cushions off the couch and lay them out all over the floor below the balcony. They then ran upstairs and jumped over the balcony onto the pillows. The mansion had a large staircase that ascended up three floors and down into the dark basement below. Concrete lions protected the front doors of the large, pink brick structure. A gargoyle spouting water from its mouth stood at the pond in the garden, and an ornate wrought iron gate surrounded large, beautiful lawns and gardens. A lovely cherry tree stood outside the window of the kitchen.⁹

There was also a large sunroom with a “whole wall of glassed windows” and a ping-pong table next to the office. In Wally’s office there was a copy machine—or as the children called it, the “ditto” machine—at the back of the room. They regularly played with it to make copies, turning the handle, cranking out each sheet, and getting ink all over their hands.¹⁰ On the main floor, Wally’s office was off to one side while the dining room and kitchen were on the other.¹¹ A piano room adjoined the dining area. Marion often played the piano to soothe herself whenever she was distressed or unhappy. The kitchen had stairs leading up to a missionary dormitory with four or five beds for the young men, and one room reserved for the sisters.¹²

7. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 1.

8. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 71–72.

9. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 3–6.

10. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 6.

11. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 22.

12. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 22.

Their second mission was a little different for Wally and Martha because they now had six children who needed to attend school. Wally was determined that his children be immersed in the language and culture. People respected him for that, and his family became a good example to the missionaries and others.¹³ The Torontos decided not to send their children to a private school. Instead, they sent them to the Czech public schools. For the children, public school was often challenging.¹⁴

Carol and Judy became close buddies during those years. They regularly did things together that made them and their older brother, Bob, late for school, the consequence of which was standing in the corner with a dunce cap on.¹⁵ Judy remembered one particular day when Bob ran about two miles to get to school on time. Carol and Judy, with no desire to run, said, “We just can’t make it.” They decided to stop at a sugar beet field, where they sat and filled their stomachs with sugar beets instead of getting to school late. About the time that they believed school was out, they went home. Carol wrote a note pretending she was her mother and explained to her teacher why she had missed school that day. She also typed up a note for Judy to take to her teacher. When she gave the note to her teacher the next day, he asked her, “Who wrote this note?” She replied, “My sister did,” for she could not lie. Both of them got in trouble, and the school called Wally and Martha to inform them about what had happened.¹⁶

Tardiness, however, was not the worst of their problems. The Toronto kids were constantly bullied. Their classmates would write things on their backpacks to tease them. They would also tell them to say certain things in Czech that were out of order or inappropriate, knowing that the Torontos did not know what the words meant, and laugh hysterically when Bob or Carol repeated the words. One day on the way home, about twelve kids chased the Torontos, who tried

13. Dale Tingey, interview, 3.

14. David Toronto, interview by Daniel Toronto, 2010, 4.

15. Judy Richards, interview, 3–4.

16. Judy Richards, interview, 3–4.

to hide in a doorway of some apartments to get away from them. The schoolmates lined up and would not let them out of the doorway for a long time.¹⁷

The children did learn enough Czech words to get along with their friends, but not enough to understand schoolwork. Bob found himself sitting in a Czech classroom, “not knowing what was going on” for the three years he attended.¹⁸ He remembered when “the pictures of Masaryk and Beneš, democratic presidents, came down; Stalin and Lenin went up.” The requirements also changed. Instead of learning just Czech, they had to learn Russian.¹⁹ In class, Bob was to learn Russian in Czech but he still did not know Czech well enough to figure out what the Russian was about.

At one point, Wally tried helping Bob with his schoolwork in his office. They were supposed to copy notes into a blue book, but Bob struggled because penmanship had to be “virtually perfect” by the second grade. He just could not do it in the foreign language. Wally tried to help him for a while. But after some time, Bob didn’t remember his father being in his life too much. He was just too busy. Wally had “fifty missionaries spread out all over the country doing things.” And as things worsened politically, Bob remembered losing his dad altogether.²⁰ It was just a downside of having a mission president as a father. Wally sometimes became rather distant. He treated his children without a great deal of warmth. Wally’s being gone a great deal of the time was especially hard on Bob because Wally was “never around for the family. He was off doing mission stuff all the time.” Bob felt his absence “very keenly,” and it affected his life later.²¹

On the other hand, David, the youngest, remembered his dad being very fun to be with. David was born in Czechoslovakia in July 1947. After he was born, Wally called his kids “Czech, double Czech, triple

17. Judy Richards, interview, 3–4.

18. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 4.

19. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 4.

20. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 6.

21. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013, 19.

Czech.”²² When they left the house, He called them the “cancelled Czechs.”²³ Being the youngest, David realized that Wally probably paid more attention to him than to his other children. When Wally was in Czechoslovakia, the family “probably got pushed back a little bit because there was so much else going on.” When he was finally in a position where he could be with his family, they were able to develop a personal relationship with their father.²⁴

“I think the relationship between me, and Al, and Dad is probably a lot different than it is with the older kids,” David observed.²⁵ When David was born, Wally would “take [him] around to the branches and . . . introduce [his baby] as his little spy” because he was born in 1949, the year after the Church was branded as a spy organization. “So [he] was the little spy.” When David returned to the Czech Republic as an adult in 2007, he visited Plzeň. While there, he saw Sister Marková, who had been Wally’s secretary and translator in her early twenties at the time. When she saw David, she looked at him and said, “You must be my little spy.”²⁶ The experience brought him deep emotions.

Along with feeling somewhat lonely in Wally’s absence, Bob also remembers being hungry almost all of the time he was in Czechoslovakia. He remembered having snack time every day at school. The children would arrive at 8 o’clock in the morning. Snack time was at 10 o’clock. They could bring their ration stamps to school and exchange them for things such as a liter of milk. After World War II, the country used ration stamps to control how much food people could buy. For some reason that Bob cannot remember, everyone would have milk and braided bread except for him most of the time. When he did get to have some, it was “the most delicious thing [he] could ever remember in [his] life.” He recalled, “I don’t know why I didn’t [get the snack]. . . .

22. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 3.

23. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 3.

24. David Toronto, interview by Daniel Toronto, 2010, 6–7.

25. David Toronto, interview by Daniel Toronto, 2010, 6–7.

26. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 23.

I just never asked my Mom and Dad or anything like that, so I'd just go around and bum what I could off the other kids."²⁷

School would go from eight o'clock to noon and then from two to six o'clock. During the two hours off, Bob would go to the mission home and eat whatever he could find. The Torontos were given enough ration stamps to get milk and butter for their six children, but nobody else could get any because they lacked stamps. Instead of butter, they would spread goose grease on their bread. They would "cook a goose, let the grease solidify, put a little salt on it, put it on the bread, [and] eat it." Having at least half a dozen missionaries constantly staying at the mission home at any one time cut down on how many rations were available. Luckily, they had a cook for the mission home as well as an older woman who would help out around the house, but the children still had to wash most of the dishes.²⁸

Bob would "climb right out the window of the kitchen" onto the branches of the cherry tree and "torment the elders." One day the missionaries decided that they had had enough of Bob's pranks. They took him upstairs onto the balcony and hogtied him with his hands behind his back and his feet up. "I thought this was no big deal," he recalled. "I . . . snuck the pocketknife out of my pocket [and] was going to . . . free myself. But they came and took my pocketknife." He was stuck until Marion went over to them and gave them "the devil." Then they released him.²⁹

For Bob, being tied up was nothing compared to the scary experiences of his Czech classroom. One particularly frightening experience occurred in a class on Czech literature. There were four rows of desks, and Bob was in the fourth row at the back. The students started reciting a poem row by row, but he did not know it. By the time it got to him, he had heard the first stanza enough times to memorize it and recite

27. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 12–13.

28. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 12–13.

29. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 14.



it to everyone. The teacher looked at him and said, "Okay." "It scared the bajeebers out of me."³⁰

Like all children, Bob wanted to be included, so one day he joined a group called the Pioneers. As a Mormon boy, he thought he would know about them. However, they were nothing like the Mormon Pioneers he had grown up learning about. Instead, the Pioneers he joined were a Communist youth group. They would cut the cornstalks and clean the cornfields, even though there was not actually any corn to pick. When Bob told his father that he had joined such a group, Wally said, "Well, I don't think you need to do that," explaining its true nature.³¹

30. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 14.

31. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 14–15.

Toronto family,
ca. 1950.
Courtesy of
Church History
Library.

Bob later told his teacher that he did not want to be a part of the Pioneers anymore. Much to his surprise, one of his friends then stood up and said he did not want to be one anymore either.³²

Bob recalled learning very little in Czechoslovakia. “I don’t remember ever opening a book for three years except those early experiences with my dad.” He did, however, remember having to buy his own books, which surprised him because the schools in America provided all the books for their students. He learned the language instead by talking to other children but “pretty much did not understand what was going on in the classroom.” It impacted his intellectual development for ten years. When the Torontos returned to America, Bob did not know how to do arithmetic or grammar or how to diagram sentences in the English language. For him, the deficiency affected him through college and even graduate school.³³

The toys that the Toronto children played with were different from those they would have had growing up in Salt Lake City. In a big World War II dump, they found some very interesting things to play with such as shotguns. The dump was located just over the hill by the mission home. Bob “found on the ground thousands of .30 caliber cartridges, so [he would] just sweep them up and take them home.” He built a bunch of pretend villages and bombed them from the balcony for entertainment. Over the years, he realized that such activities had more of an effect on him than he had thought. In Czechoslovakia, he had actually experienced great fear. Because his mother had been so afraid, he felt like it was his job to take care of her. So he grew up in what he called an “envelope of anxiety and utter fear.”³⁴

While Martha exhibited some well-founded fears, she was not necessarily a doting mother. Sister-in-law Carma Toronto remembered that she was a “competent mother” in that the children were always well clothed, fed, and taken care of physically; however, there was never “any outward show of affection.” Martha did not put her arms

32. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 14–15.

33. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 15.

34. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 7.

around her children. It was obvious that she was proud of them and of what they did, but it was just not “in her nature to be demonstrative.” She never put her arms around Wally in public either, but as Carma explained, “People in that day didn’t do that. . . . Public show of affection was frowned on.”³⁵ Regardless, there was always laughing and teasing. Wally, of course, found a way around such norms. When he greeted a female, he would grab her hand as if he were going to kiss it. Instead, he would kiss his thumb.³⁶ And when his future son-in-law, Vern Miller, asked for Marion’s hand in marriage, Wally asked him to crawl across the floor and kiss his feet to ask.³⁷

In Prague, setting up a household was “no small task as necessities were scarce. Rationing severely limited available foodstuffs, and the family could not afford to buy on the thriving black market . . . [Martha] shopped daily, going from the butcher to the vegetable market, to the baker and then to the dairy for the children’s small ration of milk.”³⁸ There were sacrifices that the Torontos had to make as a mission family. Because they had six children, the Torontos were able to get ration stamps for a quarter liter of milk a day per child, which equaled about one glassful a day. It was not a lot, but it was certainly more than most Czechs were receiving. “Each person was allowed two eggs per month, about one pound of meat, and a quarter pound of sugar.” Feeding a family of that size was problem enough, but the Torontos often had sixteen missionaries to feed at the mission home as well. “Housing was critical and . . . [it was] almost impossible for the young men who came to our mission” to find lodging. The missionaries were often housed and fed in the mission home while they were learning how to speak the language, to teach the gospel, and use good proselyting methods. Because the missionaries had to stay at the mission

35. Carma Toronto, interview, February 26, 2004, 10.

36. David Toronto, interview by Daniel Toronto, 2010, 8.

37. Bob and David Toronto, interview, August 20, 2013, 24.

38. Mehr, *Mormon Missionaries Enter Eastern Europe*, 82.

home for several months before they were sent out into the branches with senior companions, rationing was always a juggling act.³⁹

The rationing of commodities often caused problems for the Torontos. To begin with, people could only purchase certain kinds of food as they were available, even if they had the necessary stamps. And to find out if something was going to be offered, they had to listen to the radio, which notified everyone about what items would be in the market. One thing that was never available was peanut butter. One time, someone had sent Wally some peanut butter from home, knowing how much he loved it. He only shared it with his children. Elder Mel Maybe remembered one particular occasion when Martha and Sister Krejčy, the cook, were going to bake a cake. The recipe that they used required two eggs, which was all they had at the time. They added the rationed ingredients—flour, fat, sugar, eggs—in the bowl. But when Martha cracked the second egg, she realized it was rotten. She and her cook debated back and forth about what to do. Finally, Martha said, “Let’s cook it. That will probably kill all the bacteria that’s in it.”⁴⁰ So they did. The cake was passed around to everyone at the table. Martha, however, chose not take a piece. Sister Krejčy followed suit. But Wally did. When he took a bite, he supposed, “You’ve used my peanut butter!” He was rather upset to think they would use his peanut butter in a cake. But Martha and Sister Krejčy were taken by surprise by the egg’s unexpected flavor.⁴¹ That, Elder Maybe said, was the only time he saw his mission president angry.⁴²

Marion saw the mission home “as a place of refuge . . . , a place where [she] could escape from the merciless teasing of [her] Czech classmates who thought [she] was a spoiled, stupid, rich American girl who couldn’t even speak their language.”⁴³ While in Czechoslovakia, Marion gained a lifelong love and appreciation for music as

39. Anderson, *Cherry Tree*, 43.

40. Mel Mabey, interview, August 13, 2013, 8.

41. Mel Mabey, interview, August 13, 2013, 8.

42. Mel Mabey, interview, August 13, 2013, 8.

43. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 6.

she took piano lessons. At the time that they were forced to leave, she had been taking lessons from a man who planned on putting her in the Prague Conservatory of Music.⁴⁴ She continued piano lessons when she returned to America. Because she was the eldest child of the mission president, she believed that she “was expected to be an example to my siblings, to [Church members], and to the Czech people in general. In short, I felt my father expected me to be no less than perfect. However, perfection was different in his eyes than in mine,” she remembered.

Marion knew that her father liked women with dark hair, dark eyebrows, and dark eyelashes. As she explained, “Along with my red hair came freckles, fair skin, and desperately blond eyebrows and eyelashes. . . . Bright lipstick helped a lot, [but] that was often the source of painful teasing from my father.” Because of her desire to look better, she got herself in a predicament that was particularly traumatic for her. When she was fourteen years old, Wally and Martha allowed her to take the tram down to the middle of Prague to get her hair cut.⁴⁵ After cutting her hair, the beautician said, “You have such long eyelashes, but they’re so white. Wouldn’t you like to put some color on them?” “Oh, no, no. My father wouldn’t like that,” Marion replied. The beautician assured, “They’d look just like mine.” She showed Marion her nice, light brown eyelashes. So Marion agreed to let her go ahead and color her eyelashes.⁴⁶ The beautician dabbed cotton around Marion’s eyes, and after a little while, she took the cotton away. “Now, look.” When Marion looked in the mirror, she was horrified. It looked like she had huge black brooms on the top of her eyes, and she had no idea what to do.

When she got home, she went inside through back door and wanted to go straight to her room. But it was dinnertime. Everyone was seating themselves at the dinner table. The only empty chair was for her. Wally called for her to join them, but she told him she wanted to go upstairs.

44. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013.

45. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 7–9.

46. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013.

He was insistent, and when she finally walked into the room, everybody burst out laughing, including Wally. Despite her humiliation, she handled the situation well and laughed alongside everyone else. Everyone started calling her “Brooms.” She described, “A fun comedy hour played itself out during dinner . . . ‘Brooms, please pass the salt,’ or ‘Did you enjoy your dessert, Brooms?’ ‘Brooms, you wash the dishes and we’ll dry.’ ‘Flutter your eyes at us, Brooms. It’s so thrilling!’”⁴⁷

After the dishes were done, Wally decided to figure out what to do about Marion’s eyelashes. She told him the color was permanent, but he was determined. She felt bad and began to cry.⁴⁸ “Sit down, let’s do something.” She tried to explain, “Dad, they’re dyed.” There was nothing they could do. But he was adamant. He tried soap and water, and then nail polish. When nothing worked, she cried even harder. He grew more and more angry at the situation. He even tried using a rag with some turpentine on it, but that didn’t work either. He declared in disgust, “Okay, we’re going to take care of this.” He went into another room, got some nail scissors, and cut off all her eyelashes. Surprisingly, they still stayed black on the ends when they grew out again.⁴⁹

Because of that incident—and others—Marion felt that her father was really hard on his children, particularly on her because she was the oldest. She explained that she was uprooted from a place she was used to—a place where she had grown up—and from her friends. She and her family were plopped into an entirely new situation, a new country. For her, the adjustments were awful. Wally did not want her to grow up, but unfortunately, she grew up fairly quickly. She was growing up in a situation that made her far more mature than most people of her age,⁵⁰ including those Marion called “beautiful young missionaries” that were in the mission home constantly. As nature would have it, she fell in love with them. Wally and Martha had been concerned that Marion might find a missionary, and she did.

47. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 7–9.

48. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 7–9.

49. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013.

50. Miller and Richards, interview, May 3, 2013.

Marion had her favorites among the missionaries. “Some were tall and handsome; others were full of fun and teasing.” But there was one man who would make a bigger impression on her than all the others: Vern Miller. When she developed feelings for Elder Miller, she could hardly wait to tell her mother about her new love. Martha “seemed to know that this was more than a girlish fantasy,” even though Marion was only fourteen. “She was more concerned than ever when [Marion] told her of a goodbye kiss” that had taken place when Elder Miller left the mission field. Marion knew she had broken the rules. She begged her mother not to tell Wally. She was afraid that Vern would receive a dishonorable release. But despite Marion’s wishes, Martha did tell Wally.⁵¹

The following morning, Wally ushered Marion into his office. She vividly remembered that moment in her father’s office: “My father was very stern and furious. I was told that Vern would not be dishonorably released, but that I was not to write or hear from him. It was absolutely folly to think that Vern would wait for me to grow up. After all, when he returned home, he would be going to BYU. Who would remember a funny teenager in the midst of a bevy of beautiful coeds? But I stood my ground and with tears streaming down my cheeks, I told my father that if Vern would have me when I was old enough, I would marry him! In utter frustration, he angrily dismissed me and told me to stay in my room.”⁵² Marion’s words were prophetic, for later, when they returned from Czechoslovakia, she married Vern Miller.

For all the Toronto children, not just Marion, the years spent in Czechoslovakia left a lifelong impression and changed their lives forever.

51. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 15–16.

52. Miller, “My Story: The Dream,” 15–16.