

All in the Family

“The things that children say and do
may be God’s way of calling you.”¹

The Stones That Made Music

by Helen Kemp

It was summertime. Twenty girls and boys, ages 9 - 11, elected to take the music/choir option at the week-long conference on music and worship. Parents were encouraged to be involved as auditors.

Let me tell you about two of the class members. David, a handsome self-centered boy of eleven years, was confident that he was the social leader of the group.

Then there was J.W. As J.W. entered the room, all eyes were on him, as he struggled to get himself seated on a chair. Yes, J.W. was different. J.W. was physically handicapped. His legs and arms were very short, while his torso was of normal length. J.W. entered the classroom with a reluctant willingness to be in this music group. Often his frustration was reflected in a surly, eyes-down expression. Only once in a while would he open his mouth to sing. I learned that he was scheduled for yet another spinal surgery the following week. I was reminded of a verse from a psalm:

“How can I sing the Lord’s song, when my spirit has no wings?”

On the third day, J.W. arrived late and I noticed he had a rather large stone in each hand. The auditors were annoyed that I didn’t immediately take them from him. But I had a plan—a sort of message from my guardian angel.

We were learning a favorite summertime song, “Prayer of the Norwegian Child”² —

I lay me down upon the ground
and think on my Lord Jesus”

We talked about camping experiences, sleeping on the ground, under the stars . . . about making the ground smooth for our sleeping bags by picking up the stones.

“J.W., will you take your two stones and strike them against each other to see what nature sounds they can make?”

After a pause, and without looking up, J.W. tried it several times.

“Don’t you think that would make a wonderful outdoor sound to add to the piano accompaniment? Try playing those stones in rhythm during the first part of the song.” With eyes looking up just a bit, J.W. joined in the music-making with those stones. And we all rejoiced!

On the last day of our choir week, the whole class was walking up the steep hill to the chapel for a closing worship service. J.W. was making a superb effort to keep up with

the group, but was falling far behind. Then I saw another transformation. David turned and walked back.

“J.W., get up on the curb and hop on my back. We’ll get to the chapel faster.” And J.W. *did*.

I believe even the stones on that hillside were singing! Perhaps the prayer at the end of our song was being answered.

Lord Jesus, think on me,
Make my soul like unto Thee.

¹Brian Wren, from “When Children Pray.” Written for the Children’s Choir, July 1993, Montreat Conference Center, Montreat, NC. © Hope Publishing Co., Carol Stream, IL 60188. Reprinted by permission.

²“Prayer of the Norwegian Child,” arr. Ruth Artman, Hal Leonard 08596454