

**Lookin' Backwards 20+ Years: What I Wish I Knew**  
**When I Started Homeschoolinz**

**Betty Pearson**  
***LDS Homeschool Mom***

*Involved in Utah home education for quite awhile. They have five boys and the oldest is 21 and the youngest is six. The oldest daughter is in the MTC, going to Argentina and they have a son in the MTC going to Germany as well. And so they've been helping the movement quite a bit. Carl has been the past president of the UHEA, Utah Home Educators Association, and Betty has chaired the convention as secretary as well. These people are wonderful people, they've been involved in home schooling for a long time and have gained a lot of experience and raised wonderful children. Well welcome Betty Pearson.*

Thank You, I'm not used to this microphone thing so I'm probably going to hold it. First of all, please write down any comments or questions that you have and I may cover them during my class time and if I don't, raise your hand the last five minutes and ask your question and if I don't get to any of your questions then you can e-mail me.

We began home schooling back when nobody knew what home schooling was. My daughter was three or four years old and we had gotten a copy of Reid Benson's dissertation from Carl's father and it had been just barely published and when we read it we knew that this was the thing we were to do with our family. And, we were really excited about it and we started telling people all about it and found out not everybody was as excited as we were. In fact, our family thought for sure we'd get excommunicated and I remember reactions were very different. One time, we had a reporter come from the Provo Herald to interview us for some newspaper articles and she was so scared because the only home schoolers she heard of was the Singer guy who got shot or shot somebody, so brought her boyfriend with her to protect her! And, was quite relieved to find out we looked normal. Anyway, those were the days when nobody really knew anything about home schooling. I ran out and bought all kinds of stuff that we could use in the public school classrooms thinking I could use it in a home school and it just didn't work out. Back then there were no home school curriculums except for ABeka and maybe Bob Jones still geared to a classroom. Nobody had written home school books except Reid's dissertation. So we really had to learn the hard way.

First of all, when we start our home school you need to know for a surety that this is what your Heavenly Father wants. You're going to go through some hard times or you've been through some hard times and without that surety you won't have the confidence that you need. And, we knew without a doubt we knew that this is what we were supposed to do for our children. My oldest has never been in a public school except for, I think she had to try it out for two weeks when she was in elementary school and found out that it wasn't for her. But your children need a good strong spiritual foundation and one of our children chose to walk the edge. This particular child had friends during her high school years that maybe weren't the best kind of friends that a good LDS person could have and we know that without our strong religious foundation that we gave in home school, we probably would have lost her if she'd attended the public schools because she wouldn't have had that firm foundation. Our children aren't perfect, we aren't perfect! We are not the ideal home schooling family. I figure were just like everybody else, we all struggle, we are all learning, we

don't claim to know all. Some of you who have begun home schooling after us had many more advantages and the only thing I can say is we are just down the road a little bit longer. Right now, my youngest is six years old so I still have a lot of home schooling years left.

First of all, begin with the end in view. When I first started home schooling I decided I was going to write down everything that I wanted my children to be when they became adults and I wrote pages and pages. Now I was a young mother, I was very idealistic and as time went on I found I had to be more flexible and change some things. For my sons, my goals were that they would be Eagle Scouts, the scout program offers many wonderful educational tools. For my daughters I wanted them to get involved in the Young Women's recognition programs. I wanted my sons to serve missions. For us, we tell them this is what the Lord wants you to do. It's not a do it if you want to but this is what the Lord expects of you. Right now my son can hardly wait to get out of the MTC and he's only been there a week and three days and he had an interview with the MTC President a few days ago and he told him, "you need to tone it down, you're trying to memorize too much! But he could hardly wait to be there and he was so eager. My daughter on the other hand was scared stiff because she wasn't a scriptionist but she knew that this was the thing she needed to do in her life. Another goal for our children was for them to attend seminary and institute. And Temple marriage, they say that if you are an Eagle Scout and you go on a mission, then most likely you will have a Temple marriage. I think that they learn certain things along the way that help them be successful in their marriages. When you skip part of that it is just a harder struggle for them. We have constantly had to re-evaluate and make changes and change again and I think the key word is you have to be flexible. You must stay close to the spirit so that you can listen to the whisperings and promptings that you receive.

OK now I have a list of a few things I wish we'd had when we started home schooling that are here now and I really think you are missing out if you don't take advantage of them. It would have been great if we invented the internet but we didn't and it wasn't around back then. But there are so many wonderful educational internet sites for all ages of kids and on our website, we have some links to some of those educational sites and I have a list. If you e-mail me, I can give you the 100 top educational sites. Another thing, if you don't have the internet and you happen to use the library, there's a warning here...you need to ask your library if they screen out pornographic materials. The American Library Association does not do this and if you send a child to the library on his own they could pick-up pornographic things off the internet. So I advise if you're going to use the library to be with your child. Another thing I wish we'd had when we first started is e-mail. My boys are not writers, it was a battle to get them to write a few sentences. They just don't like writing but when we got e-mail it was wonderful! They really like e-mail and my son who is in the MTC now, he got on and contacted all the congressmen and senators and started writing them and he had quite a correspondence going with a few of them. It was very very interesting some of the things they got talking about. It encourages them to express their feelings and so it that is the only way you can get your boys to write I think e-mail is great. But then you have to use cautions also on this too because they can meet friends that may be aren't so trusting. So, there again you kind of have to keep tabs on things. The other thing that I really like is using educational TV. If you don't have satellite or cable, I highly recommend it. There's the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, the Biography Channel, the Learning Channel, and we have watched wonderful series on weather: volcanos, tornados, hurricanes, lightning. These kind of things you just can't get the full effect in a book. And another thing we watched, was a series on the brain. My kids love watching Bill Nye, the science guy. In fact, my children have never had a formal science program. I think we bought a ABeka biology

book and we have never used it and my daughter when she took the ACT exam scored a perfect score in science. So they can pick up things along the way. When studying history I wish we would have had video's sooner. My kids would say Mom, where are all the video's of me when I was little and I tell them their weren't any! It's kind of like was there electricity when you were little? But now, there are so many wonderful video's out there and I love using video's especially when we are studying history. For example, when we were studying ancient Rome we watched Ben Hur and Spartacus and when we were studying ancient Egypt we watched The Ten Commandments even though they say that's not historically accurate. There's lots of video's on the civil war, the 1800's, and there is a website here you can go to it and type in the topic that you're studying and it will bring up some really good educational video's that you can use with your educating. But of course, nothing beats a great book! The first thing is you need to be a good example to your children. How much do you read and do you read a good variety? In our home I make sure we have a newspaper, monthly newsletters. For example, we subscribe to the Rush Limbaugh newsletter, the Dr. Laura Perspective, we get Readers Digest and Prevention Magazine. I get a cooking magazine. We try to get a big variety and my children really enjoy looking through them. They don't read them entirely, completely but they pick up things here and there. We try to read good church books and magazine articles and Carl reads the Book of Mormon every night and I try to study at the kitchen table in the morning so my kids know by looking at me that they know I'm doing what I should be doing.

If I were starting over ago in when my children were younger I would have researched more into the great lives of men and women and I would try to tie in as much religious materials as I could into those because the secular education they get in the public schools does not even touch anything that these people did and they were really close in working with God and they were inspired and I think it's just really important that they learn that these famous people were close to our Heavenly Father and they received inspiration from Him. For example, in the Ensign in the 80's there was an article about Columbus and I used that in our home school. Recently there was one on the renaissance and the reformation and the restoration. Those are excellent to use in your home school. I try to use as much church material as possible. Sometimes when we do spelling, I will get out a New Era article and I'll copy it off and I'll read through it and if I see spelling words that I don't think they know how to spell I'll underline it in red and then I'll have my kids read the article and they write down those words in a notebook and then we have a spelling test on them. Other times when I don't have time to do that, there are internet sites for this too. You get a bad spellers dictionary or list of the most commonly misspelled words and that's our spelling list. I don't put a lot of money into spelling programs because you can come up with your own.

For history I like using basic books and then we can use the library a lot. For example, the books by Edy Hirsch, "What Your Fifth Grader Needs to Know." Being a true home schooler I don't go grade by grade with these books. Instead, if we're going to do old world history, I start in the kindergarten book and I make up worksheets and everybody in the whole family studies through sixth grade. Even my third grader will be reading Old World History out of the sixth grade book. I like things chronologically, I don't like splitting it up year after year. And, then I always try to tie in the gospel principles with what we're doing in history. For example, when they studied the Aztecs I had them look up scriptures in the Book of Mormon. When we studied Ancient Greece and Rome, we talked about Korihor and his teachings. Also I explained to them that when I was growing up the Middle Ages were called the Dark Ages but now that people are rewriting history they don't say why it was called the Dark Ages. They just say it was the Middle Ages. The dark ages is when the spirit of the Lord was taken from the earth. There wasn't any revelation during that time and I explained that to my kids

Why home school if you don't take advantage of your religious freedom? Like Ezra Taft Benson once said, "nothing more than the secularly taught and created clever devils, is that we are educating our children to be clever devils?" LaDawn Jacob has said, "what good is it if a child becomes an expert musician but lacks a testimony of the gospel?" In our day the majority of the people worship education. The world has chosen to ignore and treat lightly spiritual things. In fact, many deny or ignore any type of spirituality especially Christianity. When we had exchange students from Europe we had one from Germany one year and another one from Hungary. They were not taught right and wrong and when they came over here and found out that we believe that there was an adversary, that there's a Satan, our students if you said even that where we live they would think you would need to see a psychiatrist. They do not believe in Satan. Anyway, the world ignores morals and values and what is right and wrong and we should build our home schools on the teachings of Christ.

Also, when we first started home schooling I went really far into child initiated learning, to far and I decided I was going to wait for two of my boys to get excited about math. Now we are still trying to catch up. They have never been excited about math! So that was my mistake and maybe you can learn from that. You can find different ways of presenting math, but there will always be kids who will never like to do math and never have a talent for it. And you just have to find a way for them to understand it and sort of enjoy it. For us, we hire a tutor, luckily Carl's niece is a math teacher and so we are going to use her. I've used BYU tutor's before.

Another thing that I've thought of that would be so fun was to do a-school scrapbook or a yearbook. My two oldest children when they went to high school part-time they were on the yearbook staff and it was so much fun seeing them put together the yearbook for the high school and I thought gosh, we should have been doing this for our own school, why don't we? It would be so fun to take pictures of them. For example, take pictures when they go on field trips, when they go to a music lesson, when they have a performance, even when they have their nose in a book and mine never sit at the table hardly ever, they're either sprawled on the floor or the couch or in their bedrooms. You can take pictures of their artwork of science things that they do. If you go to a library, usually a library yearbooks that you can look through and you can see what they've done with them and you can do the same thing. It's kind of like we are a record keeping people and so this would be a fun way to keep school records along with involving your children in putting together a scrapbook or a yearbook. I wish I'd been a little more creative with the writing and science. I attended a workshop once where a lady talked about how her children loved to write books. And, they put together books of their favorite things that they're studying. For example, you could call it a scrapbook if you want but I called it a book. Boys, I'm geared to boys because my youngest daughter is now a senior in high school and I can now focus in on my younger boys. Boys like to build things and they like to make things and do things with their hands and I remember when my Mom taught cub scouts. They made a scrapbook with a wood cover and I thought that would be kind of fun for my boys to make a book with a wood cover. Or, they could make a cover with a leather cover or you could come up with different ideas where boys can learn to be more hands on involved with their things. But, they pick the subjects that they are really interested in like mine were always interested in Big Foot or the Bermuda Triangle or dinosaurs or some of the mysteries and they really liked those volcano shows on TV. They just think they are so cool to watch. If you can catch their interest, have them put a book together on that subject and then you have something concrete to show their grandparents. Carl's Dad even spoke at home school conventions but his Mom is still very much against home school. So is my Mother but that's another story!

Another thing that I have learned is that I do not have to be their main teacher. I believe it's very important particularly when you get teenagers, they need to have a second witness about what you are teaching. If you can find someone who has the same beliefs that you do then I think you should tap them. For example, we have used grandparents, we have used neighbors, we've used relatives, people in the home school movement. And, another thing, sometimes I don't have time to go out and find people instead I've gone to video's. If I can get a speaker on a video, this is mainly for my older children even though my younger sit and watch anyway. I'll purchase those video's so that they can hear it from someone else besides me. For example, the National Center for Constitutional Studies, I have their phone number 1-800-388-4512, I use the Cleon Skousen video presentation of The Making of America and I have a lot of wish things that they publish. I want to get an educational package called "A More Perfect Union" I've heard of some home schoolers that have that and really really like it. I also want to purchase video tapes called American Government and the U.S. Constitution.

We always read the scriptures together as a family and then we try to do a little more in depth gospel study with them. For the younger kids we use a scripture reader from church distribution. I also like to use the scripture kit. It's by Bruce Barton and its available at Deseret Book. I really like it because he's my cousin anyway! But it helps familiarize kids with the books in the scriptures, books in the New Testament, books in the Old Testament, and books in the Book of Mormon. You'll find teaching primary kids don't know is that in the Book of Mormon or in the Old Testament? They just aren't familiar with the scriptures, so this will help. Another thing we use is Cleon Skousen's Treasures From the Book of Mormon and Building Faith of the Book of Mormon by Glenn L. Pearson and Reed Bankhead. Another one if you don't have loads of money and you can't find these things in the library, you can get Gene R. Cook's book, "Search the Scriptures", and in there he has a lot of idea's that you can do together so a family can become better at learning scriptures with kids.

OK, another more personal way of doing history with the children is to do your family history and find out what was going on during the times of your ancestors. Carl's aunt, I'm so lucky she did this for us. She published a book on their ancestors and a lot of them came from the times of the Vikings and he was a descendent Eric the Red and Lee Erickson. Anyway, she took and studied everything that was going on during the times of the Vikings and put it in a book and they said. And, they also carry a book by Vicky Jo Anderson, it used to be published by Deseret Book, "The Lives of Eminent Men", and anything LDS that I can find that has any educational value, I will buy. For example, I've found recently in Deseret Book, I got the last copy I had no idea how long this has been published, it's called "The Spirit of America." It has all the speeches given at the Freedom Festival in Provo and these are our prophets and apostles that have put together these talks and what better curriculum can you have than studying what they have said. I've also tried to get books by good Christians. Focus on the family has a fit and it's called, "One Nation Under God", and I, just got it but it has in here a video called, "The Nation Adrift," and it has a book and I really like this author. It's by William J. Bennett, "Our Countries Founders." It has some cassette tapes so I purchased those. Also Living Scriptures, they have a cassette tape series called "Living Principles of America." This is excellent! They have cassette tapes of some of our nations founders and the principles behind the starting of our nation, some of the inventors. These are excellent materials, they provide a religious background that you won't get anywhere else. Help your children become more familiar with the scriptures. Any of you who have taught primary, you can obviously tell families who are helping their children with scriptures and families who aren't.

This is your relative, this is what he did, this is what went on during the world at that time. I know I had an ancestor that fought in the Revolutionary War, that would be pretty fun to pull out his name and try to guess what went on in his lifetime. Another fun thing I thought about doing was we would publish newsletters. Pretend we were this relative of mine, Ralph Petty. He fought in the Revolutionary War, if he picked up a newspaper during the Revolutionary War, what would he be reading about in that newspaper? I think that would be fun to put together as a family. Make your own newspaper but you'd have to go back in time.

I'm a list donor of the IDS Home Education e-mail group and it's a support group for people who home school that are IDS and we do a lot of e-mailing. This is what I do instead of going to support meetings because I'm a homebody. Anyway, I e-mailed them and I said if you were starting over again in home school, what would you do differently? And here I have a few remarks of what they've done. One said, "I used to be very demanding of my children, I tried to cram three years of work into one year of school. And, I learned that you have to be flexible, you have to seek your own way, what works for one family will not work for another. Put some serious thought and prayer into why you want to home school, what you want to accomplish, what are your priorities. Write these things down, keep it simple, do reading, writing, and arithmetic and then throw in anything else that interests you. Pray about what your children need, help them find hobbies, help them know what they're talents are and how to develop them. Buy less curriculum and stick to the basics: math, grammar, and history. I would have had my children keep a journal. My children learned my attitudes and bases, so be careful what you say. If you happen to say "I didn't like math either," then they're going to decide they're not going to like math. And, I think my younger kids say that because my older kids say that. But, I do have one child who loves math!

I've never know any home schooler who didn't go through a series of changing in home school. The overall goals of the family stayed the same but you have to do fine tuning along the way. You have to make changes, if something doesn't work you have to discard it and try something else. Just like the gospel stays the same but the church changes its programs to meet the needs of the people. Do I always fix the same food everyday? Do we eat the same way? No, we need to try doing things differently with our children. We try to come up with different ways of doing laundry or cooking or cleaning and so on home school you need to have a variety. I'd help my children understand why they're being taught at home sometimes they don't understand why they can't go over to that elementary school where the teachers hand out candy and they can play on those fun things outside.

You also have to understand that sometimes you're going to miss neat things that are going on in the public school, but you're also going to miss a whole lot of junk. I'd try to set a wonderful example by studying the scriptures so that when I come across instances with my children, I will have the words of the prophets and apostles more available in my mind. In our home school we've always saved the religious education instruction learning for the morning and in the afternoon we worked on personal things: practicing, exploring a hobby, working in cub scouts or merit badges. Whenever I get discouraged because we don't seem to be covering as much materials as I hoped, I reminded myself the reason why I pulled my kids out of the public school in the first place. Every child has their right to learn at their own pace. When you first start out home schooling make sure you just get the bare bones of the curriculum. With us, we purchased Saxon math. My kids hate it, they think it's boring, they hate copying the stuff onto another piece of paper. Now there's some home school kids who absolutely love it and I hate to say it but I did spend a lot of money on Saxon math. And, so you have to get it aside and sell it and try something else even if it kills you. Sell it on ebay. I

don't know if anyone's heard of ebay in here. It's on the internet and they have a lot of home school curriculums that people sell. They don't want them anymore. Find the learning styles of your children.

If you read Thomas Armstrong's books, they can help you tremendously in finding out the learning styles of your children. If your kids have been in public school they need to be detoxed. That means that when you bring them home and you start home schooling, they're going to expect you to teach the exact same way that their teacher did at school and it just doesn't work in a home school. So we suggest that you do reading together, go on field trips, watch educational video's for a little while to help them unwind. Another thing is that when I was pregnant or I had a new baby, I had to change my curriculum to fit my circumstances. With one child I had toxemia so I couldn't get off the couch and so we did a lot of oral reports and we did a lot of already prepared curriculum like ABeka where they could work as independently as they could for me. And, this also fits if you have a new baby. You don't need to feel guilty for taking time off to spend with that new baby and wonder what your kids are doing. If they already have their work in front of them, they know what they can do.

Every home school is different. You have to remind yourself that every family is different. What I'm doing and what I'm saying right now may not fit for you. You have to pick and choose, if you have a home school hero that you like to emulate, just try one or two things that they are doing and see if it works for you. You don't have to do everything.

Part of having a successful home school is learning how to do what your child is interested in what their learning styles are. Every child is different. For example, I have a couple of kids who are very self-motivated, they don't need to be reminded, they go off and do their own things all the time. But, then I have some children that they're not the leaders, they are the followers. For example, when my little boy was young, if he had a friend that told him go out and burn that bush out there, he'd do it. These children need motivation, they need to have outside help, you need to help them do their school work. There isn't one perfect method of home schooling. Maybe up in heaven there is, but there isn't here. Somewhere along the way I came to the realization that Satan plays a very strong part in our activities here on earth and pre-teens and teenagers are subject to those temptations. Satan does not want our children to achieve. He wants them not to do things that they need to do. He doesn't want them to learn how to play the piano, he doesn't want them to study the gospel, he wants them to be illiterate. They lose their free agency, your children do, if they're not prepared. If they do not take advantage of opportunities when they get to be an adult, they have to turn down opportunities and they lose their freedom. For example: If a child chooses I'm not going to play the piano if somebody asks him, say he goes on a mission and they need a piano player, he lost the opportunity if he can't play for them. This goes for anything. If you don't do your math you can't score well on the ACT. Which means you can't get a college scholarship. The world has certain expectations of our children. They expect them to be at a certain educational level and we have to prepare them for that level as best we can. Sometimes they just have to learn the hard way. My oldest daughter, she just refused to do some subjects and so when she went down to take the college test at UVSC she had to be in the dumbbell math class. But, now she tells her siblings you've got to do your math or you have to pay \$400.00 just for one class. They learn, they learn the hard way though. Another thing is that try not to be so different. If you're different in your lifestyle don't advertise it, it makes it really really hard on teenagers especially when they're with their peers who go to public school.

How do you teach your children an end in view? First of all, you need to teach them how to teach. Help them overcome the fear of talking in front of people. They can give a lesson in Family Home Evening. They can give devotionals, they can do oral reports, they can have the advantage of studying scriptures together as a family and you can even have them do impromptu talks. One thing that we started doing was reading books together as a family. We started reading *The Marvelous Work and a Wonder* and it was a lot of fun to have everyone there. We each take turns reading a paragraph and we discuss it. Teach children to preserve. Raising family takes a lot of time. When they're in the public school you don't have that time. You need to have time to discuss things. You need to discuss things at the dinner table, after devotionals, late night talks. You can talk about activities after dates.

Help them deal with ridicule and rejection. I'm going real fast now! We went to regional conference last May and Boyd K. Packer came and spoke and it was right after the Columbine shooting incident and he gave some very important information to our youth and I feel that every child needs to know these things. He said first of all not everyday is a happy day, you have ups and downs. Life is meant to be a test, if you run around smiling all the time you're not normal. In fact, you'd really worry if someone smiled all the time. He said, life is hard. There's certain character traits that you have to learn in order to be a successful adult. Sometimes we have to do things we don't want to do and we have to hold our children accountable for those things especially when it comes to hard work, like chores. You have to be accountable, you have to make sure they're doing the things they're supposed to do and you have to know what is right and wrong. Sometimes life is just hard and they have to learn to stand on their own. For example, President Packer said, it's very important in these last days that your children learn to listen to the Spirit. He said that they need to know what that feeling is. If you have a feeling you should go by that feeling, listen to it. I honestly believe this is for their own safety and protection. If a child gets a feeling he shouldn't go somewhere, he should listen to that. He says, I don't mean to be a doomsday preacher, but it is necessary in the last days, that children know how to feel the spirit and follow the promptings. Another thing is they must be taught to be obedient, especially, if they're going on a mission. Maybe the Lord cannot help protect a missionary who breaks mission rules even if he's late getting into his apartment by 10 minutes. Something bad can happen to them. Your children need to know even if they don't know the reason why they have that rule. They need to understand it may save their life someday. They also need to learn how to deal with peer pressure. I feel that President Packer's remarks can also be applied to home school. Parents, you do not have to have the ideal home school. We all strive for that but everyday is going to go all happy and up and everybody is going to do exactly what they're supposed to do. Life is supposed to be a challenge and learning is a challenge sometimes. We need to teach our children to believe in themselves, to settle disputes peacefully so that if they do go on a mission they don't end up beating up a companion because they got frustrated. Another thing, I got the book by William J. Bennett called "Devaluing America" and in that book he brought out the important points that if you're not teaching your children right from wrong, society is not going to be teaching them. The community and the world have not focused on teaching children right from wrong so therefore it's our responsibility to make sure they get those things and I'm going to end with a quote. This is from the First Presidency. "We call upon all parents to devote their best efforts to teaching and rearing their children in gospel principles which will keep them closer to the church. The home is the basis for a righteous life and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forth this God given responsibility. We counsel parents and children to give the highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study, and instruction.

Very few families in public school have time to do that. Wholesome activities, however worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely appointed duties that only parents can adequately provide. Home schooling is a wonderful blessing. For other parents who have had children full time in home schools, it's an uphill battle to accomplish these things that the First Presidency has asked us to do. We who home school can take the time to give our children a strong foundation upon which to build a life of service to Heavenly Father's kingdom which is centered around the family.

Thank You.

One minute for questions.

Well, if they're going to college you have to look at what the college expects of them. Poor curriculum, if you follow the books by E.D. Hirst, "What Your First Grader and so on Know," that's basically what they can use all through high school. You just go to the library and get more detailed books. There's websites and everything that tell you. Worldbook Encyclopedia has stuff that kids are all supposed to know. But, they're not going to learn everything and teachers can't teach everything in public schools so I wouldn't worry a whole lot. If they have the basics that's what is going to count. That's it.