

THREE STARS

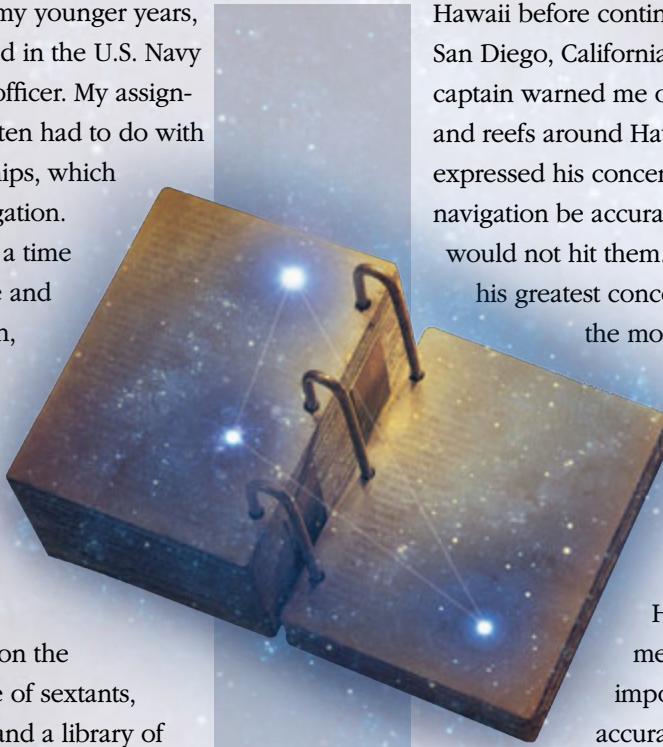
By John B. Rowe

During my younger years, I served in the U.S. Navy as an officer. My assignments most often had to do with steering the ships, which included navigation.

Since this was a time before satellite and GPS navigation, we had to navigate by the tried-and-true method of star sights.

Accuracy was dependent upon the navigator's use of sextants, mathematics, and a library of books. Our training taught us that navigation by the stars required at least two star sights, and a third star was necessary if we wanted to be sure of our location. This rule of two stars for position and three for assurance proved to be a true principle and became the standard that helped me, as a junior officer, have confidence in navigating a ship.

This was brought forcefully to me shortly after reporting to my first ship. We were leaving Japan and planned to stop for refueling at Pearl Harbor in



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Hawaii before continuing on to San Diego, California, USA. The captain warned me of the shoals and reefs around Hawaii and expressed his concern that our navigation be accurate so we

would not hit them. He said his greatest concern was for the more than 900 lives on our ship, one of which was mine.

He helped me realize the importance of accuracy in my navigation. Lives depended on it. Two stars for position and three stars for accuracy guaranteed we would be safe. Throughout my 28 years of service, I found that every commanding officer of the 11 ships on which I served had the same need for assurance in navigational accuracy.

When investigating the Church and reading the Doctrine and Covenants, I came across the scripture that says, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established" (D&C 6:28; see also Deuteronomy 19:15 and 2 Corinthians 13:1). In other words, establish the word by two persons and a third for accuracy and assurance. This sounded like the rules of navigation to me. I knew it was a true principle.

Then I read "The Testimony of the Three Witnesses" in the Book of Mormon. I believed Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris had borne witness that they had seen "the engravings, which are upon the plates" and they knew "that [the plates had] been translated by the gift and power of God." I knew that the testimony of three witnesses established accurate assurance that gospel principles would keep me safe from the sins of the world, just as using three stars would establish the accurate navigation for our ship and keep those on board safe from the dangers of the sea. This understanding became the beginning of my testimony and led to my baptism. Of course, each of us needs to gain our own witness of the truth through the power of the Holy Ghost, which testifies of truth, but these additional witnesses helped me to recognize truth and take the time to seek an answer. ■