

Why Was I Awake at 3:00 a.m.?

By Stan Byrd

I thought at first that my wife, Eva, had nudged me. But as I turned over, I could see that she was still asleep. As I sat up, I had the distinct impression that I needed to go to the living room. I slipped out of bed and headed down the hallway.

Checking the children as I passed their bedrooms, I could see that they were sleeping soundly.

In the living room, a comforting warmth radiated from our coal-burning stove, which was burning the evening's load of coal. The

damper was set correctly, and the furnace seemed to be working properly. Everything looked normal. Even our dog was sleeping, oblivious to my presence. Outside, I saw only motionless shadows lying across a snow-covered yard.

As I again looked around the room, I was perplexed. The impression I had was real. So why was I standing alone in the living room at 3:00 a.m.? I

As I looked around the room, I was perplexed. The impression I had was real. So why was I standing alone in the living room at 3:00 a.m.?



lingered for a few minutes but finally decided to return to bed.

Just as I started for the bedroom, I heard a metallic *swoosh* sound behind me. I quickly turned around to see smoke and hot cinders billowing from the back of the stove! A rivet on the stovepipe had suddenly snapped, and a section of the pipe had slid down into another section, leaving a gaping hole in the pipe.

I called to Eva for help. Then I quickly donned a pair of heavy leather gloves that I kept near the stove and squeezed the stovepipe seam back together. After reconnecting the pipe piece, I joined Eva in clearing the smoke from the living room. We then surveyed the damage.

Cinders and soot had burned only a small section of carpet. Had I not been there when the pipe rivet snapped, the whole living room would have been quickly engulfed in flames. The likely destruction of our home and the possible loss of our lives had been averted—thanks to a gentle but indelible impression from the Holy Ghost.

Returning to bed, I was grateful that a loving Heavenly Father, who is over all things, would warn me about a small metal rivet that would fail on that cold winter night. ■

How Could I Get to Church?

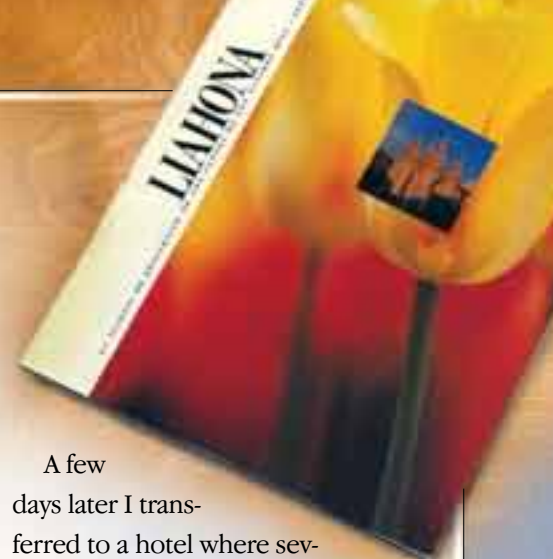
By Alberto Bocca

In 1997 I found myself on what was supposed to be a 10-day working assignment in La Victoria, Venezuela. When I realized that I wouldn't be returning home to Italy as soon as I expected, I began looking for a Latter-day Saint chapel so I could go to church on Sunday.

One day at lunchtime I made friends with a young Italian engineer who knew where to find a chapel in Maracay. He made a map for me. I had a car at my disposal, but unfortunately I hadn't yet taken the medical examination required to obtain temporary permission to drive.

I was new to the area, I had only a sparse knowledge of Spanish, and several people had advised me against taking public transportation alone. I faced a dilemma. As Easter Sunday approached, I really wanted to renew my covenants by partaking of the sacrament. If I didn't drive, how could I attend church in Maracay? If I did drive, I risked being stopped for driving without a permit.

As I considered my options, the 12th article of faith came to mind: "We believe in . . . obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." Rather than drive, I knew that I must obey the law of the land (see D&C 58:21), even if doing so meant missing church.



A few days later I transferred to a hotel where several of my co-workers were staying. On Saturday morning, after a walk I returned to the hotel, still trying to figure out how to attend church the next day. As I passed the reception desk, to my surprise, I saw a copy of the *Liabona* in Spanish.

"Who is a member of the Church here?" I asked. Someone responded that the magazine belonged to one of the hotel workers. The receptionist went to his office and invited him to meet me. As we chatted about the Church, this good brother told me that there was a ward right there in La Victoria and that the chapel was located just a short walk from the hotel. He told me he would be happy to meet me the following morning and accompany me to church. What joy!

I ended up being in La Victoria for two more months. During that time I built many friendships as I happily participated in meetings and activities. Shortly after Easter, I obtained legal permission to drive, which enabled me to attend stake conference in Maracay.

While I was in Venezuela, my testimony of the importance of obeying the law of the land—even when inconvenient—was strengthened. I also obtained a testimony that Church publications are an effective way to share the blessings of the Lord. ■



The Book with Answers

By Alessandra Maria Pereira de Paula

While watching a documentary on the Amazon jungle, I learned that missionaries from various religions had taught the Native Americans about Jesus Christ. I began to wonder about the salvation of the millions of their ancestors who had never heard about Jesus, the gospel, or saving ordinances like baptism. If the Savior came for the salvation of all humankind, why had so many throughout history been excluded from His glorious message?

I searched for answers in the Bible, but I couldn't find anything suggesting that the Old World was even aware of the civilizations in the Americas. No pastor, priest, or Bible student could answer my questions.

One day I was moved by a hymn I heard. I learned the hymn in my own language, Portuguese, and as I struggled to translate it into English, I remembered that my Latter-day Saint neighbor, Jesuina, often received American missionaries in her home. I asked her if the missionaries could translate it for me. The next day they left a translation with a short note

that read, "It was a pleasure to be able to help you. One day we would like to meet you."

When I met the missionaries a week later, they invited me to visit their church. But I did not like Mormons. Members of my family and leaders of other churches I had investigated criticized them, calling them a dangerous sect. They made many absurd criticisms that I believed to be true. One rainy Sunday shortly thereafter, however, I awoke with a great desire to visit their church—to repay them for their kindness but also out of curiosity. During the first meeting, people went to the pulpit and testified they knew that the Church and the Book of Mormon were true and that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God. Somewhat disturbed, I left the meeting and went to Sunday School.

When the teacher mentioned scriptures or stories from the Bible, I was eager to participate. But when she spoke about the Book of Mormon, I remained quiet and pensive. Why another book if we already had the Bible? Before I left, the teacher thanked me for my participation and then surprised me by giving me her copy of the Book of Mormon.

When I returned home, I went to my room, knelt on the floor, and began a sincere conversation with Heavenly Father. I told Him that I felt something special about the

Mormon Church but that I didn't want the adversary to delude me. I prayed that He would help resolve my confusion and show me which church was true.

Afterward I felt a great desire to read the Book of Mormon. I prayed again for strength and direction. During my prayer, I felt a strong and good feeling—an interior warmth. I knew I was not alone at that moment. A thought came instantly into my head: "Read the book!"

I opened it and began reading. Before I had finished the introduction, tears began running down my face as the Lord revealed to me the mystery of the Native Americans. The Book of Mormon seemed prepared especially to respond to my concerns. I felt great joy to have my questions answered. It was as though the ancient Americans had spoken from their graves to tell me about their lives and to testify that they also knew Jesus and that He had suffered for them as well.

Amazed with my discovery, I sought out the missionaries and listened to their lessons. On Easter Sunday, March 31, 1991, I descended into the waters of baptism—the best decision I had ever made.

I feel immensely grateful to Heavenly Father for His mercy and great wisdom. I know that He is just, that He has not forgotten any of His children, and that He is eager to reveal His plan to all humankind. I know that the Book of Mormon is a sacred book. It is true. ■

Something I Wasn't Expecting

By Aubrey Williams

In high school I became involved with a young man my family did not approve of. Eventually, because of their opposition, I became hostile toward my siblings and hateful toward my parents. Unfortunately, I was convinced that they didn't know what was good for me; only I knew. How could they be so opposed to my boyfriend? Yes, he said awful things to me sometimes. But I believed he hurt me because he loved me. I felt that no one else really cared about me.

Being in an abusive relationship altered my emotions and perceptions. I was angry at everyone one moment and disappointed in myself the next. I stayed away from church, eluded everyone who really loved me, and avoided anything spiritual, especially good music. I was hurting, though I wouldn't admit it.

As I was struggling with my life and everyone around me, my violin teacher asked me for help. She was the Primary music leader in her ward, which was planning a

sacrament meeting featuring songs by the Primary. My teacher asked if I would be willing to play violin accompaniment on a few songs. I didn't want to, but I said yes. When she handed me the music, I looked through the titles. The last piece was "I Am a Child of God" (*Hymns*, no. 301).

I was not thrilled because I knew the power of music. I began practicing the songs anyway, while doing everything I could to repel the Spirit—from thinking of how much I hated my family

to trying to keep the songs out of my mind when not practicing.

When the Sunday for the program finally arrived, I couldn't wait for it to be

The Spirit told me to listen to the lyrics and remember that I was a child of God.

over. During the program, I tried to ignore the Spirit, but when it came time for the closing song, my violin teacher did something I wasn't expecting. She turned around and invited the congregation to join in singing.

I placed my bow on the violin strings and struck the first note. The Spirit hit me with such force that tears began streaming down my cheeks before the end of the second line. The Spirit told me to listen to the lyrics and remember that I was a child of God, would always be special to Him, and did not need an abusive boyfriend. I needed Him.

The sound of all those voices— young and old—singing the hymn's simple words helped me hear and understand His words, the words of my family, and the words of Church leaders. Music was my weakness. Heavenly Father knew music was the way to my heart. I was the one who needed to change, not my family.

The Lord knows and understands the power of music (see D&C

25:12). It can lift us and open our hearts and minds to the Spirit.

I will always be grateful for music and the spirit it still brings to my life today. ■