

When I was escorted to the officers' dining room, the ship's captain was yelling and pointing his finger at a young officer.

HOW IMPORTANT COULD THIS BE?

During my tour aboard the USS *West Virginia*, a call came for an officer who spoke Portuguese to go on a three-week exchange with the Brazilian Navy. I was the only one in the submarine force who spoke Portuguese.

My initial feeling was not to go. I had just finished a three-month patrol and was looking forward to seeing my family, but the exchange would not leave my mind. I turned to Heavenly Father in prayer, received a strong answer that I should go, and accepted the assignment.

The arrangements proved fraught with hurdles. At one point I felt like

giving up. I thought, "How important could this be?" The Holy Ghost, however, prompted me to push ahead.

Finally, after several delays, I arrived on a Brazilian ship. When I was escorted to the officers' dining room, the ship's captain was yelling and pointing his finger at a young officer. The captain saw me, stopped, and said in broken English, "Ah, my American friend has arrived. Welcome. May I offer you something to drink?"

I responded in Portuguese that I would love a popular Brazilian soft drink I hadn't tasted since my mission. He told me the ship had all kinds of

liquor on board, but I stated I did not drink alcohol.

Later a knock came at my cabin. When I opened the door, there stood the young officer from the dining room.

"You are an American," he said. "You do not drink alcohol. You speak Portuguese. Could it be that you are a Mormon?"

"Yes, I am," I responded.

He threw his arms around me and broke down sobbing.

This officer, Lt. Mendes, was a fairly new convert and a recent graduate of the Brazilian Naval Academy. On board the ship, he quickly learned

that the captain expected him to share in the wild lifestyle of the officers when visiting ports. Instead, Lt. Mendes constantly volunteered for “in-port duty” and otherwise skipped port-of-call activities. The captain grew weary of this. When I entered the dining hall, he was yelling at Lt. Mendes for not joining in.

“You will go out with the officers during our next port of call,” he had ordered the lieutenant. “You will show the visiting American officer what it is like to have a good time. He will expect that of us.”

For months, Lt. Mendes had been praying that his captain would understand and accept his principles. With my arrival, discussion of the gospel became the center of most conversations in the dining room. We talked with the other officers about Joseph Smith, the Restoration, the Word of Wisdom, and the law of chastity. Feelings toward Lt. Mendes soon changed. The officers removed the openly displayed pornography, and at the next port we all enjoyed a meal together at a restaurant instead of going to a club.

Near the end of my three weeks on board, and after many discussions with the captain and officers about our beliefs, the men softened their hearts. “Now I understand,” the captain told Lt. Mendes before I left, adding that he would no longer ask him to go against his principles.

I will never forget this experience. Lt. Mendes and I learned that our Father in Heaven knows us individually, loves us, and is concerned with our personal lives. ■

Kelly Laing, Washington, USA

SISTER SPAFFORD WAS SPEAKING TO ME

I was playing an online restaurant game late one night when my husband walked by and announced that he was going to bed.

“I’ll be right in,” I told him.

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” he said.

I was playing a game in which I cooked virtual food in a virtual restaurant for virtual customers. I looked at the computer screen and said, “Actually, I have food coming up in 15 minutes.”

To pass the time while I waited, I picked up *Daughters in My Kingdom: The History and Work of Relief Society*, which had lain on the desk since I had received it in Relief Society. I began reading the preface. On the third page I found the following by Belle S. Spafford, ninth Relief Society general president.

“The average woman today, I believe,” she wrote, “would do well to appraise her interests, evaluate the activities in which she is engaged, and

then take steps to simplify her life, putting things of first importance first, placing emphasis where the rewards will be greatest and most enduring, and ridding herself of the less rewarding activities” (2011, xiii).

Other than the scriptures, never has anything I have read touched me so deeply. This woman who died more than 30 years ago was speaking to me. Her words are likely more relevant today than when she said them.

I knew immediately that I would never play online games again. I turned off the computer, went to bed, and told my husband of my decision. The next day I did not even turn on the computer. Instead, I figured out how many hours I had wasted on those games every day.

I multiplied three hours a day by 365 (days in a year) and divided by 24 (hours in a day). I was stunned to learn that I had wasted 45.62 days per year. Those precious hours and days are gone forever. I could have spent them reading my scriptures, spending time with my husband and children, serving others, or magnifying my callings.

General Authorities often address this subject during general conference. Yet it had never hit home, and I thought it did not apply to me.

I am grateful that the Holy Ghost helped me recognize that the General Authorities—and Belle S. Spafford—were speaking to me. ■
Sandy Howson, Ohio, USA

I DIDN'T KNOW WHY I WAS THERE

My mother and I had just finished our nightly prayer. We hugged each other and said, "I love you." Then I walked to my bedroom. As I reached for my door handle, a strong impression came into my mind that the next day my mom would die.

My brain and heart tried to fight the thought. There was no way that something was going to happen to my mom. Everything would be fine with her.

Once in my room, I knelt in prayer and told Heavenly Father that the impression about my mom could not be true. I asked Him to please take the thought away, but it didn't leave. I returned to my parents' room and told my mom I wanted one more hug and kiss before I went to bed. We again said, "I love you," and I returned to my room. It took me a while to fall asleep that night.

When I woke up the next morning, I was nervous. Thankfully, there was my mom, happy and well. But in the back of my mind, I still had that nagging feeling that something wasn't right. At fast and testimony meeting that day, Mom stood up and bore a beautiful testimony.

After sacrament meeting she went to teach her Primary class, and I went to Sunday School. I had another distinct impression, this time to get up and leave Sunday School. I didn't want to draw attention to myself, but something pulled me out of my seat and out of the door. Within a few minutes, I found myself sitting in my mom's Primary class listening to her teach. I didn't know why I was there, but I

knew that was where I needed to be.

Later that afternoon at my brother's house, my mom stared straight into my eyes for the last time as she collapsed and passed away from a pulmonary embolism. For His reasons and in His mercy, Heavenly Father had sent the Holy Ghost to prepare me. Those promptings gave me extra time with my mom that I wouldn't have enjoyed had I ignored the still, small voice.

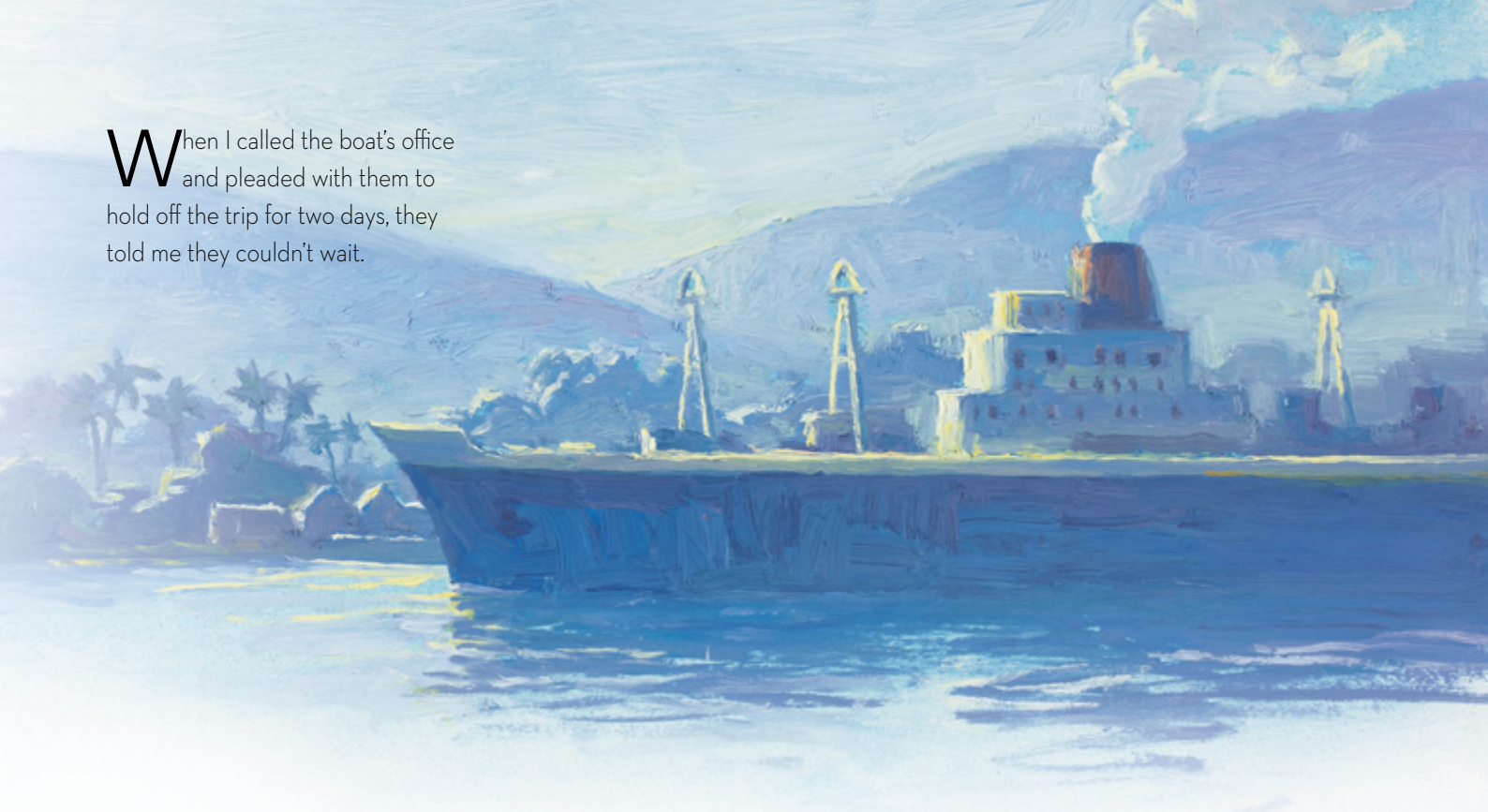
The love of my Heavenly Father had never been so evident to me until the events that took place around my mom's passing. How blessed we are to have a Father in Heaven who loves us enough to give us the special gift of the Holy Ghost. ■

Amber Cheney, Alabama, USA

I returned to my parents' room and told my mom I wanted one more hug and kiss before I went to bed.



When I called the boat's office and pleaded with them to hold off the trip for two days, they told me they couldn't wait.



PRAYING MY WAY TO ROTUMA

The *Westerland* left yesterday," my sister-in-law said as she greeted us at the Nadi International Airport in Fiji.

I was sad and disappointed at the news. The MV *Westerland* was the boat that was supposed to take us to see my elder brother on Rotuma Island. Rotuma is approximately 375 miles (600 km) northwest of Viti Levu, the largest of Fiji's islands. If you miss the boat, you most likely have to wait days or even weeks for the next one.

A year earlier I had gone to Rotuma to help my brother renovate our grandmother's house, and I left him because of a job-related disagreement. Now I wanted to see him face to face and tell him how sorry I was.

A week before my wife, Akata, and I flew to Fiji from Australia, my niece told me that the *Westerland* would be going to Rotuma the day before we were scheduled to arrive. I

immediately called the boat's office and pleaded with them to hold off the trip for two days.

"No, we couldn't even if we wanted to," came the reply. "The Rotuma Island Council has made preparations for a welcoming feast, and the boat needs to depart as scheduled."

A thought flashed through my mind, and I decided to fast and pray.

"Dear Heavenly Father," I prayed, "I would very much like to catch that boat to Rotuma. I believe they can't hold off departure another day or two, but Thou hast power to do it. Couldst Thou please remove just one bolt anywhere on the boat so as to stall the trip that I might board? I need to go to Rotuma and be reconciled with my brother."

After we had heard the disappointing news, we made our way to the port on the other side of the island. There, however, we learned that the

boat had experienced engine troubles and hadn't left yet. Heavenly Father had answered my prayer! As it turned out, the entire engine—not just one bolt—had to be removed to repair a major oil leak.

When the boat finally left a week later, I was on board. When I arrived in Rotuma, I embraced my brother and apologized, and we restored our relationship. It was certainly a day of jubilation.

I will be forever grateful for this wonderful spiritual experience and for the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a testimony that miracles still occur today, that Heavenly Father lives and answers our sincere prayers, that prayer and fasting go hand in hand, and that the gospel is true—even in a small village on the tiny island of Rotuma. ■

John K. Muaror, New South Wales, Australia
(The author has passed away.)