

I Remembered the Pioneers

By Daniel Cisternas

When I was 19 I was called up to the Swedish army. As an artillery signalist, I served in the Eighth Company's staff and leading platoon.

At 4:00 one January morning, our officers ordered us to get dressed with full equipment and gather outside in 20 minutes. Tired and hungry from the previous day's activities, I felt like I had barely closed my eyes, and here I was again preparing to confront a new test. I still remember how it felt, stepping from the warmth of the barracks into an indescribable cold.

A huge military bus arrived to pick us up, and we were told we were going to Stockholm for a big test to see if we were qualified to continue our training. Arriving in the city, we were divided into three groups, with different maps and separate destinations.

We walked the streets of Stockholm, fully equipped with weapons, ammunition, and other gear. At each checkpoint we were required to perform a physical test, such as hostage confrontation, street battle, running through tunnels and buildings, and first aid treatment. After every test we barely had time

to rest before moving on to the next checkpoint.

The freezing asphalt made my feet numb, and my shoulders ached from the heavy equipment. But I kept going and tried not to complain. Our group experienced bitter weather and difficult trials, but we were still marching as brothers. Along the route, we encountered shocked civilians who laughed, pointed fingers, and shouted at us.

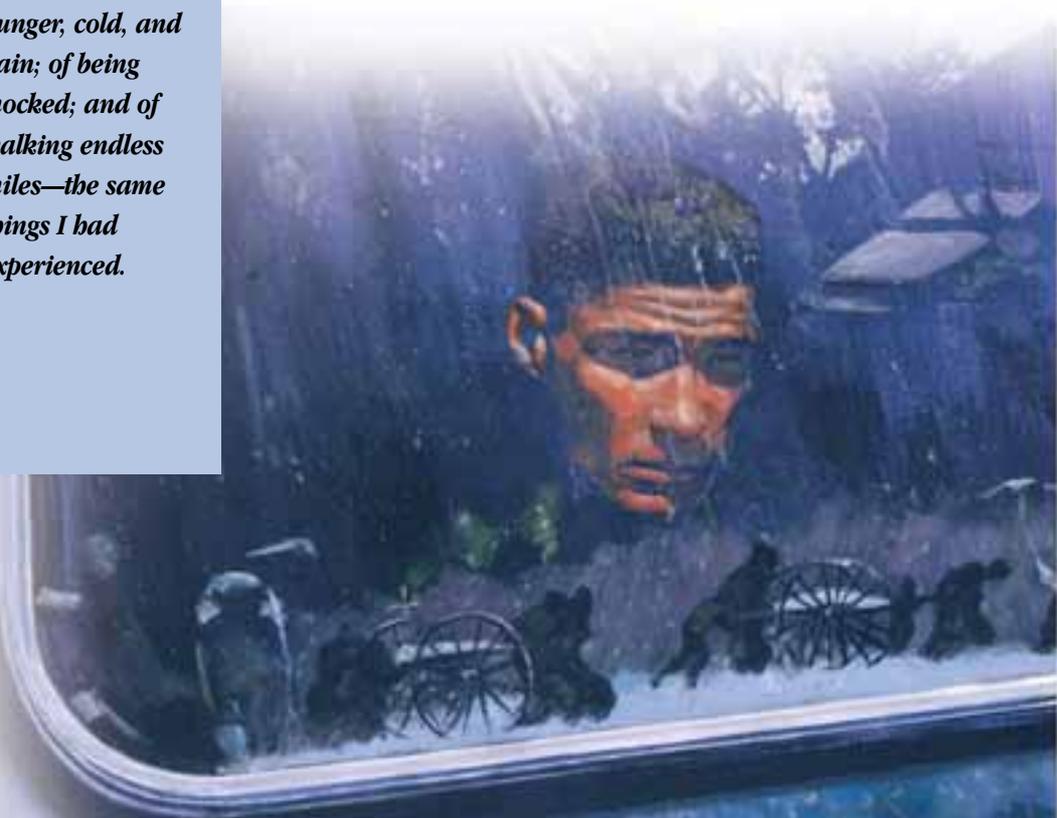
I was tired, cold, dirty, and in pain when we reached our final destination and the bus picked us up. During the trip back to the base, I reflected on the trials my platoon and

I had endured and asked myself if this training was worth anything besides the

medals awarded at the conclusion. I asked myself if anyone else besides us had gone through trials as we had that day.

Suddenly, I thought of the hardships and sacrifice of the pioneers of the early days of the Church. I recalled the stories of their hunger, cold, and pain; of being mocked; and of walking endless miles—the same things I had experienced that day. The big difference is that I had to endure this for only one day. The pioneers traveled in cold and snow, rain and heat, walking through mud and dust. They walked with little material security, having only faith that the Lord would protect them. The pioneers walked to find Zion because the Lord had a marvelous work for these members to perform.

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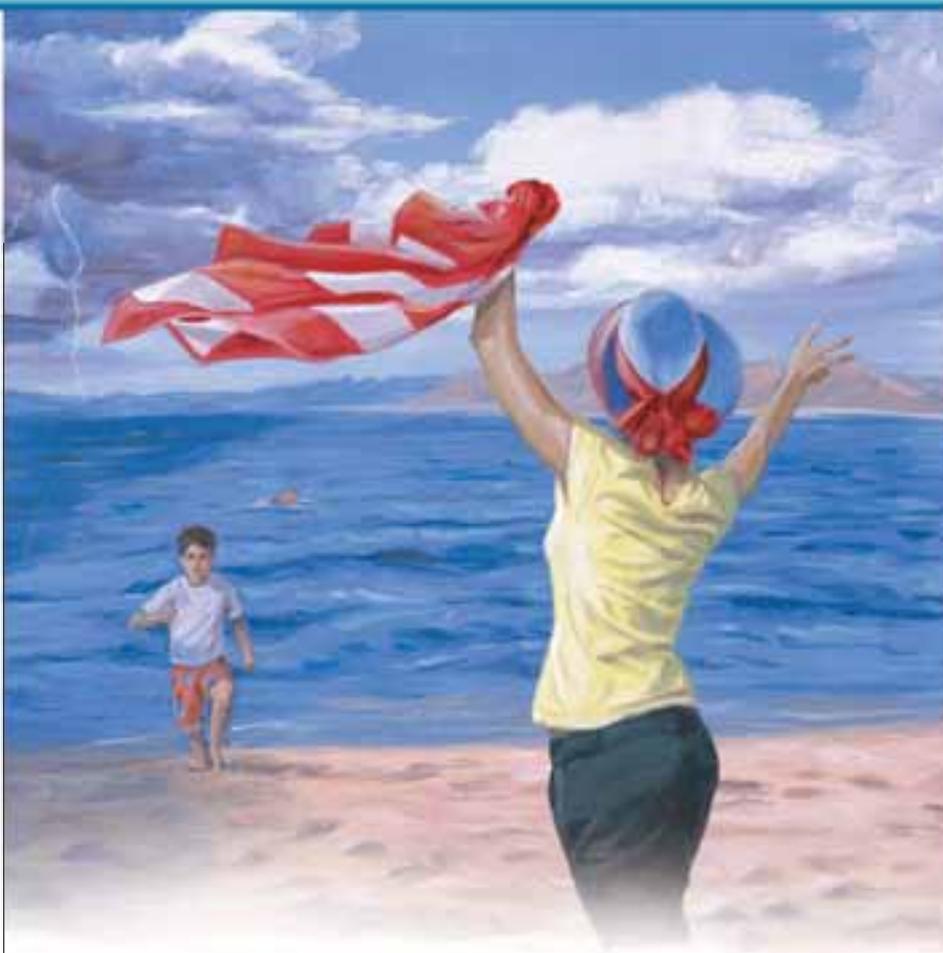


Suddenly, without thinking, I started to sing “Come, Come, Ye Saints” (*Hymns*, no. 30), and right there on the bus I started to feel a difference within me. A great warmth and happiness flowed through my body. I was not active in the Church at that time and I had thought I would never come back, but suddenly a feeling came over me saying, “Come back to church.”

When I got to the base, I called my parents and told them I loved them and wanted to go back to church. The following Sunday was a huge test for me to see if I had the courage to return because I had been away for so long. Going back wasn’t easy, but it was worth it. My family and the other members helped me feel welcome.

I began to prepare to serve a mission and two years later received a mission call to serve in the Cape Verde Praia Mission. When I arrived in Salt Lake City on my way to the Missionary Training Center, I saw the marvelous work performed by the pioneers in building a magnificent temple and planning a beautiful city. I said softly, “Thank you.”

Today, when I ask myself if that military test was worth anything, I answer that it was, in every way, because in that moment of great insight on a bus with a platoon of fellow soldiers, I realized how important the work of the Lord is. It was worth it because I came back to the Lord and am now doing His work and His will. ■



Get the Children Out of the Water!

By Janell Johnson

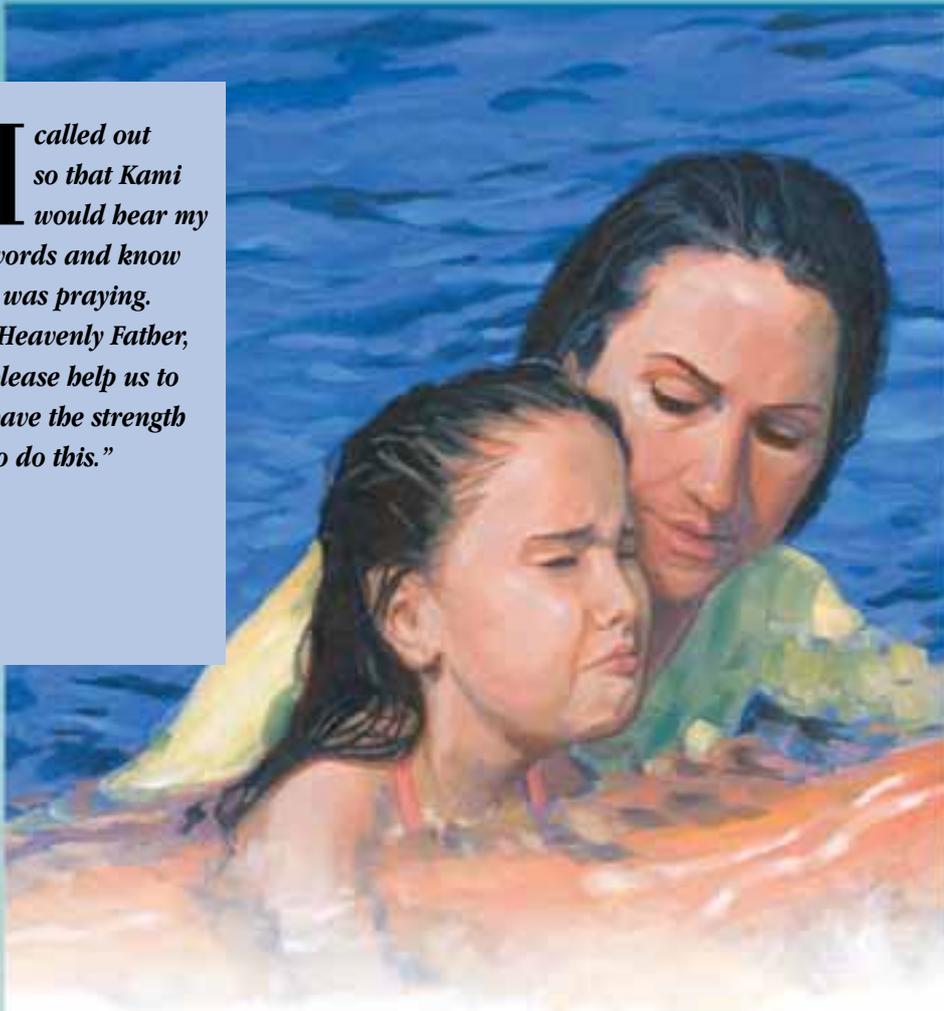
It was a pleasant day in June 2003. I drove my five children from our home in Logan, Utah, to Bear Lake to visit my sister’s family. Their home lies a few minutes’ walk from the water, and after visiting for a while I decided to take my children and their two cousins, Kami and Erin, to the beach to play.

The water near the edge was warm, and a gentle breeze stirred the air as I sat on a chair, reading and relaxing. I looked out toward the lake and noticed that Kami was about 50 yards (46 m) from shore,

floating on a high-density foam pad. Because the lake became very deep not far from shore, I waved to her and called for her to come closer, but she couldn’t hear my voice from that distance.

About that time I began to feel very uneasy and heard the Spirit whisper that the children needed to get out of the water. I called to them to come closer to shore, and reluctantly they wandered toward me. Suddenly the Spirit spoke loud and clear, “Get the children out of the water!” I turned toward the mountains behind

I called out so that Kami would hear my words and know I was praying. “Heavenly Father, please help us to have the strength to do this.”



us and saw dark clouds gathering. A bolt of lightning flashed brilliantly in the sky.

“Get out of the water,” I screamed. “There’s lightning coming!” I raced for Kami, who by now was floating about 75 yards (68 m) from shore. At that moment a blast of wind hit us. My eight-year-old son, Dallin, tried to carry another foam pad out of the water, but the wind hit it like a sail and threw him to the ground.

I tried to get to Kami as fast as I could, but the wind was driving her farther out on the water. I am not a strong swimmer, and with the waves rising around me, I continued to wade. I could see her kicking her feet as hard as she could while leaning over the side of the pad, but this

did little to combat the fierce wind. She was still being swept out to open water.

The water became deeper and deeper as I waded out, until it reached my shoulders. Then my feet came to a sharp drop-off in the lake bottom. I had to stop, but I was still 20 yards (18 m) from Kami. I opened my mouth to call her, but to my horror no sound came out. When it finally did, it was only choking gasps. It was then I realized how very cold the water was out this far. I realized that hypothermia was setting in. I wasn’t going to make it back either. We were both going to drown.

At that moment, using all the strength left in me, I called out so

that Kami would hear my words and know I was praying. “Heavenly Father, please help us to have the strength to do this.” In an instant a warmth flooded my body, and my energy returned. My voice became clear and strong, and I called to her, “Kami, paddle with your hands!” Her little 10-year-old arms dog-paddled on the water in front of the pad. She was hardly strong enough to make a difference in the terrible wind, but it was as though a giant hand were behind her, gently propelling her toward my outstretched hand. I continued to call encouraging words to her until our fingers touched, and at that moment I knew that because Heavenly Father had brought her to me, we would make it.

On shore Dallin cried as wind and sand beat him cruelly. It took all my strength to get him, the other children, and the pads and toys into the car. In the distance the mournful wail of a loud siren filled the air, signaling a fire started by the lightning on the hills. It seemed to add to the trauma of the moment, yet we knew we had been preserved by divine assistance.

I told the children what had happened out on the water, and the instant we reached the house we gave thanks in prayer for His saving our lives. As we did so, I felt the overwhelming love of our Father in Heaven. I know that He is aware of His children, and I am very grateful that He was with us that day. ■

Will I Be Able to Talk Again?

By Javier Gamarra Villena

I had been on my mission in my home country of Peru for several months when I met Santiago. He attended a Sunday School class for new members, but he had not been baptized. Nor had he taken the missionary discussions. I learned that he had a speech impediment that made him feel insecure because he had difficulty communicating.

For most of his life, Santiago had been able to speak clearly and had been blessed with a beautiful singing voice. But then he suffered a stroke. After a long time in a rehabilitation center, he had learned to walk again, but he still had trouble speaking.

We were thrilled when Santiago decided to meet with us. During our first visit, he tried to talk, and we tried to understand. He especially enjoyed reading aloud from the Book of Mormon. We loved and admired him.

One day while we were discussing gospel ordinances, Santiago said he was ready for baptism and confirmation. After we had finished the discussion, he stood up, eyes shining, and with great difficulty asked, “Elders, after I’m baptized, will I be able to talk normally again?”

I was taken aback for a moment and at first didn’t know how to

answer. But responding to the influence of the Spirit, I said confidently, “Yes, if you have enough faith, the Lord will grant your desire.”

On the day of his baptism, I remembered Santiago’s question when he was asked to bear his testimony. Realizing that some of the Lord’s promises aren’t fulfilled immediately, I wondered if Santiago would feel disappointed if his ability to speak didn’t immediately improve. In the days that followed, he still struggled to talk, but he didn’t seem to be concerned.

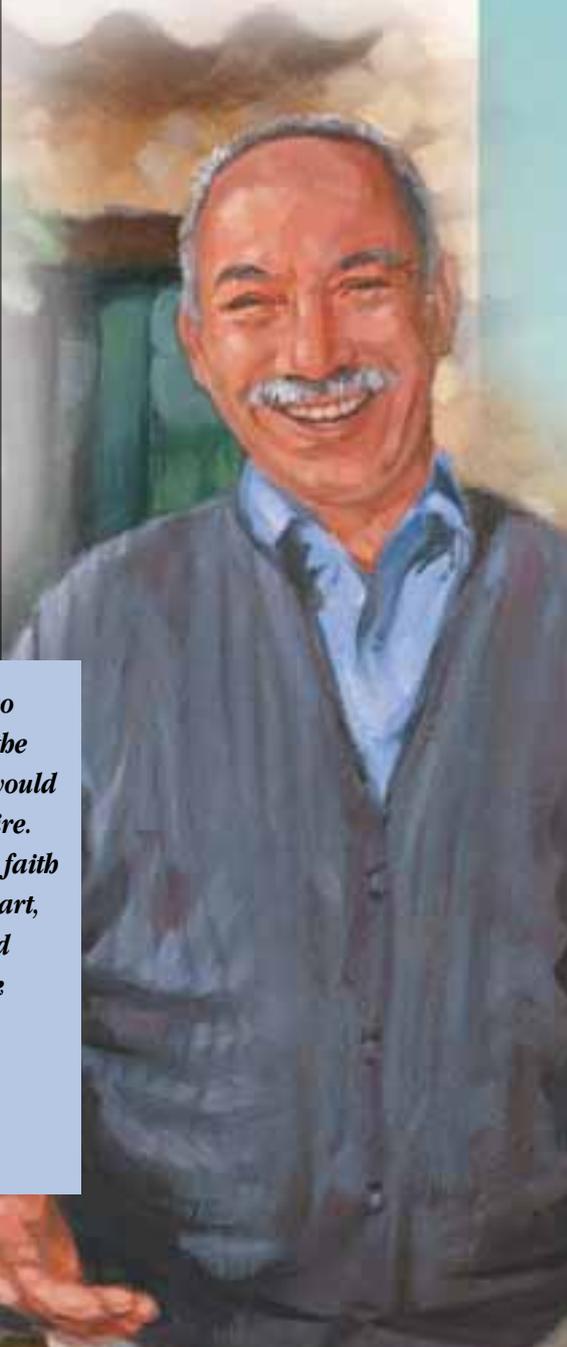
I was soon transferred and didn’t see Santiago again until the end of my mission, when I went to say goodbye before returning home. My companion and I didn’t find him home and started to leave, when suddenly we heard a strong voice calling to us. It was Santiago!

We entered his house, and he talked about how happy he had been as a member of the Church. After a few minutes I realized that he was speaking almost perfectly. Surprised, I said, “Santiago, you talk fine now!”

He said he knew the Lord would grant his desire. So he showed faith and did his part, reading aloud from the Book of Mormon and doing exercises his doctor

had recommended. “The Lord has seen my efforts and has given my voice back to me,” he said. “And it won’t be long before He blesses me with the ability to sing again.”

I could not hold back my tears. That day Santiago taught me a great lesson. The promises of the Lord aren’t always fulfilled quickly, but they are fulfilled nonetheless. ■



Santiago knew the Lord would grant his desire. So he showed faith and did his part, reading aloud from the Book of Mormon.