

# MY FIRST BATTLE

BY COLIN SLINGSBY

*My first Saturday night in the army was one of the hardest in my life. I had to make a choice that would affect my future.*

**W**hen I was 17 years old, I enlisted in the Royal Canadian Army Reserve. I was sent to a training base, and for the first time in my life, I was on my own to determine my path. I suspected that I would be tempted not to remain active in the Church and that my testimony would be challenged.

When I arrived on the base, a course sergeant gave a tour of the different buildings and churches. I was prompted to ask where the LDS branch was located. The sergeant paused for a moment. Then he said that the LDS Church wasn't found on base, but if I would like to attend, I could go with him and his wife. He was a recent convert to the Church and was happy to take anyone who wanted to go. I was glad to have the option of going, even though I had not decided if I was going to go that Sunday. After all, I was alone and free to choose for myself now. But something in my heart told me I needed to attend.

That Saturday night was one of the hardest in my life. I have since called it my "tree of life" experience. It started when my friends wanted me to hang out with them at the mess hall. I knew they were just going to drink, and

I told them I needed sleep because I had to get up early for church. They laughed at my choice and went their way.

After they left, I sank into my bunk. From there, I could look out the window and watch my friends on the mess hall balcony, drinking and laughing. I remembered how they had teased me for not joining them. I felt like I imagine Lehi must have felt when he looked at the great and spacious building, where people were similarly laughing at him (see 1 Nephi 8:26–27). I turned around to face my desk, only to notice my scriptures. I eagerly opened them and began to read. These were my iron rod, and just as the word of God had kept Lehi's family safe, I knew they would likewise protect me.

I don't recall what I read that night, but I do recall the Spirit I felt. I felt it again when I went to church the next morning. By attending church every Sunday while I lived on the base, I built a lasting testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Since my time at training camp, I was given the opportunity to share my testimony with others as a full-time missionary in the California Sacramento Mission. ■

