



SERVE IT FORWARD

BY JORDAN MUHLESTEIN

We were stranded and in need of help; we didn't realize that we were just one link in a chain.

A cloud of Mexican dust consumed the minivan, and Jeff drove blind for a moment.

A moment was enough.

A sharp grinding sound from under the vehicle made the barren landscape suddenly seem menacing, and as soon as the dust had cleared among the dry, crusty cactus, Jeff, Brandon, and I climbed out to inspect the damage.

We had driven to Baja Mexico in Jeff's mother's car to spend the last week before school camping, surfing, and remembering Spanish from our missions, but our excitement quickly changed into dry-mouthed worry.

Jeff looked below the car and found that a large rock had punctured the oil pan. A pool of thick, black motor oil was spreading on the dirt. We tried to stop the leak with a towel, but the slimy oil spread into it. The flow couldn't be stopped. This wasn't good.

As we tried to figure out how far it was to town, a truck we had seen earlier at the beach pulled up in a cloud of dust. A tan man with shaggy hair leaned out the window and asked what was wrong.

"We put a hole in our oil pan," Jeff said.

"We tried to plug it, but it didn't work."

"Hold on," said the man. "I have some stuff that could help."

He and his wife climbed down from the truck, and after fishing around in a toolbox, he produced a tube of self-hardening epoxy made specifically for sealing oil pans.

Wow, are we lucky, I thought.

While her husband was putting the epoxy on our car, his wife explained that they had just had battery trouble with their truck and had needed a jump start from someone else.

"So we get to help you now," she said. "Now it's your turn to help someone."

Her comment made me think, and I promised myself that I would help someone in need the first chance I got.

The couple drove off, and we waited an hour for the epoxy to harden. As we waited, we all expressed our gratitude for the couple and marveled at the perfect timing we had had in driving down the deserted road at about the same time they had. And they had happened to have something that could fix our problem.

We decided to say a prayer of thanks, and as we prayed, we knew our Father in Heaven

Our cracked oil pan wouldn't stop leaking. We needed help. But where would it come from?



was looking out for us personally, even in that remote desert in Mexico.

When the car was ready to go, we started on our way again, slowly, down the coast. A short time later we saw two young Mexican parents and their two toddlers standing next to a car with a mangled tire. Our opportunity to help had come sooner than I expected.

We spoke with them and offered to take them to their home a few miles down the road. They gratefully accepted and piled into the back seat.

Two dusty little hands plunged into our box of crackers as we bumped along that rocky dirt road in the Mexican desert. Now seven people were crammed into the minivan, along with a cooler, two surfboards, camping gear, and a pile of oily towels.

As the toddlers eagerly devoured the last cracker crumbs and we joked with their parents, I realized that this was what helping was all about. It didn't matter how much it cost the man to give us the epoxy or how far out of our way we went to take the family home. We all knew we had done the right thing, and the feeling was worth more than anything in the world. **NE**