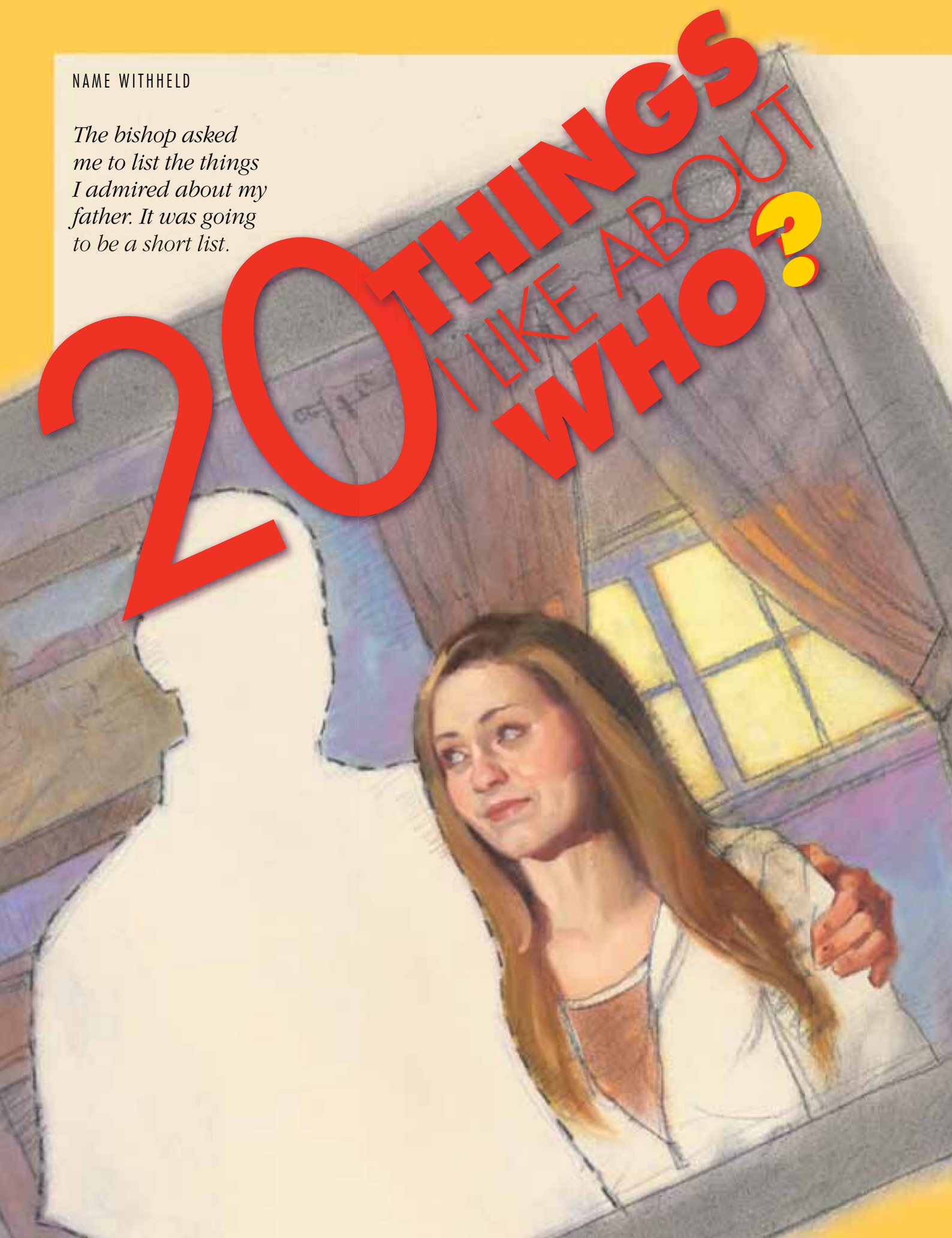



NAME WITHHELD

*The bishop asked me to list the things I admired about my father. It was going to be a short list.*

# 20 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT WHO?





**G**rowing up, I often heard people in church say, “Families are forever,” and I’d think to myself, “Sure. If I lived in so-and-so’s home, that would be easy to say.” But I did not come from an ideal family background.

I was adopted and an only child. My mother was an alcoholic, which contributed to my parents’ divorce when I was five. My father raised me alone from then on.

I joined the Church on my own when I was in fifth grade, which introduced the challenge of being the only member in my family. My father supported my participation in the Church to the extent that it helped him in his efforts to raise a moral, drug-free daughter.

By the time I was in high school, he was gone on business trips the majority of the time. He left every Monday morning and came home every Friday night for all but five weeks one entire year. Several families in our stake opened their homes to me when my father traveled.

However, there was one major problem. The more time I spent in these good, Latter-day Saint homes, the more my own home life seemed to fall short. Great Mormon families doing what seemed to be all the ideal things a family should be doing surrounded me.

Inside I was frustrated and even dissatisfied.

About this same time my father began to challenge me about the things

I believed. When he started to attack my testimony, I felt I just couldn’t take it anymore, so one day I went

to see my bishop.


I must have wanted someone to side with me or give me sympathy because (as I saw it then), my dad wasn’t as great as other dads since he wasn’t a Latter-day Saint. My bishop said he’d be happy to meet with me the following week after church, but he wanted me to do one thing before our meeting: to go home and make a list of 20 things I admired or appreciated about my father.

I was sure he hadn’t understood why I’d asked for this meeting. Didn’t he realize that I was having a problem because there was so little to appreciate anymore? But fearing he was half-serious, I made half an effort. After a half hour, I only had five things on my list. I figured that proved my case, and tucked it in my scriptures for my appointment with the bishop.

When I returned to the bishop’s office the following week, he invited me in and immediately asked if I’d completed my assignment. I told him I had started and showed him my short list. He responded by telling me that he’d be happy to discuss anything I wanted, at length, but first I had to complete my assignment. He asked if I would like him to reschedule an appointment for the following week. Anxious for some relief from the many pressures I was dealing with at home, I made another appointment and left.

Saturday night rolled around, and I realized I still hadn’t made the list. I decided I’d better do it if I was going to get anywhere with the bishop. Then I remembered a conversation I’d had with a friend that week. She asked me why I didn’t seem emotionally “messed up”

**M**y dad was gone a lot on business trips. He didn’t seem to be as great as other dads since he wasn’t even a member. I tried to write the list, but it only had five things.



**W**hen I thought how my life would have been if my father hadn't worked so hard to keep me, my list came easily and helped me realize how blessed I was.

because of my parents' divorce. I thought back on how much effort my father had made to keep me out of the center of the ugly part of the divorce, and, while talking to my friend, I realized for the first time what a tremendous gift that was. It became the first sincere thing I'd written on my list.

Then I remembered how hard my father had fought to keep me in a time when fathers were rarely granted custody of their children. I thought how different my life would have been if I'd had to grow up with my alcoholic mother. Tears of gratitude streamed down my cheeks. This too was added to my list.

And the list grew on and on. At nearly 1:30 in the morning, I looked down at my list of 69 reasons why I felt

so blessed for the wonderful father Heavenly Father had given me.

After church the next day my bishop invited me into his office and asked how my week had been. I told him it had been a good week, and that I wasn't really sure there was a reason for us to meet any longer. When he inquired as to why—though I hated to admit it—I told him it was because of “the list.” I pulled out my list and shared with him what a wonderful man my father was.

My dear bishop taught me one of the most important lessons I have ever learned in life: no one has the perfect situation. But it is up to us to make the most of that situation and help wherever necessary. With my dad, should I focus on the majority that is good or the minority that could still use a little improvement? My bishop helped me realize that when I am discouraged, I can always think about—or maybe even list—the positive things in my life. **NE**

For advice on getting along with your parents, see “Talking with Dad,” *New Era*, Feb. 2008, p. 10, and Q&A, *New Era*, Jan. 2003, p. 17.