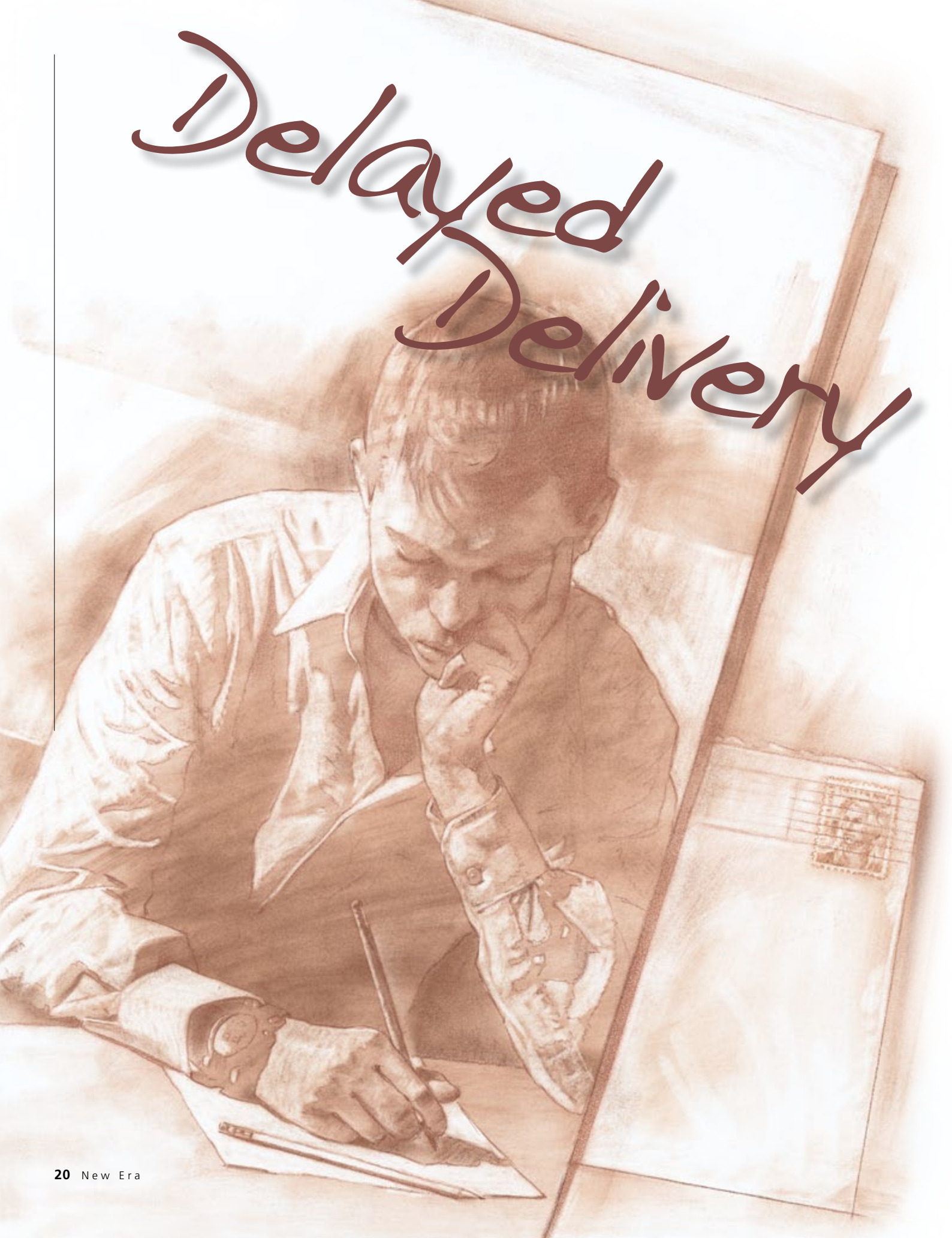


Delayed Delivery





By Jacob Fullmer

In 1979, Art Hansen was wrestling with the decision to give up his personal pursuits in competitive skiing to go on a full-time mission. Back then he went to a sacrament meeting that helped him make up his mind.

Art listened to a talk given by a friend who had accepted a mission call. “I thought, hey, I’m going to go too,” he remembers. Guided by his initial excitement, he penned a letter to another friend, Elder Matthew Balkman, who at the time was serving in the Philippines. He told his missionary friend about his decision to serve. Only one problem—Elder Balkman never received that letter or the two that followed. “We didn’t communicate regularly back then,” Art says. “I didn’t know he never received my letters.”

Almost 30 years later, Elder Balkman’s son Blake was called to serve in the same location in the Philippines where his father had served. When Elder Balkman junior arrived at the mission home, he was presented with three faded letters from “Elder Hansen” addressed to an Elder Balkman. He noticed the postmarks were dated 30 years ago and sent the letters home to his father, assuming they had something to do with him. Elder Balkman senior then forwarded them on to his old friend Art Hansen, not knowing that this time the letter would arrive just at the right moment—for someone else.

An Answer to Prayer

Art’s son, Brody, loved the Church, but he was concerned about serving a full-time mission. He was nervous about his natural

shyness. “I wasn’t a big talker,” he explains. And up to that time, he “wasn’t super motivated to study the gospel.” He prayed every day, but his worries persisted.

His family was supportive. His father recalls: “We reminded him how important his mission would be, not only for his own growth but also for those he would meet and teach.” Just the same, Brody remained nervous. That’s when the letters arrived.

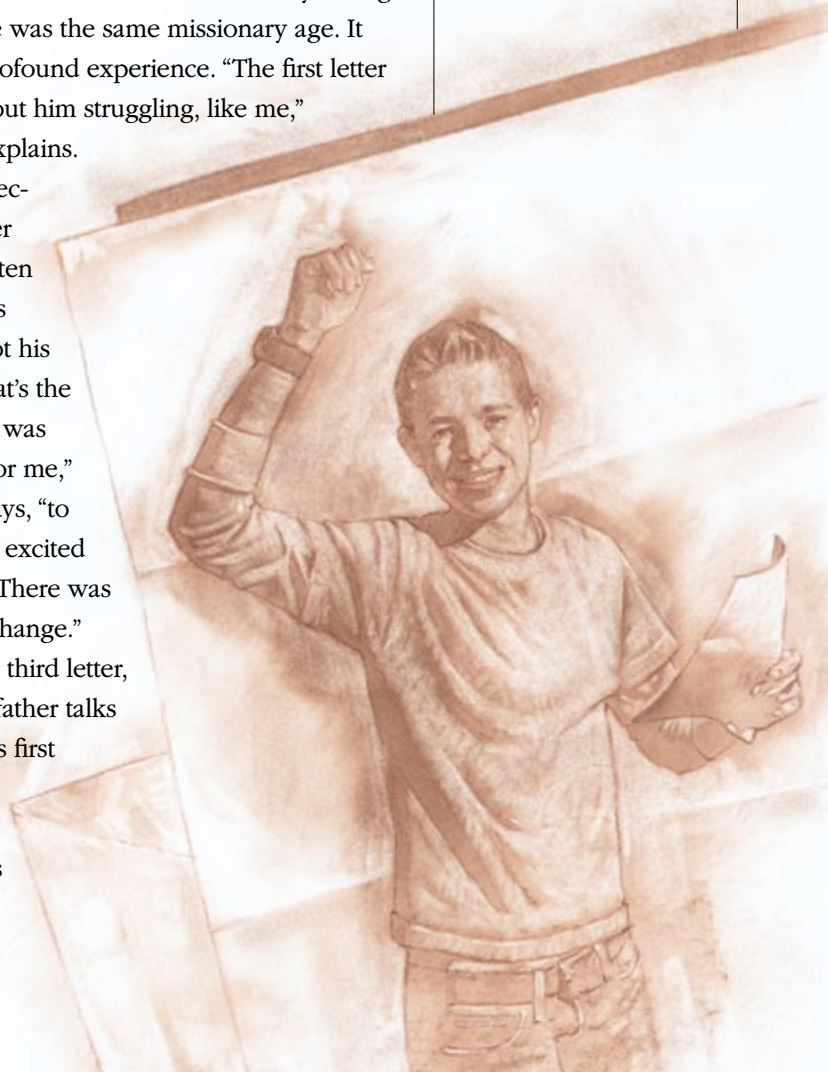
They were an answer to Brody’s prayer. Reading them was like being able to sit down and visit with his own father years ago when he was the same missionary age. It was a profound experience. “The first letter talks about him struggling, like me,”

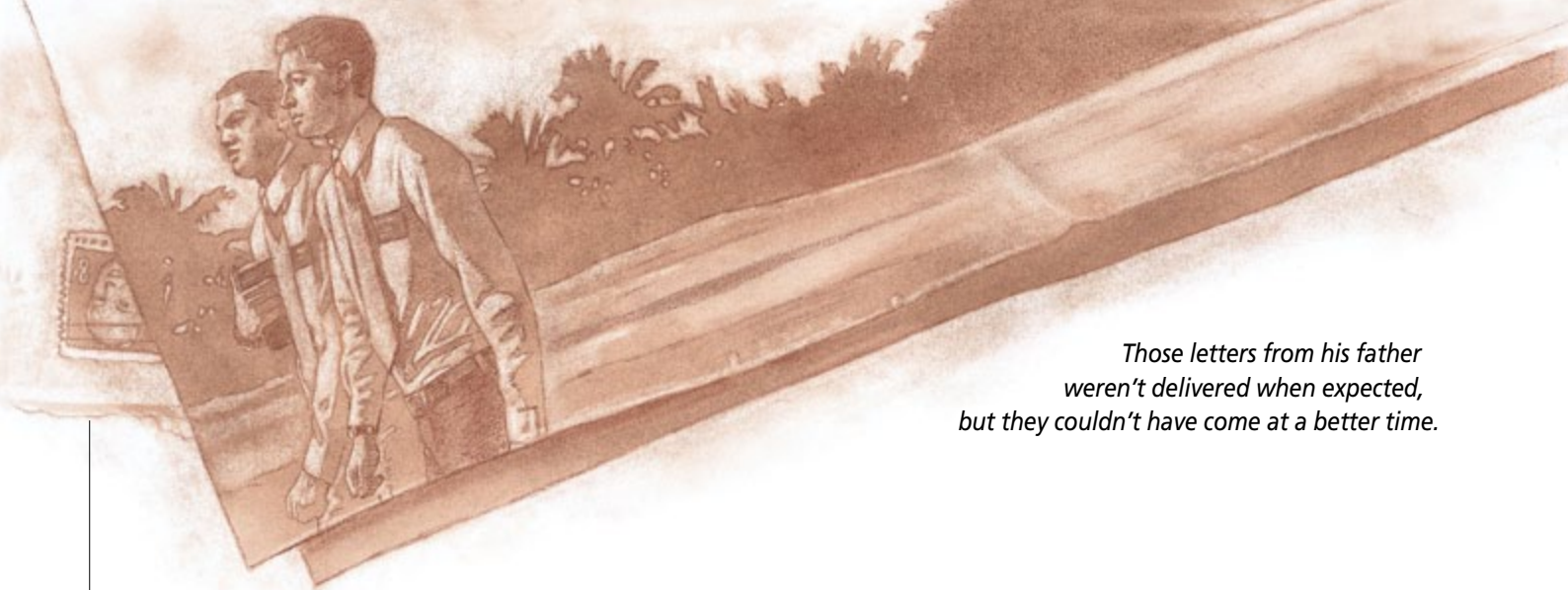
Brody explains.

The second letter was written when his father got his call. “That’s the one that was crucial for me,” Brody says, “to see how excited he was. There was a great change.”

In the third letter, Brody’s father talks about his first area and his struggles learning

Thirty years ago three letters were lost. But they were eventually found—at just the right time.





Those letters from his father weren't delivered when expected, but they couldn't have come at a better time.

how to teach the gospel. Brody learned another lesson: “The harder you work for something, the more rewarding it’s going to be. His decision was hard for him. The letter shows he’s glad he went.”

Brody’s parents saw how amazing the letters were. Brother Hansen realized that at the time he wrote them, he thought he was writing to his friend. But, as it turns out, he was really writing to his own son who would experience similar feelings and doubts 30 years down the road. “As an adult, I hadn’t been able to share those feelings in the same way,” his father says. “Brody needed to read about those feelings in writing from a 19-year-old’s perspective.”

What about Brody’s concern about his shyness and his gospel knowledge? The Lord helped him with those too. “At the Missionary Training Center, my teachers and my branch president reassured me that overcoming shyness and gaining gospel knowledge were things I could work on,” he recalls.

When Brody spoke in sacrament meeting before leaving on his mission, he says it was the first time he teared up at church. “My parents were pretty excited to hear me talk that much.”

The Call Accepted

Elder Hansen was called to the Switzerland Geneva Mission. He knows Heavenly Father answered his prayers. Those letters from his father weren’t delivered when expected, but they couldn’t have come at a better time. “The coolest part is the timing,” he says. “What can’t be explained is why those letters

sat untouched in the mission home for all those years. I already know that God loves me, but this strengthened my testimony that He wants me to know I’m doing the right thing,” Brody says.

To others who may be struggling with the decision to serve a mission, Brody says, “Really pray about it. Be specific with the Lord. I hadn’t really done that before, and when I did, I got a specific answer.”

The answer may not come in the form of 30-year-old letters. “But the Lord will help you,” Elder Hansen explains. And he knows from experience. **NE**

