

By Elizabeth S. Stiles

The very first Sunday I attended church with the full-time missionaries, I recognized people I had grown up with and knew from the community. One of my best friends from middle school, whom I admired and who often invited me to attend dances at her church, was surprised to see me in the chapel. I was equally surprised to find that she was a Mormon.

The elementary and high school secretaries from my schools both turned out to be members of the Church too. I thought it was cool that of all the students they dealt with every day, they still remembered me. A girl that I had not been exceptionally nice to throughout our childhood was there, also. She was friendly and welcoming to me. I ran into a young man on whom I had had a crush in my early teen years as well.

Each individual that I knew before coming to church that first time had a lasting impact on me. My best friend was a young woman of great integrity. I always admired her values and was invited to follow them with her, though I never felt I was capable of following her good example. She had always been open and inviting to me. Because of her attitude, I chose to continue to investigate the Church.

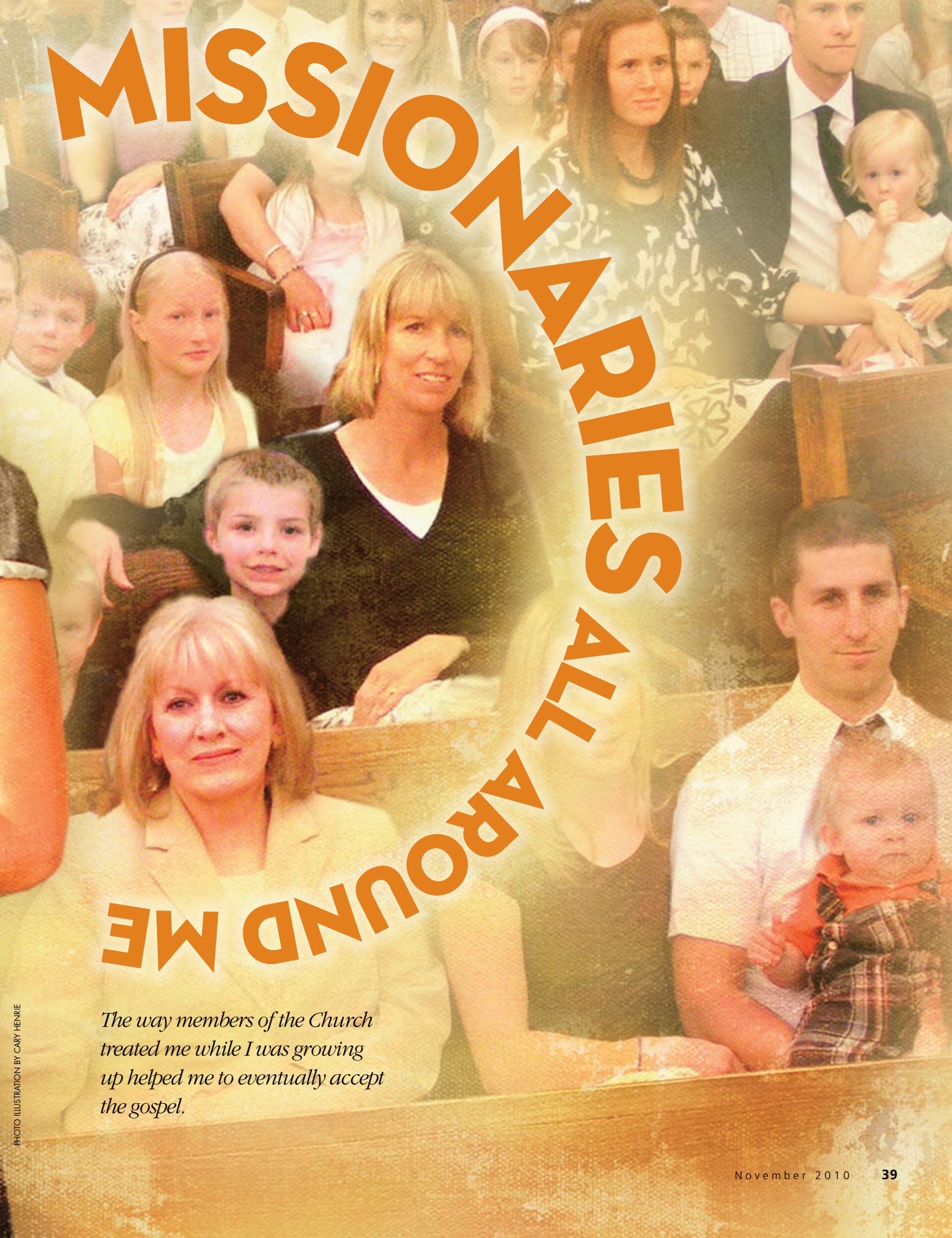
The secretaries who remembered me helped me to know that I am important. I learned that I am a daughter of God and that He knows me personally and loves me.

I learned about godly love and charity from the young woman who embraced me despite my less-than-kind behavior toward her in the past. She extended fellowship as I learned about the Church. Forgiveness was a byproduct of her Christ-like love.

My early teenage crush brought back memories of years of my calling him, writing him, and asking him out, while he always turned down these hasty invitations. He was such a good person. I recognized his light and wanted to bask in it.

These experiences helped me to learn that, even before my first exposure to the missionaries, Heavenly Father had prepared me to receive the gospel through the people He placed around me. I have learned to not be afraid to keep inviting someone to church. I have learned that every human being is a child of God and deserves my attention. I have learned that even the seemingly unlovable have a place prepared at Heavenly Father's feet. I have learned not to waste opportunities to invite someone to church. I have learned that missionary work starts with me. **NE**





MISSIONARIES ALL AROUND ME

The way members of the Church treated me while I was growing up helped me to eventually accept the gospel.