

FOUR GENERATIONS STRONG

One hundred descendants have been blessed by the conversion of one family in Peru.

By Robert D. Boyce

It was a mercilessly hot day in Callao, Peru, where my missionary companion, Elder Jerry D. Stevenson, and I had been knocking on doors for days with no discernible results. It was my turn to knock on the next door, and a pleasant, middle-aged woman answered.

“Good afternoon, ma’am,” I said, using the rudimentary Spanish I knew at the time. “We’re missionaries from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and we have a message for you. May we come in?”

“I’m busy. Please come another time.”

Right then I was blessed: out of my mouth came something spontaneous, something I was not until then capable of saying. “You’re Christian, right?”

“Yes, of course.”

“Our message is about Christ. Don’t you have 10 minutes for our Lord?”

A long pause. “Well, yes, I do. I do have 10 minutes for my Savior. In fact, I’m quite concerned about our oldest son. He’s 17 and beginning to make some bad choices. Maybe you can help us with him.”

Another blessing: I understood what she said.

Elder Stevenson took over from there, and the Hooker family joined the Church in February of 1963—the father, Alberto; the mother, Isabel; and the three children old enough to be baptized.

Some 45 years later I was in Salt Lake City for a mission reunion. I had with me an advertisement for a tour of Peru. The travel agent associated with the tour was named Estefani Hooker. Could she be related?



The travel agency was in the area, and I had some free time one afternoon, so I decided to go by to find out. After we were introduced, the conversation went something like this:

“Ms. Hooker, do you happen to be from Peru?”

“Yes.”

“From Callao?”

“Why, yes.”

“Was your family baptized in the early 1960s?”

“Yes!” Her eyes were getting brighter with every question.

“I think I may have been one of the missionaries who taught and baptized—let’s see, would it have been your grandparents?”

“Who was your companion?” she asked.

“Elder Stevenson.”

“My father has been looking for him for years now, and here, out of the blue, his companion walks through that door! Do you even realize how happy this will make him when he finds out?”

I learned that Estefani’s father, Cesar H. Hooker, just two years old

when his parents joined the Church, had served a mission, was married in the Los Angeles California Temple, had served as mission president, and was now an Area Seventy. Estefani further told me that there were now nearly 100 Hooker descendants, all but a handful active in the Church, with the majority still living in Peru.

Following this meeting, I received tender expressions of gratitude from the Hooker family via email and during a particularly sweet phone call from Grandma Hooker, still healthy and vibrant at 88.

April 2008 general conference found both Elder Hooker and me in Salt Lake City. We met in person for the first time since he was a toddler, along with two of his daughters, their husbands, Elder Stevenson, his wife, and our youngest daughter, who was a student in the area. We ate, chatted, reminisced, caught up, and took pictures.

Then Elder Hooker asked for our attention and said these inspiring words:

“While growing up, my mother had us pray daily, by name, for you, our missionaries, expressing our deep gratitude and asking the Lord to bless you. My daughters and the rest of my mother’s grandchildren all know the names of the missionaries who found our family; and they also pray for you, every day.”

Elder Hooker’s daughters were nodding enthusiastically in agreement.

He continued: “Now, some of my mother’s grandchildren have children; they too are being taught who their family’s missionaries are. They too are praying for you. So you see, my beloved brethren, you are being blessed by not one, not two, not three, but four generations of prayers on your behalf, for the sacrifices you made in performing this tremendous service to our family. We thank you again, with our whole soul.”

He concluded: “When I was a mission president I would recount this to every new group of missionaries and end by saying that they are not only serving those they meet but also the generations that follow, and that blessings will be called down from heaven on them for generations to come, if they will serve a good mission.”

What joy that brought me! I scarce can take it in. (See Alma 29:9.) ■

The author has passed away since writing this article.