

# A LONG Shot

**By Jessica Larsen**

(Based on a true story)

Utah, USA, 1954

“What’s up, Coach?” DeLyle said. “Come in,” Coach Gardener said. “Sit down.”

DeLyle Condie walked into his coach’s office and pulled up a chair. He held his red basketball jersey in his hands. It was almost time for practice.

“I hear you’re going on a mission,” Coach said. “Let me show you something.” He turned on the projector.

DeLyle blinked in surprise. Coach often showed films of other teams playing. But these were pictures of palm trees and beaches.

“This is Hawaii,” Coach said. “The team’s going there next year. You’re going to miss it.”

“I know. But I’ve already decided,” DeLyle said. “A mission is the right thing to do.”

*When Elder Condie gave up basketball to go on a mission, he didn’t know if he would ever play again.*

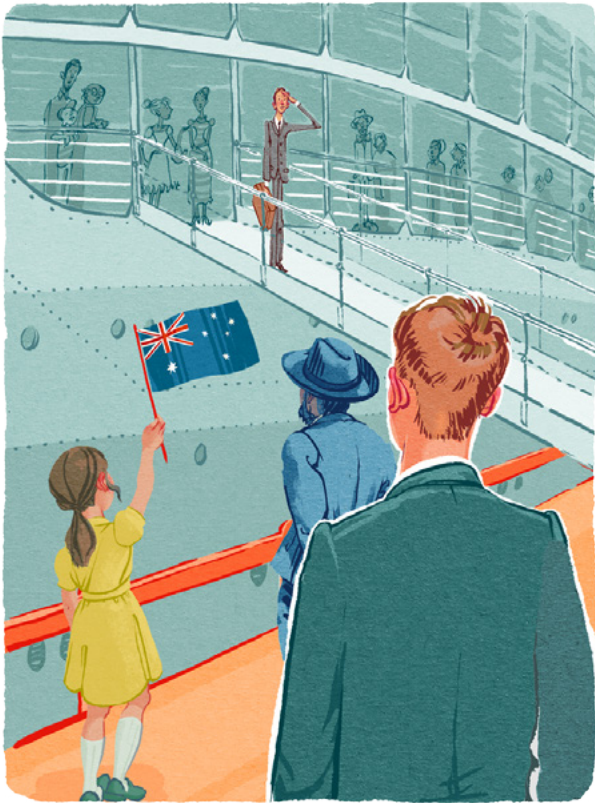
“Suit yourself,” Coach said. “But if you go, I don’t think you’ll ever play basketball again.”

DeLyle looked at his jersey. “I love basketball,” he said, “but some things are more important.”

“Good luck, then,” Coach sighed. “Now get to practice. You’re not a missionary yet!”

A few months later, Elder DeLyle Condie got on a ship in San Francisco, California, USA. It was 1955, and missionaries often traveled by boat back then. Three weeks later the ship arrived in Sydney, Australia. There, Elder Condie took an overnight train to Melbourne. Two elders were waiting for him.

“Wow! You’re a tall one!” Elder Johnson said. “You’d have been a great Mormon Yankee!”



“What’s that?” Elder Condie asked.

“More like what was that,” Elder Johnson said.

“Missionary teams used to play in local basketball leagues. It was a way to help people get to know about the Church. One of the teams was called the Yankees. But we don’t do it anymore.”

“That’s OK,” Elder Condie said. “That’s not why I came on a mission.”

“Well, let’s get to the office,” Elder Johnson said. “It’s time to meet President Bingham, our mission president.”

President Bingham assigned Elder Condie to Tasmania, an island near Australia’s southern coast. There weren’t many Latter-day Saints there. In fact, in all of Australia, there were only about 1,200 Church members.

Elder Condie soon met lots of friendly Australians. But most weren’t interested in discussing the gospel. What they did want to talk about was the Olympics.

“Why are so many people interested in the Olympics?” Elder Condie asked.

His companion grinned. “The games are coming to Melbourne next year,” he said. “It’s a chance to put Australia on the map. Besides, lots of people are sports crazy already. I think that’s why the Mormon Yankees were so popular. I wonder if they’ll ever do that again.”

At the same time, 200 miles away in Melbourne, two men were discussing exactly that.

The coach of the Australian Olympic basketball team sat across the desk from President Bingham. “We need your help,” he said. “I know you used to have teams called Mormon Yankees. Some of your missionaries were pretty good. With the Olympics coming, it’s a long shot that Australia will win any games. We need to practice against players with talent and experience. Some friendly practice games will help people know more about your church, and they will help us get ready for the Olympics. Can you put a Mormon Yankees team together one more time?”

After the meeting, President Bingham found one of his assistants. “Bring Elder Condie back to Melbourne,” he said. “Missionaries will still be missionaries. But we’re going to help Australia prepare for the Olympics. And I’ll need Elder Condie to help choose a team.” ♦

*To be continued . . .*

The author lives in Texas, USA.

