

Courage to Live the Gospel



**From an interview with
Elder Erich W.
Kopischke of the
Seventy, serving as
First Counselor in the
Europe Area
Presidency;
by Hilary M. Hendricks**

Be not afraid, . . . for the Lord thy God is with thee (Joshua 1:9).

My father, Kurt, was a young boy in Poland during World War II. Often he felt hungry, cold, and frightened. Then something wonderful happened. His 10-year-old friend Otto Dreger invited him to go to Sunday School with members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In Sunday School, Kurt and Otto learned they were children of God. They sang songs. They learned to pray. Kurt loved the way he felt when he went to church: peaceful and

happy. He asked his parents and his sister to go with him. Before long my father and his family were baptized. The gospel of Jesus Christ helped them feel brave through difficult times.

My father was very bright, and he wanted to study at a university. At that time the government where he lived chose who could attend universities and who could not. The government did not want people to



believe in God. Dad was told that he could attend the university only if he would stop belonging to the Church and talking about Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

My father knew he could not give up his faith. Instead, he and my mother, Helga, decided to leave their home. They boarded a train for West Germany, praying that they would be allowed to enter that country. At the border the police officers checking the trains did not check the compartment where my parents were riding. So they were able to begin a new life in a country where they could worship God. Two months later I was born.

Like my parents, I needed courage to live the gospel. I spent one year as a soldier in the German army. Most of the soldiers used bad language, smoked, and did other things I knew I should not do. Sometimes I felt alone, but I always tried to keep Heavenly Father's standards. My officers respected my commitment and allowed me time off to participate in Church activities.

On the last night of a soldier's service, the soldier and his friends would drink a lot of alcohol and have a rowdy party. I thought and prayed about what I should do when my last night came. When it did, I told the group of soldiers serving with me, "Let's do something that has never been done before." We dressed in our

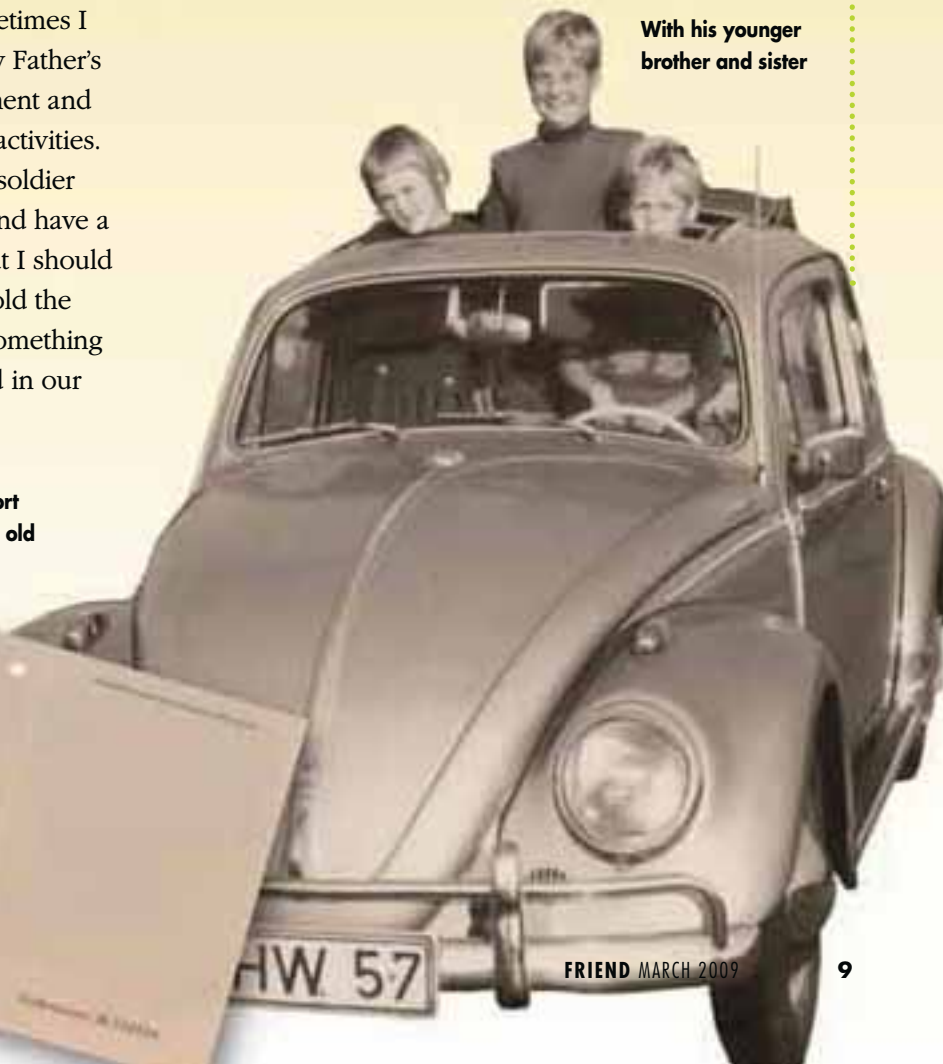


At age 10

best suits and went to say a quiet good-bye to our army leaders. Our major couldn't believe it. I felt that Heavenly Father had guided me to find an answer to my problem. Looking back, I can see that the greatest blessings in my life have come by following the counsel of prophets and keeping God's commandments.

Sometimes your friends may want you to do things you know are not right. Never forget your promise to live Heavenly Father's standards. As you try to follow His commandments, He will bless you to know what to say and do. He will help you not to feel afraid. Like my father's friend Otto, you can share with your friends what you know about Heavenly Father and the ways you feel His love. Your courage to do what is right will make a difference! ●

With his younger brother and sister



Elder Kopischke's passport when he was four years old

