

A SHIELD OF PROTECTION

“I know the power that comes from associations in the seminary and institute programs. . . . It will put a shield of protection around you to keep you free from the temptations and trials of the world.”

Elder L. Tom Perry of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “What a Way to Grow,” *New Era*, Aug. 1998, 7.



Walking the **Extra Mile**

BY PAUL VANDENBERGHE
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When Stein Arthur Andersen was about 15 years old, he wasn't active in the Church. Neither was his family. They had moved several times to different areas of Norway. This time they were living in Stavanger.

It's the fourth-largest city in the country and is located on the southwest coast.

Stein had been to church in Stavanger a few times and had met some of the other Latter-day Saint youth in the area. One young man in particular left Stein with a pretty strong impression—his name was Tor Lasse Bjerga.

It was during one of those infrequent visits to church that Stein met Tor Lasse. "He was a couple of years older than I was, and he really impressed me," says Stein. "I felt a good spirit when I was around him, and I thought he was a cool guy." Had Stein not been impressed with Tor Lasse, he may not have been willing to listen to him when Tor Lasse made the trip out to Stein's home with a special invitation.

That invitation came in the mid-1970s, when the seminary program was introduced to Norway, and Tor Lasse had been called as the first seminary teacher. Since he was only 18 years old at the time, Tor Lasse was a little nervous taking on such a big responsibility. "I prayed about it quite a bit," he remembers. One thing he knew for sure was

that he wanted to reach out to the youth in his area who were less-active. Tor Lasse says, "I could feel right away that I should go visit Stein Arthur."

"I was probably one of the names on a list," says Stein. But to Tor Lasse, Stein was much more than just a name on a list. Tor Lasse remembers being impressed with Stein's intelligence and his quiet and determined character. So Tor Lasse decided to make a personal visit to invite Stein to take part in the new seminary program.

Tor Lasse telephoned ahead and talked with Stein's parents to make sure he would be home for the visit. To get to Stein's home, Tor Lasse had to take a bus ride of about 35 minutes to get to a ferry. Then he took a 45-minute ferry ride. Finally, he had to walk another 30 minutes. "I think about this all the time," says Stein.

"What Tor Lasse did was really going the extra mile."

Both men still remember well the spirit they felt during that meeting nearly 35 years ago. As they sat in the dining room, Stein's mind was going over all the things he was involved with. "I was very occupied with football and Scouting and playing my trumpet, and I was doing all kinds of things. I was very busy."

"Tor Lasse turned to me as he talked about seminary, and he said, 'Stein Arthur, would you sign up for the seminary program and start studying the scriptures with us?' I was sitting by the fireplace, and I said yes. By all logical thinking, I should have turned him down because I didn't have time. But I said yes. And that started the whole thing."

*Sometimes
putting forth
a little effort
produces great
things.*

The “whole thing” included getting up every morning to study the scriptures and his seminary lessons on his own at home. Then the small group of four or five students would meet together each week. “Gradually I started to feel the Spirit those early mornings, reading by myself, and I got up every morning,” Stein says. “After a while I felt like the day wouldn’t be what it could be if I didn’t study in the morning. And I started to gain a testimony without even knowing that I was.”

Stein explains that “after a while I understood what those feelings were. I felt good about what I was learning, and I felt the Spirit. I felt that this was right. And I knew that this was something I wanted to build my life on.”

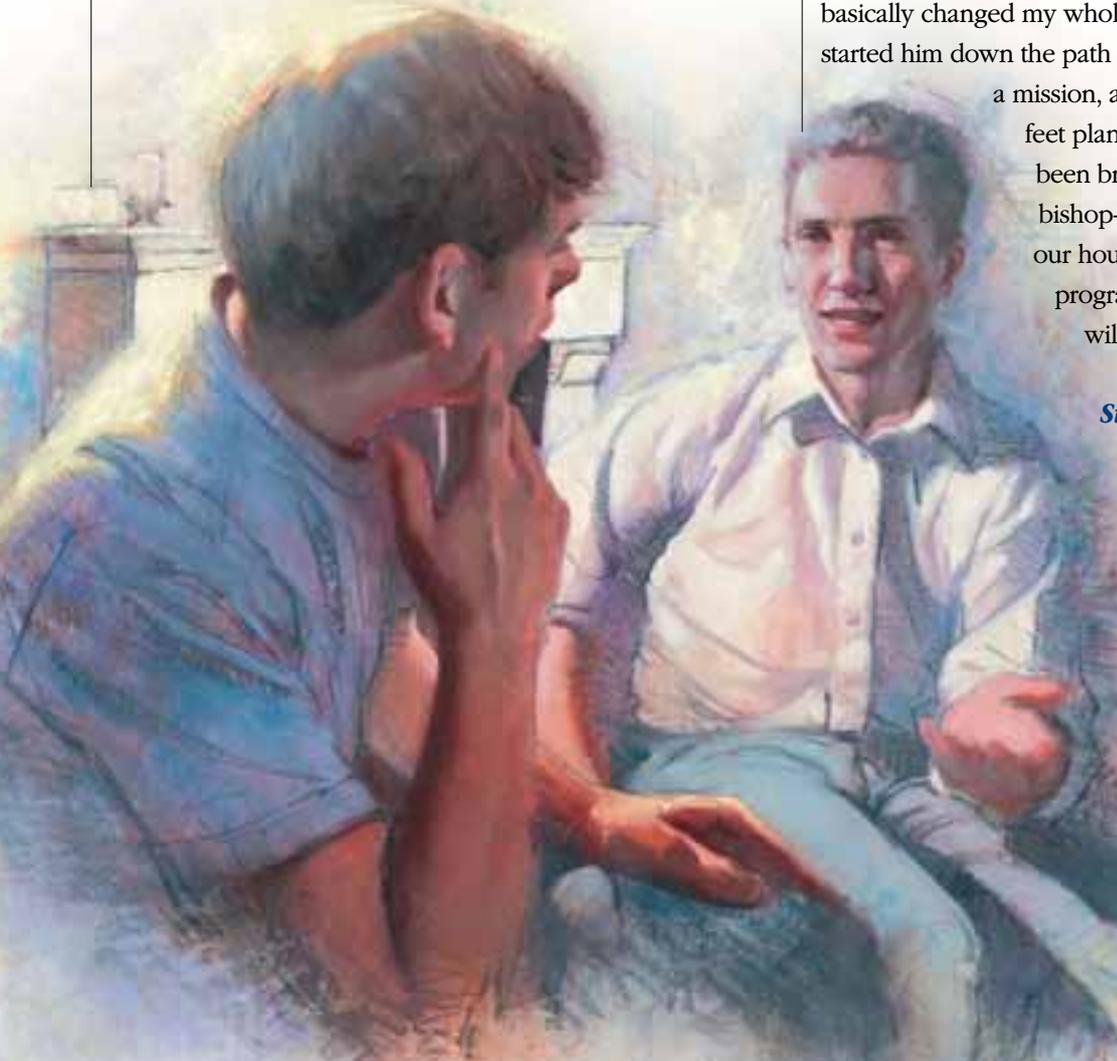
But why did Stein say yes when he had felt so busy? “I think the Holy Ghost’s influence worked on me,” he says. “I must have been prepared somehow. So when Tor Lasse came in faith, he came the extra mile, and I was ready to receive his invitation. That’s the way the Lord works.”

About a year or so later, Tor Lasse decided to go on a mission and was called to serve in Norway. During that time Stein continued to strengthen his own testimony of the gospel. “When Tor came back from his mission, that really started me thinking about a mission too,” says Stein. “I came to the conclusion that I should go because I wanted to serve the Lord, and I thought if I didn’t go, I might regret it for the rest of my life.”

Stein remembers that after talking with his priesthood leaders about going on a mission, he felt as if his feet were hardly touching the ground as he walked home. Before he left on his mission (also to Norway), Stein met his future wife, Hilde, at a youth conference in Oslo. They wrote to each other during his mission, and after he returned home, they were married. Now they have four children: two sons, who have both married in the temple, and two younger daughters, who are still at home and are active in seminary.

“That night when Tor Lasse came to our house—that basically changed my whole life,” says Stein. That visit started him down the path where he met his wife, served a mission, and started a family, all with his feet planted firmly on gospel soil. “I have been branch president, district president, bishop—all because Tor Lasse came to our house and I started the seminary program.” All because Tor Lasse was willing to walk the extra mile. **NE**

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Ida Andersen (right) with her sister, Ane, and her parents, Hilde and Stein.

I RAISED MY HAND

What would you do if your teacher at school started teaching things about the Church that weren't true? Stein Andersen's youngest daughter, Ida, was faced with this very situation. Ida's teacher had mentioned the Mormons on several occasions, teaching that they practiced polygamy. Since Ida didn't know what to say at the time, she didn't do anything. But when her teacher started to give incorrect information about the Church again, Ida knew she had to do something.

"I raised my hand and told her that what she was saying was wrong," says Ida. "I said that I was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My teacher persisted, saying that

in Utah the Mormons did have several wives. I explained to her that there were some groups in the U.S. who practiced polygamy but that these groups were not part of the Church.

"The next day this teacher stopped me in the hall and said that she was very impressed with what I had said. She apologized for saying things that were wrong about the Church. She said that she didn't really know much about the Church but wanted to know more and she was sure there were many of the students in my class who would also like to know more. That's when she asked me to make a presentation about the Church for my class.

"Four days later I gave a presentation to my class. I was very nervous. I had never talked a lot about the Church in school, except to my closest friends. Most of the people in my class knew I was a member of the Church, but that was about all they

knew. I thought and prayed a lot about what I should say. I even had my father give me a blessing to help me.

"My teacher let the class know I would be talking about the Church. When I stood up, everyone was quiet. I started off, and all my classmates were taking notes. I talked for about 30 minutes. I told about the Church today, about the Restoration, the plan of salvation, missionaries, and Church standards. Then my classmates asked a lot of questions. Before this I had always been nervous when people asked me questions about the Church because I didn't always know if I knew the correct answers. But this time I was not nervous, and I had no problem answering the questions.

"My classmates were very surprised. Everyone said they were proud of me for standing up for what I believe in."