

THE NewEra

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2004

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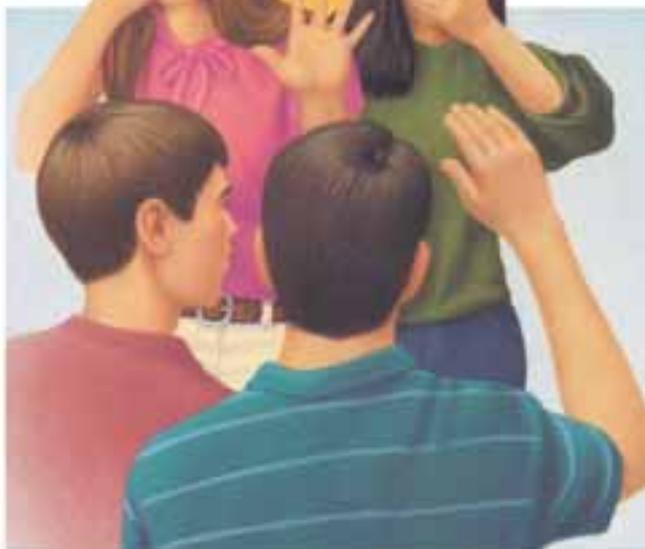
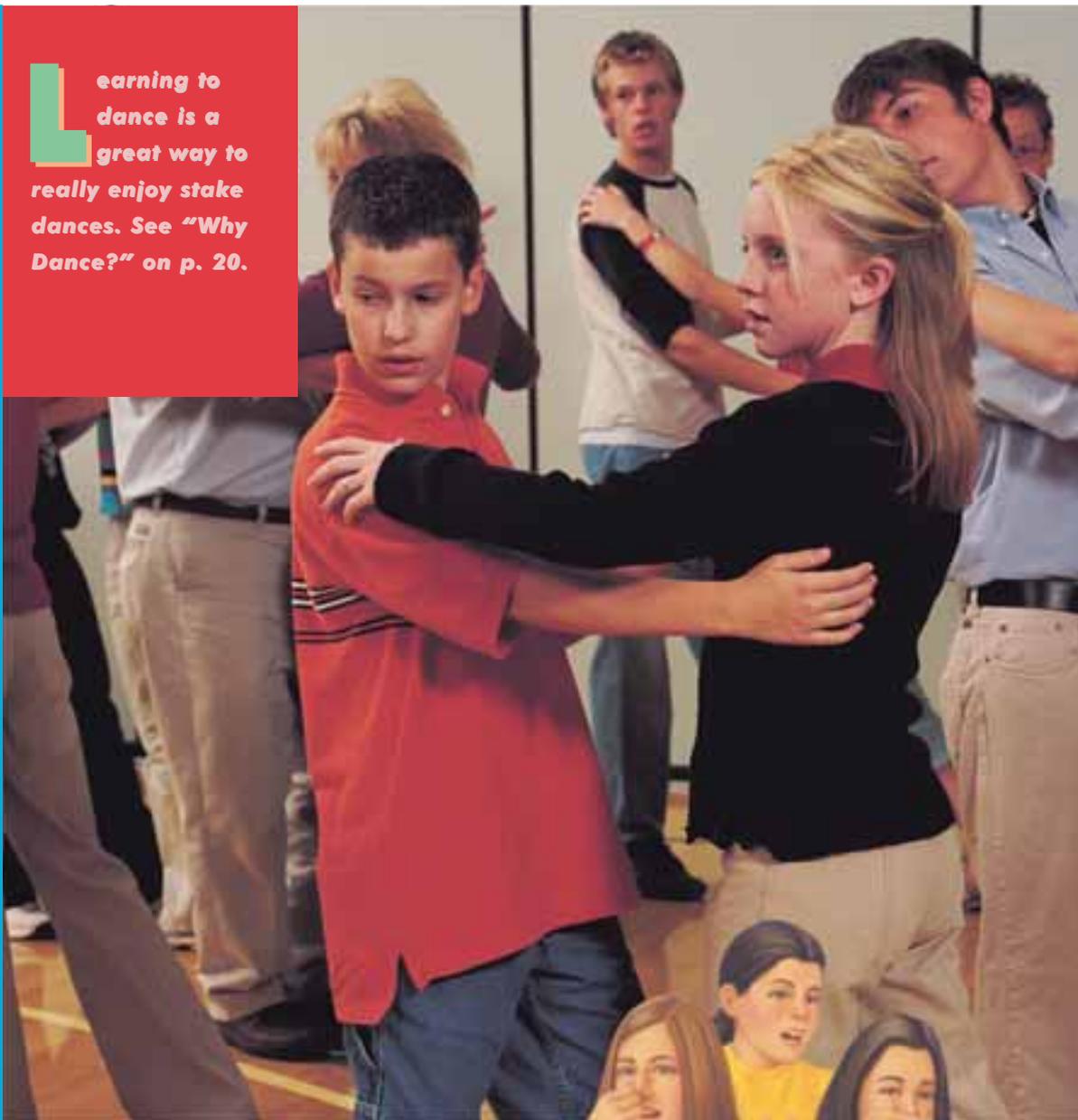
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teaching others how to
dance. See "Why Dance?"
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Welden C. Andersen
(front) and Christina
Smith (back)

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You need revelation, but in matters of great consequence it is not likely to come unless you want it urgently, faithfully, humbly.

REMEMBER HOW YOU FELT

BY ELDER JEFFREY R. HOLLAND
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The adversary tries to make us doubt or forget every answer to prayer. Moses shows us how to remember.

There is a lesson in the life of Moses that virtually everyone will experience one day. It is the sobering truth that before or after great spiritual moments, there can come adversity, opposition, and darkness. Life has some of those moments for us, as the adversary tries either to keep us from receiving revelation or to make us doubt the light we have received.

The book of Moses begins with him being taken up to “an exceedingly high mountain” where, the scripture says, “he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses” (Moses 1:1–2).

This experience is remarkable by every standard. It is one of the great revelations

given in human history. It stands with the greatest accounts we have of any prophet’s experience with divinity.

But Moses’ message to you today is: Don’t let your guard down. Don’t assume that a great revelation is the end of it. Remember, it isn’t over until it’s over. What happened to Moses *after* his revelatory moment would be ludicrous if it were not so dangerous and so absolutely true to form. In an effort to continue his opposition, Lucifer appeared saying, “Moses, worship me.”

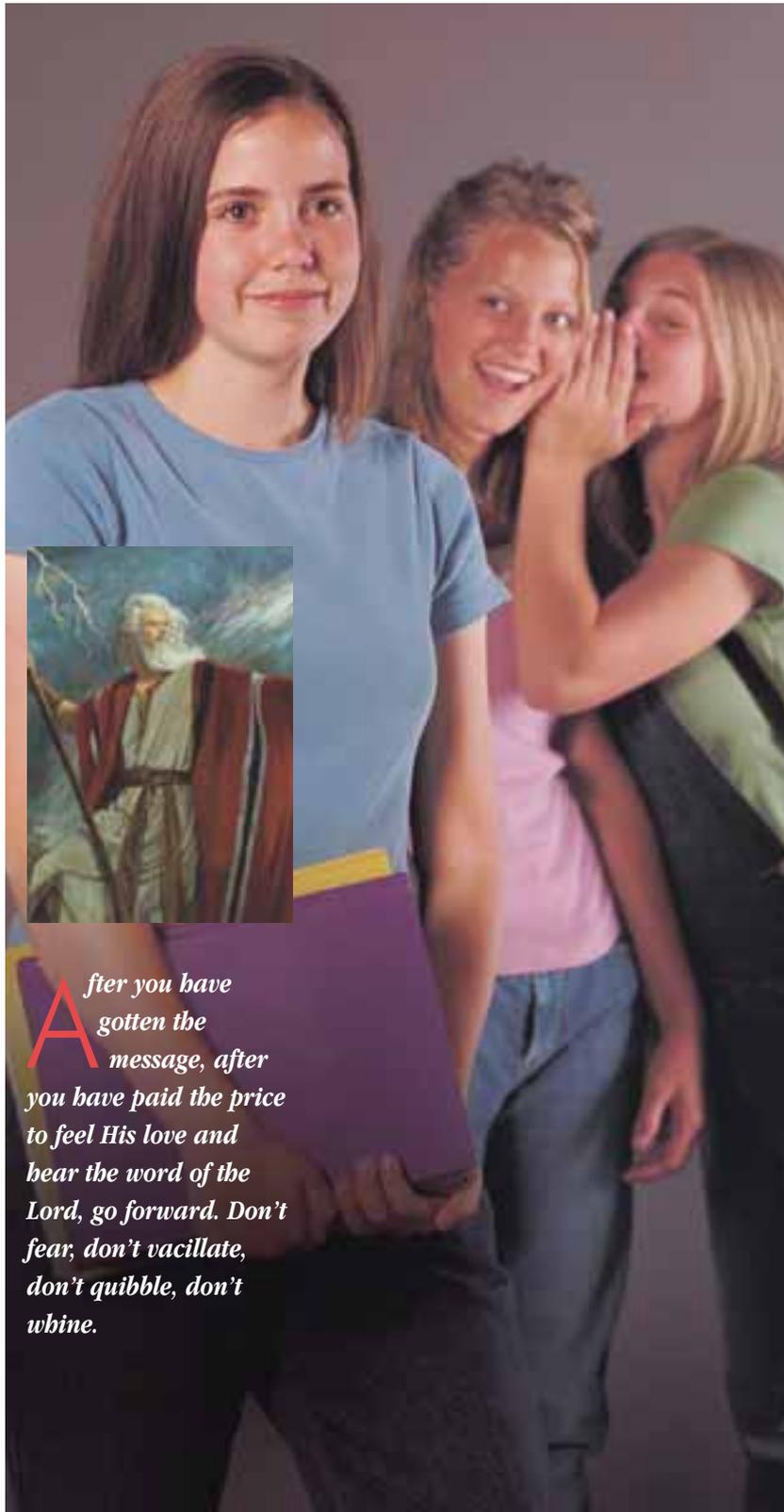
But Moses was not having it, and he rebuked him. “And now, when Moses had said these words, Satan cried with a loud voice, and ranted upon the earth, and commanded, saying: I am the Only Begotten, worship me.

“And it came to pass that Moses began to fear exceedingly; and as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell. Nevertheless, calling upon God, he received strength, and he commanded, saying: Depart from me, Satan, for this one God only will I worship, which is the God of glory.

“And now Satan began to tremble, and the earth shook. . . .

“And it came to pass that Satan cried with a loud voice, with weeping, and wailing, and





After you have gotten the message, after you have paid the price to feel His love and hear the word of the Lord, go forward. Don't fear, don't vacillate, don't quibble, don't whine.

gnashing of teeth; and he departed hence” (see Moses 1:12–22).

So Satan left, always to come again, we can be sure, but always to be defeated by the God of glory—always.

Don't Lose Confidence

I wish to encourage every one of you regarding opposition that so often comes after enlightened decisions have been made, after moments of revelation and conviction have given us a peace and an assurance we thought we would never lose.

Paul said to those who thought a new testimony, a personal conversion, or a spiritual experience would put them beyond trouble, “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35–36).

In LDS talk that is to say, “Sure it is tough. But don't draw back. Don't panic and retreat. Don't lose your confidence. Don't forget how you once felt. Don't distrust the experience you had.” That tenacity is what saved Moses when the adversary confronted him, and it is what will save you.

This opposition turns up almost anywhere something good has happened. It can happen when you are trying to get an education. It can hit you after your first month in your new mission field. It certainly happens in matters of love and marriage.

Yes, there are cautions and considerations to make, but once there has been genuine illumination, beware the temptation to retreat from a good thing. If it was right when you prayed about it and trusted it and

lived for it, it is right now. Don't give up when the pressure mounts. Face your doubts. Master your fears. "Cast not away therefore your confidence." Stay the course and see the beauty of life unfold for you.

Seek with Real Intent

To help us make our way through these experiences, let me draw from another scriptural reference to Moses. In Doctrine and Covenants section 8 the Lord defined revelation:

"I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

"Now, behold, *this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground*" (D&C 8:2-3; emphasis added).

Question: Why would the Lord use the example of crossing the Red Sea as the classic example of "the spirit of revelation"? Why didn't He use the First Vision? Or the example from the book of Moses we just used? Or the vision of the brother of Jared? Well, He could have used any of these, but He didn't. Here He had another purpose in mind.

First of all, revelation almost always comes in response to a question, usually an urgent question—not always, but usually. Moses' challenge was how to get himself and the children of Israel out of this horrible predicament they were in. There were chariots behind them, sand dunes on every side, and a lot of water immediately ahead. He needed information all right—what to do—but it wasn't a casual thing he was asking. In this case it was literally a matter of life and death.

You will need information, too, but in matters of great consequence it is not likely to come unless you want it urgently, faithfully, humbly. Moroni calls it seeking "with real intent" (Moroni 10:4). If you can seek that way, and stay in that mode, not much that the adversary can counter with will dissuade you from a righteous path.

The Red Sea will open to the honest seeker of

revelation. The adversary does have power to hedge up the way, to marshal Pharaoh's forces and dog our escape right to the water's edge, but he cannot conquer if we will it otherwise. That is lesson number one about crossing the Red Sea, your Red Seas, by the spirit of revelation.

Don't Turn Back

In the process of revelation and in making important decisions, fear almost always plays a destructive, sometimes paralyzing role.

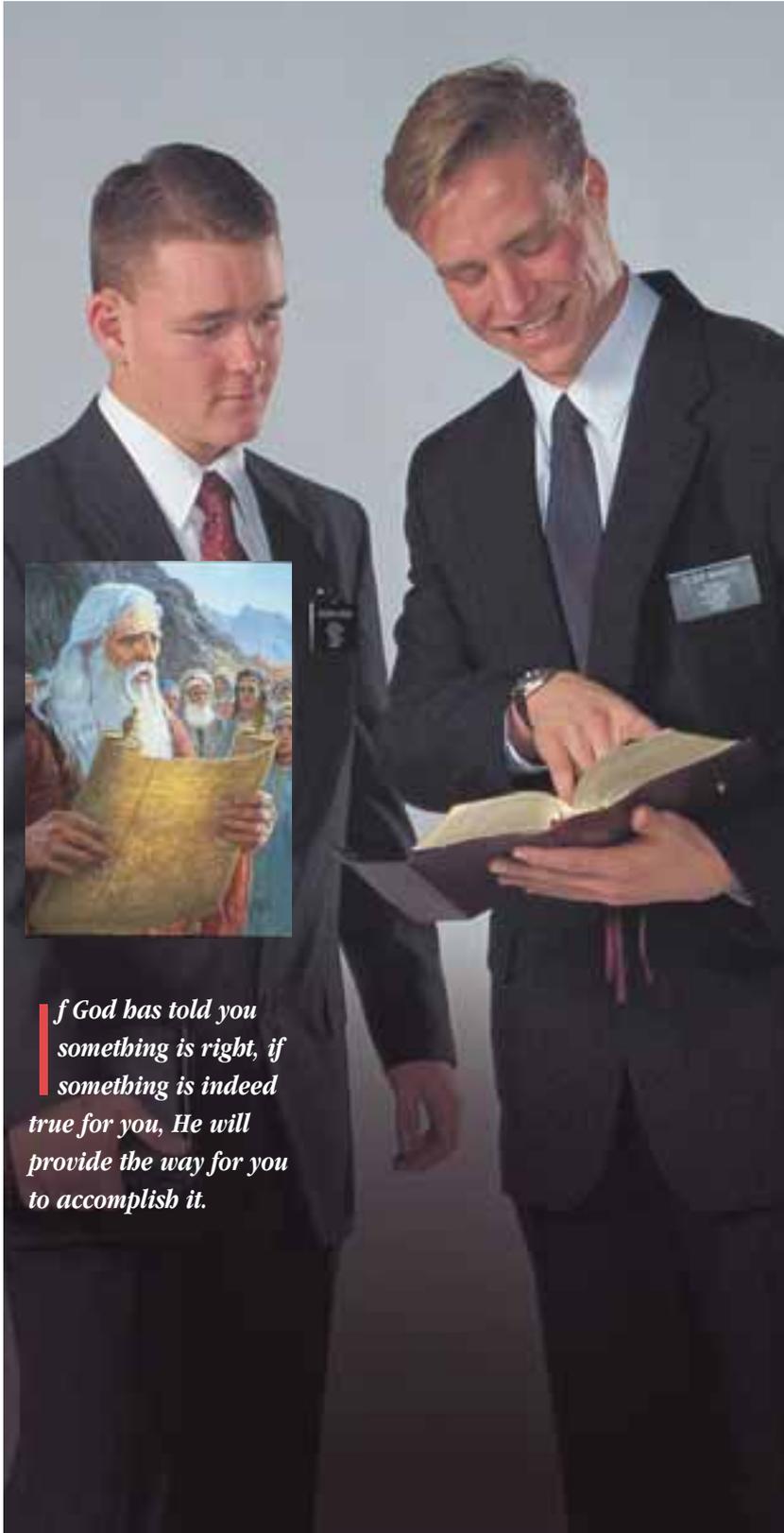
Did you catch the line in Moses' account from the Pearl of Great Price? For a moment in that confrontation, "Moses began to fear exceedingly; and as he began to fear, he saw the bitterness of hell" (Moses 1:20). That's when you see it—when you are afraid.

That is exactly the problem that beset the children of Israel at the edge of the Red Sea. That is lesson number two. It has everything to do with holding fast to earlier illumination. The record says, "And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid" (Exodus 14:10).

But what about that which had already happened? What about the miracles that got them there? How soon we forget. Of course our faith will be tested as we fight through self-doubts and second thoughts. Some days we will be miraculously led out of Egypt—seemingly free, seemingly on our way—only to come to yet another confrontation, like all that water lying before us. At those times we must resist the temptation to panic and to give up.

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. . . . The Lord shall fight for you" (Exodus 14:13-14).

Again, that is the second lesson of the spirit of revelation. After you have gotten the message, after you have paid the price to feel His love and hear the word of the Lord, go forward. Don't fear, don't vacillate, don't quibble, don't whine.



If God has told you something is right, if something is indeed true for you, He will provide the way for you to accomplish it.

He Will Provide a Way

The third lesson from the Lord's spirit of revelation in the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea is that, if God has told you something is right, if something is indeed true for you, He will provide the way for you to accomplish it. That is true of joining the Church. It is true of getting an education, of going on a mission or of getting married or of any of a hundred worthy tasks in your young lives.

I believe that in our own individual ways, God takes us to the grove or the mountain or the temple and there shows us the wonder of what His plan is for us. We may not see it as fully as Moses or Nephi or the brother of Jared did, but we see as much as we need to see in order to know the Lord's will for us and to know that He loves us beyond mortal comprehension. I also believe that the adversary and his pinched, calculating little minions try to oppose such experiences and then try to darken them after the fact. But with Paul, I say to all of you:

“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35–36; emphasis added).

I acknowledge the reality of opposition and adversity, but I bear witness of the God of Glory, of the redeeming Son of God, of light and hope and a bright future. I promise you that God lives and loves you, each one of you, and that He has set bounds and limits to the opposing powers of darkness. **NE**

From a March 1999 BYU devotional address.



My INSPIRED MISSION CALL

BY LINCOLN PIMENTEL MARTINS

As a Brazilian, I was surprised when I received my mission call to serve not in Brazil or even in South America but in the Texas Houston South Mission in the United States. My surprise soon turned to deep gratitude.

Four days after I arrived in my first area, the bishop of the local ward invited my companion and me to go with him to the hospital to visit Brother Noel Stevenson, an older member who was ill with leukemia. When I met Brother Stevenson, I was amazed that he started speaking Portuguese. He told me he had served a mission to Brazil in the 1950s. He mentioned several cities where he had served, including Ponta Grossa in the state of Paraná.

“When you were in Ponta Grossa did you know Raul Pimentel?” I asked hesitantly.

With an expression of joy, he replied, “Yes, I knew Raul. I baptized him.”

I told Brother Stevenson that Raul Pimentel was my grandfather, the first member of the Church in our family. We embraced, and tears rolled down our faces.

Then I told him that my grandfather was 84 and still

active in the Church. His 8 children were also active, all having married in the temple and 5 having served full-time missions. And his 30 grandchildren were active in the Church as well. As we talked, the Spirit of the Lord filled my heart with joy and gratitude.

My grandfather was baptized in 1958 by two American missionaries. He had heard that the other elder had now passed away, but he had never had any news about Elder Stevenson. When my grandfather learned that I had met the missionary who baptized him, he was overwhelmed with joy.

He and Brother Stevenson began exchanging e-mail messages almost every week. Then the e-mails stopped abruptly. I received a telephone call telling me that Brother Noel Stevenson had passed away.

Although I felt sad, I felt even more grateful that the Lord had allowed me to meet the man who brought the blessings of the gospel to my family. This experience helped me be a better missionary and strengthened my testimony that mission calls are inspired. **NE**

Lincoln Pimentel Martins is a member of the Lakeview Fourth Ward, Orem Utah Lakeview Stake.

Your Next Step

... from Young Women is into the arms of the Relief Society, where you will learn to become a woman of God through serving Him.

There is a wonderful place waiting for you after Young Women. It's a place where you can grow closer to your Father in Heaven. A place where you will learn to become more like the Savior through service. A place where you will make some of the best friends you could ever imagine, where you'll find sisters you never knew you had.

Relief Society is that place. "Relief Society is more than a class," says Sister Bonnie D. Parkin, Relief Society general president. It's where you will go to continue to learn how to become a woman of God.

"We have a prophet of God who loves the young women of the Church, and because he loves the young women so much, he wants to make sure that the Church is going to be part of their lives. The prophet knows what Relief Society can do for your life if you will just step forward," says Sister Parkin.

It's true that making the shift from Young Women to Relief Society can seem a little scary, but "that's just part of growing up," says Sister Susan W. Tanner, Young Women general president.

When Sister Tanner turned 18, she was excited to be a member of Relief Society, even though,

she says, "I felt a little between worlds. I think that's a very normal feeling. I didn't really feel like I fit in at first."

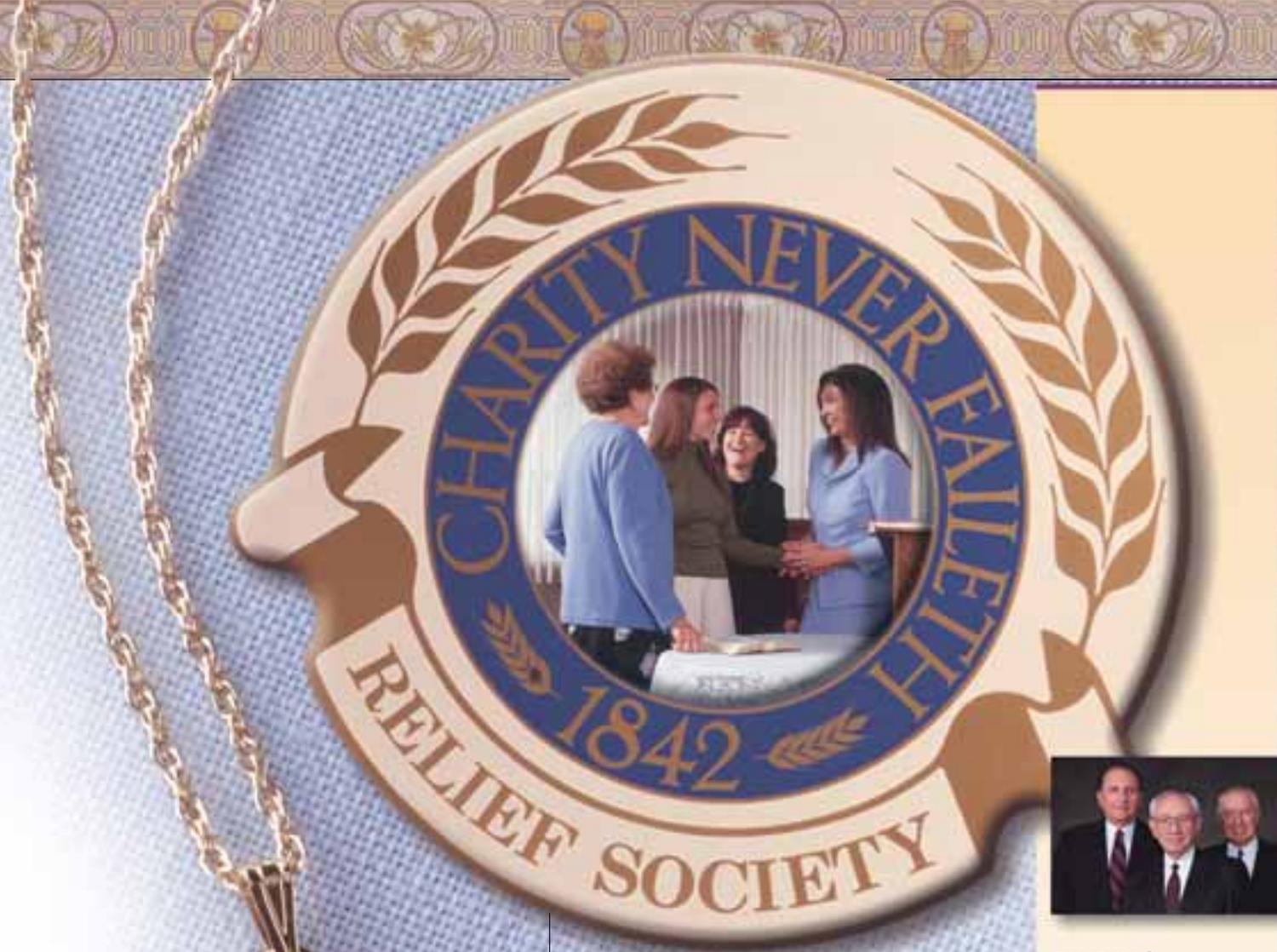
Feeling at home takes both sides working together. The Relief Society will welcome you in, and you can get to know and love the Relief Society sisters. "In the Church, there is no age barrier. We are all sisters," says Sister Tanner. "We just need to build this sisterhood."

And the most important thing about sisterhood? "True sisterhood is covenant keeping," says Sister Tanner. "The gospel unifies us. I hope we can feel the unity rather than the differences."

Keeping the covenants we made at baptism means strengthening and serving others. It means bearing "one another's burdens, that they may be light" and being "willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort" (Mosiah 18:8–10). What better place to learn to do that than in Relief Society? It's an organization set up by God, with the motto "Charity never faileth."

When you become a Relief Society sister, the knowledge you gained in Young Women will be added to, and you will learn more about being a covenant woman of God. "Womanhood in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints means active participation in





Relief Society,” says Sister Parkin.

When you take your next step forward and join the sisters of Relief Society, you will find women of God waiting with open arms to receive you (see “Welcome to Relief Society,”

Ensign, Aug. 2004, 14). “The Savior loved His disciples so much, and yet He knew He wasn’t always going to be with them. But He promised them, ‘I will not leave you comfortless’ (John 14:18),” says Sister Tanner. “I think of how much we love you young women. We’re not going to leave you comfortless. You’re not leaving friends behind. You will be in the arms of others who love you.”

Sister Parkin adds, “And when you feel the love of the Lord in your life, you will reach out to someone else, and the circle grows bigger and bigger. That’s always what happens.”

As you continue to keep your covenants and follow the Savior’s example, you will add your faith and goodness to the circle of sisterhood in Relief Society and do your part to make sure “charity never faileth.” **NE**

FINDING YOUR PLACE

“The transition from youth to womanhood is a defining time in the lives of young women. We desire that every young woman successfully make this transition and prepare for her future responsibilities as a faithful woman, wife, and mother, and in her opportunities to serve within the Church.”

—President Gordon B. Hinckley, President Thomas S. Monson, and President James E. Faust, *First Presidency letter*, 19 Mar. 2003.

A VOICE FOR Values

When Liriel couldn't talk about her values, her values spoke through the medallion she had earned for living them.

BY JEANNETTE N. OAKES

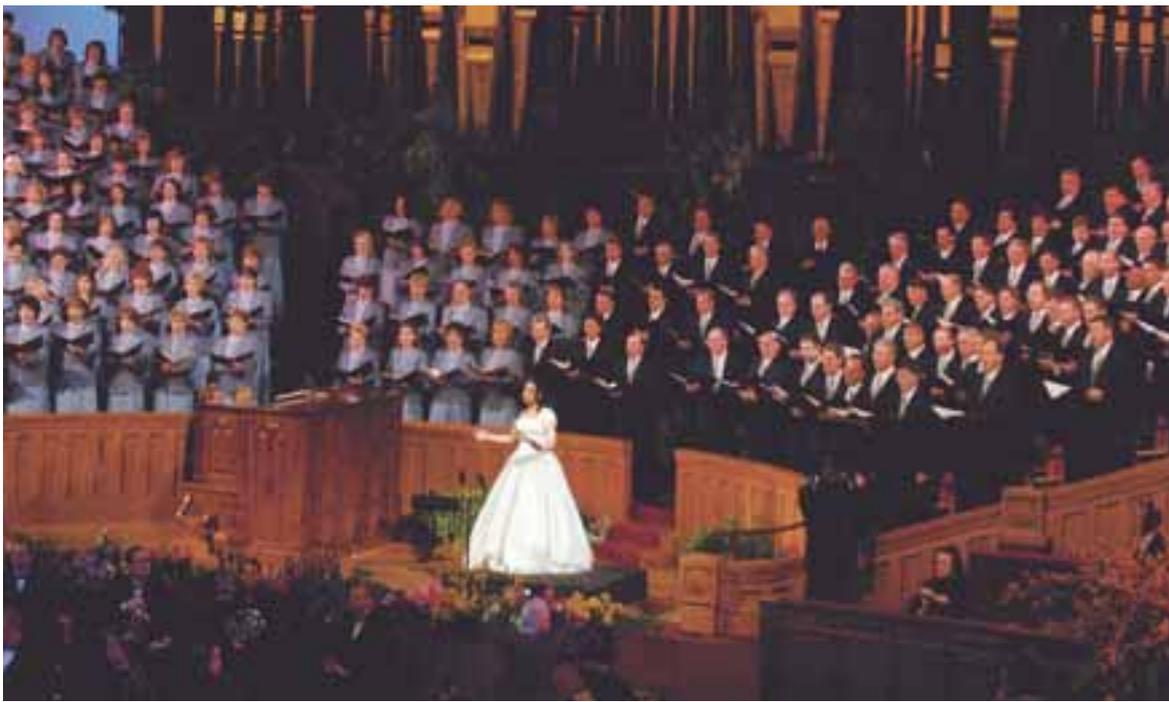
Raquel "Liriel" Domiciano was about to sing in front of millions of people. Was she worried about messing up? A little. Was she worried about what to wear?

Naturally. But what worried her most?

Only 19 at the time, Liriel, a member of the Church for five years, wanted to stand as a witness "of God at all times and in all things, and in all places" (Mosiah 18:9).

Liriel was about to perform in Brazil's largest televised talent competition, the *Raul Gil Amateur Show*.

She had been told she couldn't say anything about her religion. But she knew that many of Brazil's Latter-day Saints would be watching, and she wanted everyone to know she wasn't ashamed of the gospel. After praying in her room before her first performance, she looked up and saw her Young Women medallion. It was the answer she had been looking for.



Liriel wore her medallion during every level of the competition. Eventually she and her partner, tenor Rinaldo Viana, won the contest, signed a recording contract, and watched as their first CD became the second-highest classical best-seller in Brazil's history, with more than one million copies sold.

Almost overnight, Liriel and Rinaldo were a huge hit. But Liriel's success is based on years of preparation, during which she trained herself as a lyric soprano. She credits her participation in the Young Women program with preparing her for life.

Learning Spiritual Values

Liriel was baptized at age 14 after being introduced to the Church by her older sister, Patricia, who lived in another part of the country.

"She invited us to church while visiting home one time," Liriel says. "The people were spiritual and neatly dressed. They all had standards that I liked. I was very happy. I felt the power of the Holy Ghost working in my heart. I was hungry for the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Not long after their introduction to the Church, Liriel and her younger sister Priscila were baptized. Their mother later followed. Liriel and Priscila jumped wholeheartedly into the Young Women program.

"Lots of times we were in the same class, and we were very united," Liriel says. "We'd reach one Personal Progress goal and then talk about working toward our next goal."

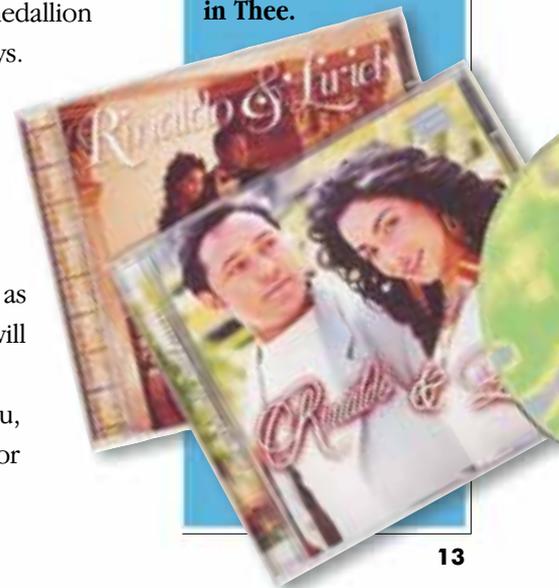
Before long, Liriel had earned the Young Womanhood Recognition—the medallion she would wear in front of millions. To her, the medallion represented her desire to follow the Savior.

"Earning my Young Women medallion was an accomplishment," she says.

"To me it means that I am spiritually prepared for temple marriage and a family."

She wishes all young women would earn a medallion. "It doesn't matter what age you are, as you look at your medallion you will always remember the goals you reached, what it represents to you, and the preparation it gave you for life," she says.

Liriel stands as a witness as she performs (above and opposite page). With the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, she sang in general conference (above, left). She was awarded the Troféu Imprensa (Brazilian Grammy) for her recent release, *I Believe in Thee*.





As Liriel (below) grew, she dreamed of singing. Now her greatest dream is that her family (right) will be together forever.



Wearing the medallion as she performed was her way of letting people know she was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and willing to stand as a witness, even in front of millions.

Lifelong Value

Since joining the Church, Liriel, now 22, has learned a lot about the Young Women values—especially faith.

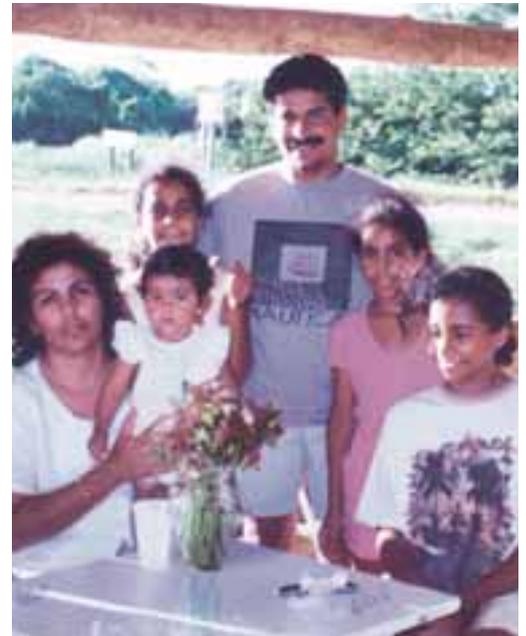
“Even when I was very small, I always read the scriptures,” she says. “I always wanted to know about God. I wanted to feel close to Him.”

As Liriel grew, her dream of becoming a singer took shape—but not as quickly as she would have liked, partly because of her family’s financial struggles. “I cried and I cried and I cried about this,” she says. “I was impatient. But a voice would come to my mind saying, ‘Be calm. It isn’t your time yet.’”

She continued to work toward her dream while working to help her family financially. It was a hard time. “God will try us, but all these things are for our growth,” she explains.

Through it all, Liriel has learned a lot—about herself and about her Heavenly Father. “I know Heavenly Father loves me,” she says. “As long as I am humble He will hear my prayers and will help me overcome my problems. I know that He hears our prayers, listens, and answers—not always as we would like, but I don’t have the least doubt that He does answer.”

She hopes her story inspires others and that she can be a good role model not only for Latter-day Saints, but also for young people all over Brazil. She’s off to a good start, having been featured on various Brazilian television shows.



Of Great Value

Liriel’s favorite scripture is Proverbs 31:10, 25–26, a scripture that has a lot to do with young women who live the Young Women theme:

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. . . .

“Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”

As each young woman comes “to accept and act upon [the Young Women] values,” her capabilities will also be of far greater value than rubies—whether she’s standing as a witness in front of millions or in the quiet of her own room—because she “will be prepared to strengthen home and family, make and keep sacred covenants, receive the ordinances of the temple, and enjoy the blessings of exaltation.”¹ **NE**

Jeannette N. Oakes is serving full time with her husband, George, in the Brazil South Area Office.

NOTE

1. Young Women theme, in *Young Women Personal Progress* (2001), 5.

preparing A LESSON

Have you ever been asked to teach or help with a lesson and then felt really nervous? Knowing how to prepare a lesson can help make teaching less scary (see D&C 38:30). Whether you're helping teach in seminary, church, or family home evening, these ideas can help you prepare.

Prepare Yourself

- Begin preparing early.
- Pray for guidance. The Spirit can help you prepare.

Study Your Topic

- Study the ideas presented in the lesson manual.
- Read what the scriptures and Church leaders say about the topic (see D&C 52:9).

Decide What to Teach

- Prayerfully decide what the people you're teaching need to learn. Sunbeams have different needs than priests.
- From the manual, choose two or three gospel principles to focus on.

Decide How to Teach

- Plan ways to involve everyone.
- Decide which teaching methods—like hymns, quotes, object lessons—will best help

your students understand the scriptures or gospel topic.

- Plan ways to relate the lesson to what the students are experiencing in their lives.

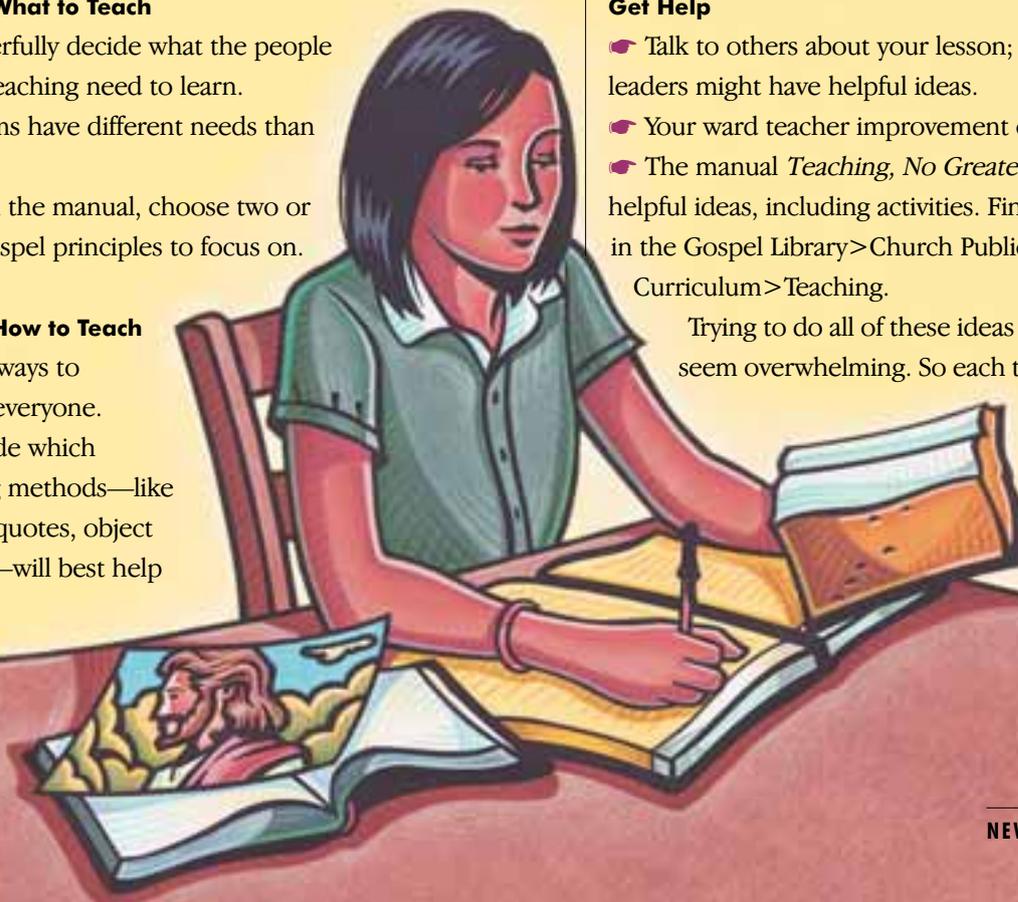
Organize Your Lesson

- Write an outline of your lesson. In what order will you teach the two or three gospel principles you have chosen from the manual?
- Decide when you will ask questions to stimulate thinking and participation.
- Plan when you will use other teaching methods (video clips, gospel art, writing activities, personal experiences, small-group discussions, etc.).
- Prepare to give the class some time during the lesson to decide how they will apply what they've learned.

Get Help

- Talk to others about your lesson; your parents or leaders might have helpful ideas.
- Your ward teacher improvement coordinator can help.
- The manual *Teaching, No Greater Call* has many helpful ideas, including activities. Find it at www.lds.org in the Gospel Library>Church Publications>Curriculum>Teaching.

Trying to do all of these ideas for one lesson can seem overwhelming. So each time you prepare to teach, choose just a few of these to work on. **NE**



Q & A

“My friend says he wants to be baptized, but I think he might be more interested in me than in the gospel. What should I do?”

NEW ERA

It is important to realize that there are two issues to consider here. The first is your friend’s interest in the Church and your responsibility to be a missionary. The second issue is deciding what your relationship should be—friendship or something more.

Your Missionary Responsibility

When we are faithful, God often brings people into our lives so we can bless them with the gospel. Missionary work is most effective when we have built relationships of trust. So our friends are more likely to listen to our message when they already trust us. However, it’s not uncommon for relationships to become confused when those involved share deep feelings.

Regardless of your friend’s motivation, you may be his only link to the Church. Make sure he is introduced to and accepted by as many other members as possible. By giving him

Heavenly Father often puts us in positions to teach others the gospel. Take pressure off yourself by introducing your friend to other Church members.

Church leaders have advised against serious relationships unless you’re old enough to consider marriage.

Tell your friend why your standards for relationships are important to you.

Seek guidance from your parents and Church leaders and from Heavenly Father through fasting and prayer.

more links to the Church than just his relationship with you, he will feel more comfortable with the Church and his developing testimony will be less dependent upon just you.

Your Relationship

Our leaders have been clear on dating standards. Those who are not yet 16 should not be dating, let alone considering a serious relationship. Older teens should avoid pairing off until they are old enough and mature enough for courtship that will lead to marriage. (For more information, see “Dating,” in *For the Strength of Youth* [2001], 24–25.)

It is important to be honest with your friend up front. If you are not old enough to be in a steady or long-term relationship, you need to explain that to him. Let him know the gospel is the most important thing in your life and that not only do you want to do what’s right, but you want him to find the same joy in the gospel that you have found.



If you are old enough to consider a serious relationship and you think your friend wants your friendship to be something more, let him know as soon as possible that it would be best for him to decide how he feels about the Lord's Church before you discuss how you feel about each other. Baptism is the first step toward salvation. That's something too important to be jeopardized by the hurt or angry feelings that often come when a romantic relationship is broken off.

Seeking Guidance

When you are in situations like this one, it is appropriate to pray, fast, and seek the advice of your parents and Church leaders. You can take comfort in knowing that Heavenly Father cares about you and that marrying the right person in the right place at the right time is important enough to your eternal salvation that He wants to help you. It is up to you to be worthy of His blessings and to seek to know and do His will. **NE**

READERS



Talk to your friend. Explain to him that joining the Church is something he should do for himself, not for others. When we are

baptized we make special covenants with God that need to be kept. Knowing this will help him make a decision for the right reasons.

Sherice Bradley, 17,

Howell Ward, Garland Utah Stake



When a friend decided to investigate the Church, I was afraid that he was doing it only because he was interested in me. But as we studied the Book of Mormon and took the missionary discussions together, I saw him growing in faith. Being a good example made me a better member. Today he's serving a mission.

Giuliana Giusti, 22,
Pleasant View Seventh Ward, Provo Utah Sharon East Stake

Many people have joined the Church through the examples of their friends. So be an example for this friend, and help him to acquire his own testimony. Beyond this, I would ask help from the Lord. Who are we to say if this friend will not be a great leader in the Church one day?

Paula Brandao Cavalcanti, 15,
Torre Ward, João Pessoa Brazil Stake

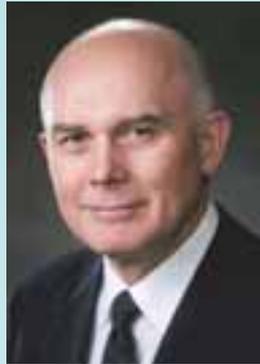


I had a friend who was attending church because he liked someone in the ward. After a few weeks he finally got the hint that she wasn't interested. He was disappointed, but he felt something every time he went to church. So he kept coming and was baptized. He went on to serve a mission. The Church is true; share it with everyone.

Elder Chad L. Cronin, 21,
England London Mission

Fast and pray. Then talk to him, and tell him that baptism will be one of the most important decisions that he will make in his life. Baptism isn't about courting. It is a sacred ordinance. Ask him to pray about baptism.

Emily Pagulayan, 18,
Makati First Ward, Makati Philippines Stake



In His own way and His own time the Lord is preparing persons to accept His gospel. . . .

When we are standing as 'witnesses of God at all times and in all things' (Mosiah 18:9), the Lord will open ways for us to find and have appropriate communications with those who are seeking."

—Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Sharing the Gospel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 8.

If you really want your friend to be a good member of the Church, you should first be a strong member yourself. If you go forward with faith, the Lord will help you and your friend. The Lord works in different ways, and although we sometimes don't understand it, He has a purpose.

Belkys Suguey Velásquez Hernández, 18,
La Esperanza Ward, Tegucigalpa Honduras
La Esperanza Stake



Avoid getting involved in a serious relationship with him. Just be friends and have fun. Encourage him to get better acquainted with the gospel, and always remember him in your prayers. Help him understand that he is a child of God and that being baptized is a stepping-stone back to Him.

Faith Ejokeoghene Imoh, 17,
Mini-Okoro Ward, Port Harcourt Nigeria Stake

Answers are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send your answer to the question below, along with your name, birth date, ward and stake (or branch and district), and a photograph to:

**Q&A, New Era
50 East North Temple Street, Floor 24
Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA**

**Or e-mail:
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org**

Please respond by 15 September 2004.

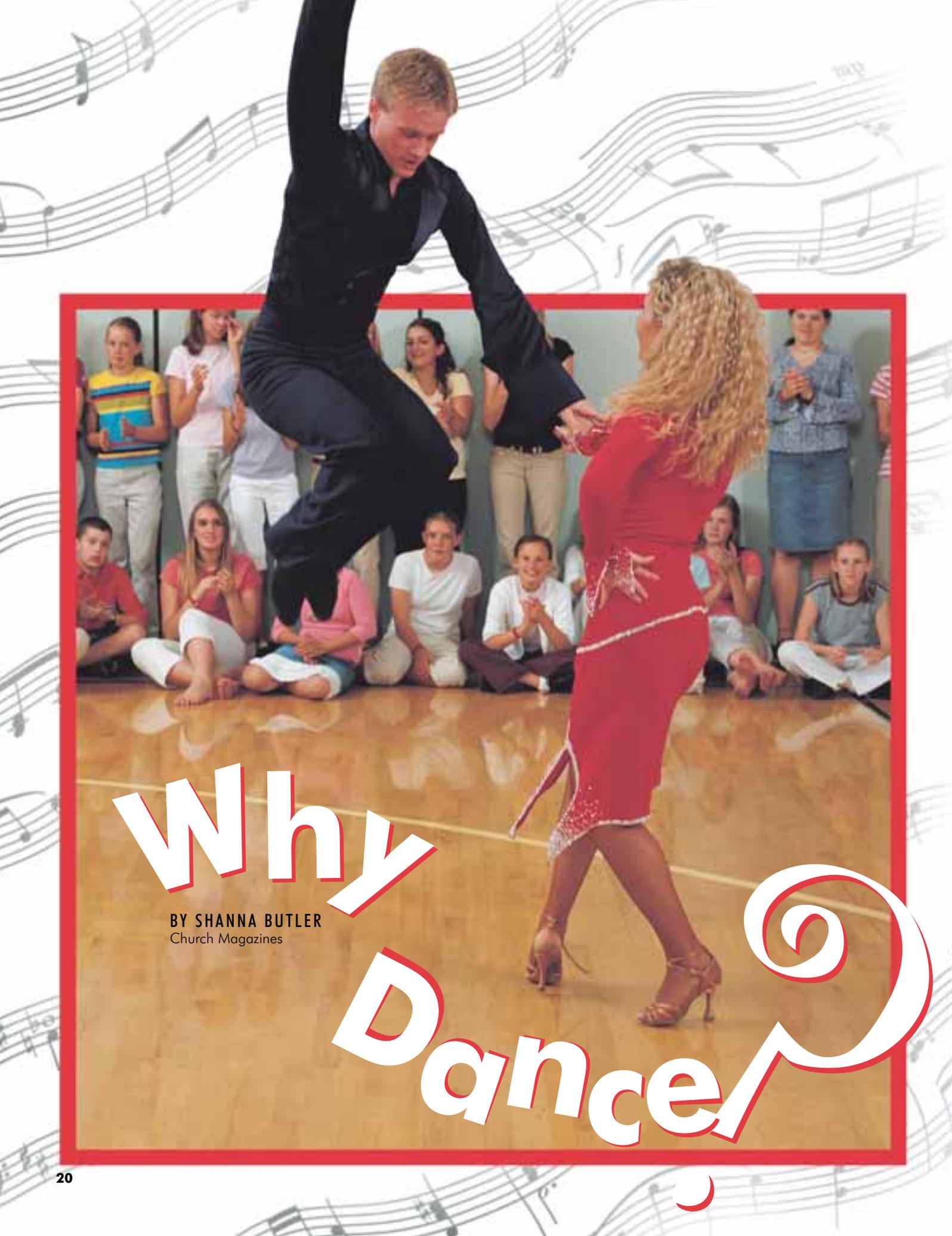
QUESTION

"Pornography is ruining my life. But every time I try to quit looking at it, I fall again. What can I do?"

GREAT EXPECTATIONS?



YOU CAN FULFILL THEM STEP BY STEP AS YOU WALK THE GOSPEL PATH.
(See 2 Nephi 31:19–20.)



Why Dance?

BY SHANNA BUTLER
Church Magazines



Your back is Velcroed to the wall, your feet frozen to the floor. Your eyes are darting around the room to avoid making contact with anyone. Sound familiar?

Dances can be hard places to be if you're shy or you just don't know how to dance. But that doesn't mean the best option is avoiding dances altogether. Even if you don't know how to dance, they're still an excellent way to meet people and make friends. And if you take the time to learn a few steps, you might really enjoy dancing!

Brock Haymond, 18, and Brittany Harper, 19, know all

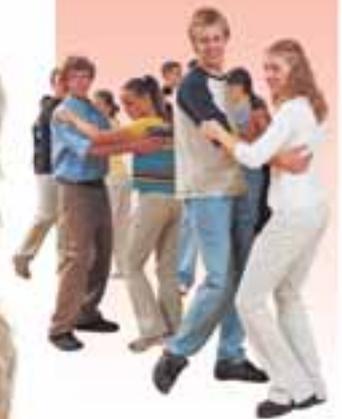
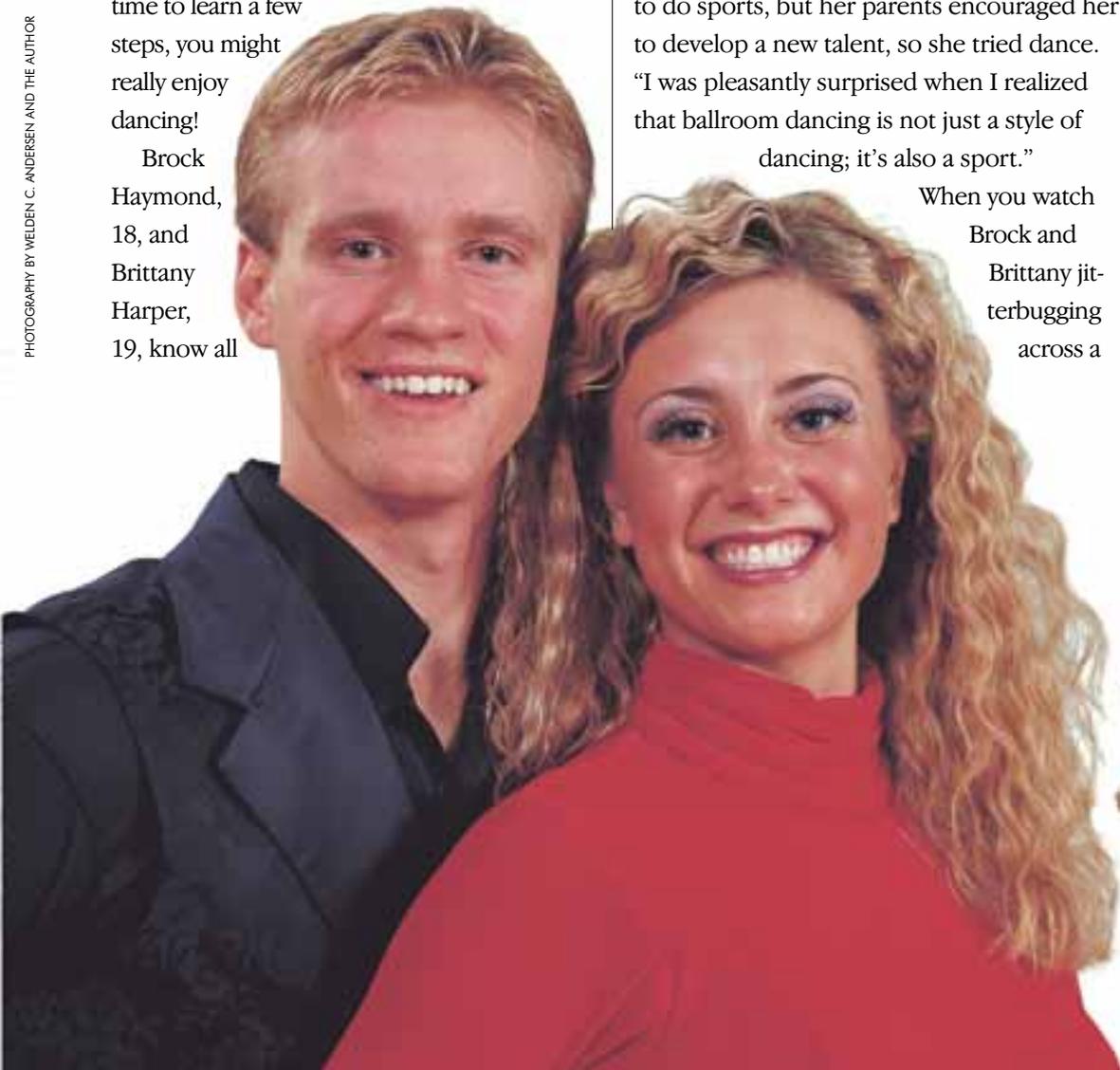
about dancing and making friends doing it. They've both been dancing since before they were teenagers, and now, as freshmen, they are dancing for Brigham Young University's backup ballroom dance team. They've also won numerous national dance awards. But the recognition and gorgeous costumes aren't the real reason they love to dance.

"I love ballroom dancing just because it's fun!" says Brittany, who started dancing when she was 12. She had originally wanted to do sports, but her parents encouraged her to develop a new talent, so she tried dance. "I was pleasantly surprised when I realized that ballroom dancing is not just a style of dancing; it's also a sport."

When you watch Brock and Brittany jiterbugging across a

There are a lot of good reasons to learn how to dance. Brock Haymond and Brittany Harper make dancing look easy, and they say it really is if you'll give it a try.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WELDEN C. ANDERSEN AND THE AUTHOR





SHALL WE DANCE?

Here are some of the guidelines the Church has given for stake youth dances:

- Dress, grooming, lighting, dancing styles, lyrics, and music should contribute to an atmosphere where the Spirit can be present.
- The music volume should allow two people standing next to each other to have a conversation instead of a yelling competition.
- Lights should be bright enough for you to be able to see across the room. Avoid psychedelic or pulsating lights.
- Youth under age 14 don't usually participate in youth conferences or dances, but the bishopric or stake presidency may make exceptions in some cases.

(*Church Handbook of Instructions*, 190, 226, and 277.)

gym-sized dance floor, their agility is impressive. Their moves are challenging. And their jumps and lifts are simply amazing. But they didn't learn how to dance overnight. Years of hard work, separately, and now as partners for the last four years, have prepared them for their many competitions—and to teach others the joy of dancing. They love teaching youth how to dance. That's why they volunteer to teach dance lessons at Mutual nights near their homes in Utah.

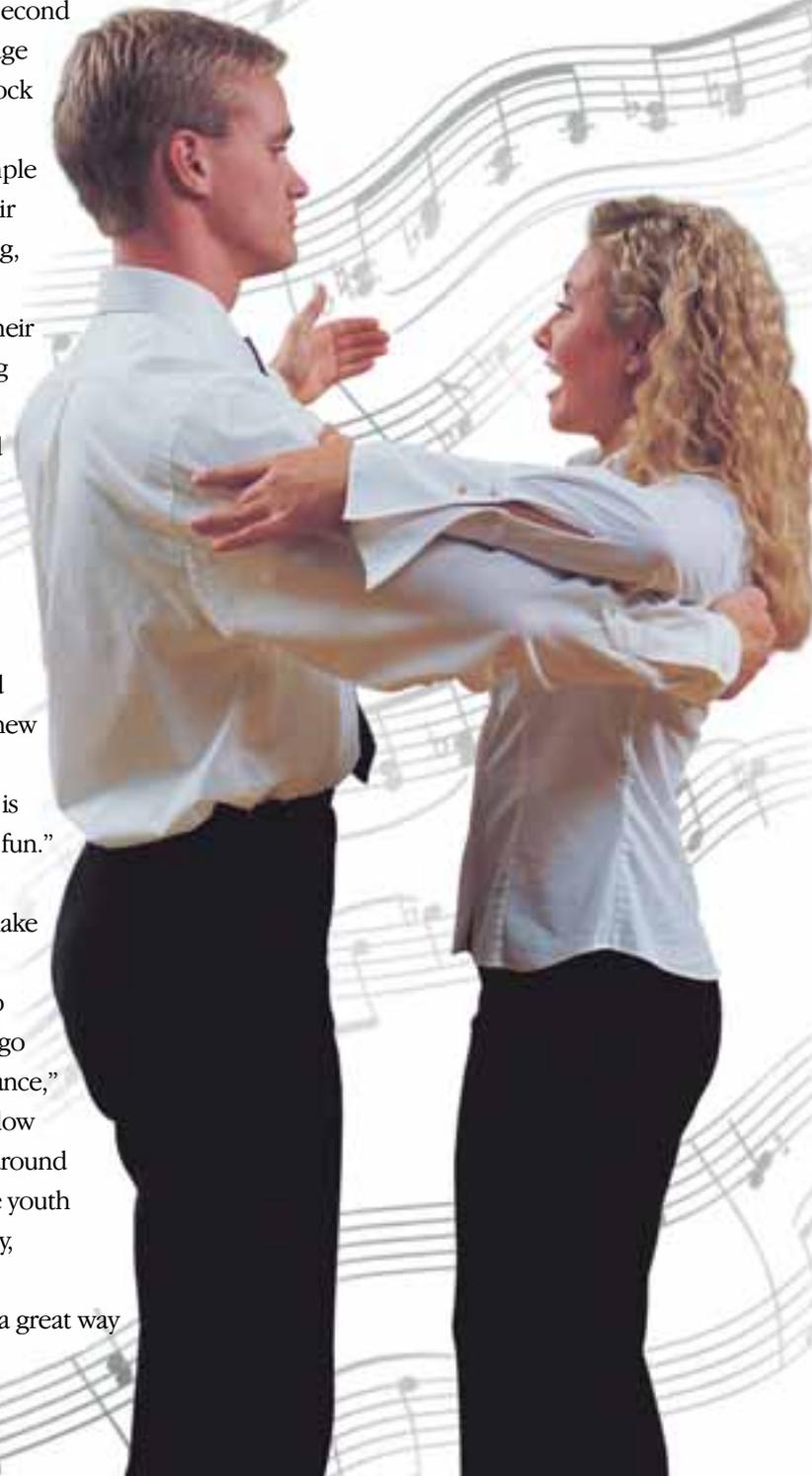
The youth of the Crescent Second Ward, Sandy Utah Crescent Ridge Stake, were thrilled to have Brock and Brittany perform for them and then teach them some simple footwork they could do on their own, like the cha-cha, the swing, and the waltz.

Jessica Wright, 17, enjoyed their instruction and plans on putting it to good use. "Now I can go to dances and do things instead of just standing around." But, she says, even if you only have the desire to dance, "you can just have fun even if you don't know how to dance."

Jason Ockey, 14, already liked to dance, but he learned some new moves from Brock and Brittany. His advice to those who are shy is the same as Jessica's: "Just have fun."

You don't need to know the 1, 2, 3s of every dance step to make dances enjoyable, but knowing the basics and having a desire to learn can be valuable. "I love to go to school dances and actually dance," Brock says. "I just can't do the slow dance thing where you shuffle around in a circle. Dance is great for the youth of the Church: physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually."

Brittany agrees: "Dancing is a great way



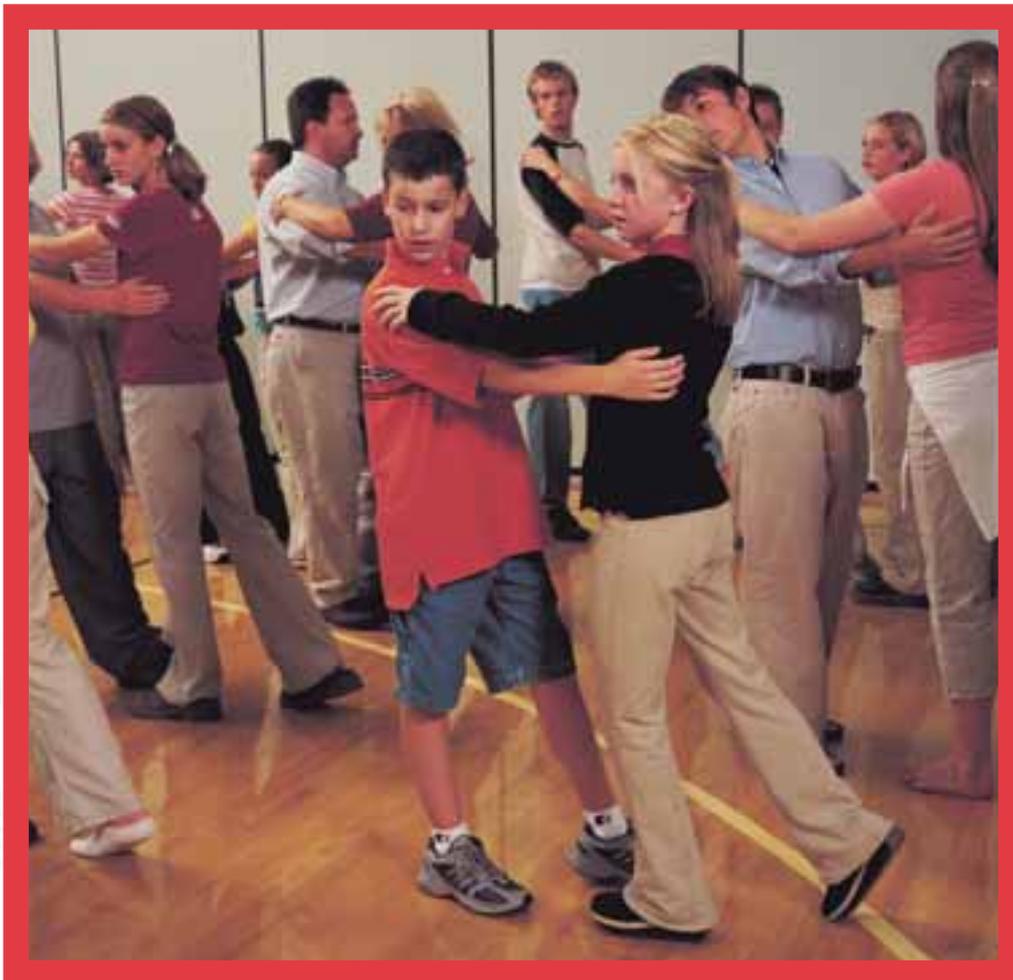


to meet new people and make new friends. I've met some of my very best friends through dance. It's also a great way to try something new and even develop a talent."

Brock and Brittany believe that dancing can be uplifting when Church standards are kept. "There's something to be gained from keeping a 'Bible' space between you and your partner," says Brock. "Keeping Church standards when you go to dances invites the Spirit, and everyone enjoys themselves."

The Crescent Second Ward youth really enjoyed learning from Brock and Brittany, even if they didn't catch on to all the steps. You can learn a few steps too. But you don't have to be a national dance champion to enjoy dancing. The next time you're at a dance, gather up some courage, tear yourself away from the safety wall, and just have a good time being with friends. **NE**

The youth of the Crescent Second Ward in Sandy, Utah, found out that fancy footwork was easier to catch on to than they had imagined. And, even if they didn't know all the steps, dancing was still a lot of fun.



HOW TO PUT ON A

Overeat STAKE

The Winnipeg Manitoba Stake youth have got it together. At a recent stake dance, held in the institute building, there were 50 or more youth—and almost all of them were actually dancing. And guess what else? When a slow song started, the dance floor wasn't empty! The music was fun and tasteful, the dancing was appropriate, and the decorations were simple but effective.

Large paper flowers lined the walls, and beach balls provided constant entertainment as they were swatted around the room from dancer to dancer.

How, you ask, did this stake pull off its successful dance? Well, each month the youth of one of the wards in the stake is in charge.

Stake leaders assign the wards at the beginning of the year so there will be lots of time to plan. The Waverley Ward was assigned to this stake dance. Its members started planning about a month in advance, and the first thing they did was decide on a theme—“Hawaiian School's Out.” The young men were in charge of refreshments, and the young women did the decorating. Then they publicized.

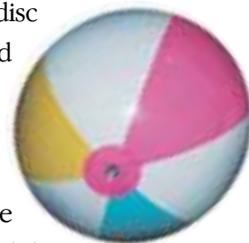
“Do lots of poster advertisements and announcements. Plan ahead. Come up with

interesting themes. Maybe a ‘dress as your parents night.’ Make sure you have a good deejay with lots of appropriate music and a large selection,” says David Moore, the teachers quorum president, who helped plan the dance along with the rest of the bishop's youth council.

Also on the council was Stephen Wood, the stake's deejay for the dance. The stake has mixers, speakers, and other audio equipment because it doesn't want to hire disc jockeys anymore. It was too hard to regulate the music selected by hired deejays, and it was also becoming too expensive. So Stephen was put in charge of the music, a very important responsibility,

because we all know—besides the fun people, of course—it's the music that makes or breaks a dance.

Stephen, a priest, had some deejay experience from being in charge of the youth conference dance music. “I talk to people before the dance and see what they want,” he says. But he does have some ground rules. “No swearing



DANCE



or unacceptable lyrics. I haven't really played anything too heavy. Too heavy or too fast a beat isn't good." He usually uses his own CDs, and others bring their CDs to the dance as well.

Not that there's a problem with inappropriate music requests. Each of the youth is interviewed by his or her bishop or branch president or one of his counselors before they come to the dance. They receive dance cards outlining what standards are expected of them while at the dance, and they need to show those cards before they can get in.

The interviews aren't stressful. For the most part, the bishop just explains the guidelines for casual versus semi-formal attire, asks you not to dance too close to your partner, and reminds you that drugs and alcohol of any kind won't be tolerated—things you already know. The interview is just a reminder of the appropriate behavior that will help you have more fun at

jumped off the stage once, leaving the deejaying duties to his older brother Richard, while Stephen and a friend taught everyone how to line dance to the song that was playing.

They also played games. There was a hula contest, the limbo (how low can you go?), and a snowball dance. Each time Stephen yelled "snowball" everyone had to trade partners fast!

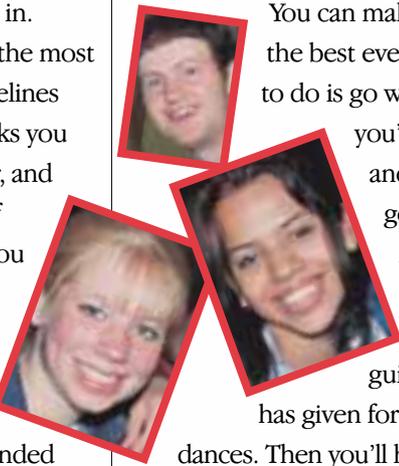
As fun as all this sounds, you don't have to go to Manitoba to find a good stake dance.

You can make your stake dances the best ever. All you really need to do is go with the attitude that you're going to have fun and that you're not going to be a wall-flower. And when you're planning, be sure you follow the guidelines the Church

has given for stake dances. Then you'll have it together too. **NE**

the dance. Surrounded by paper flowers and beach balls, everyone line danced, swing danced, and did other dances you might never

have seen before. If you had seen how much fun they were having, you would definitely have joined in. Stephen even



THE STENCH OF



BY ELDER SPENCER V. JONES

Of the Seventy



We felt a fine mist settle over us. It carried a horrible odor. What my friend thought was a cat was actually a skunk. It had sprayed us in self-defense.

Every decision we make, good or bad, carries an accompanying consequence.

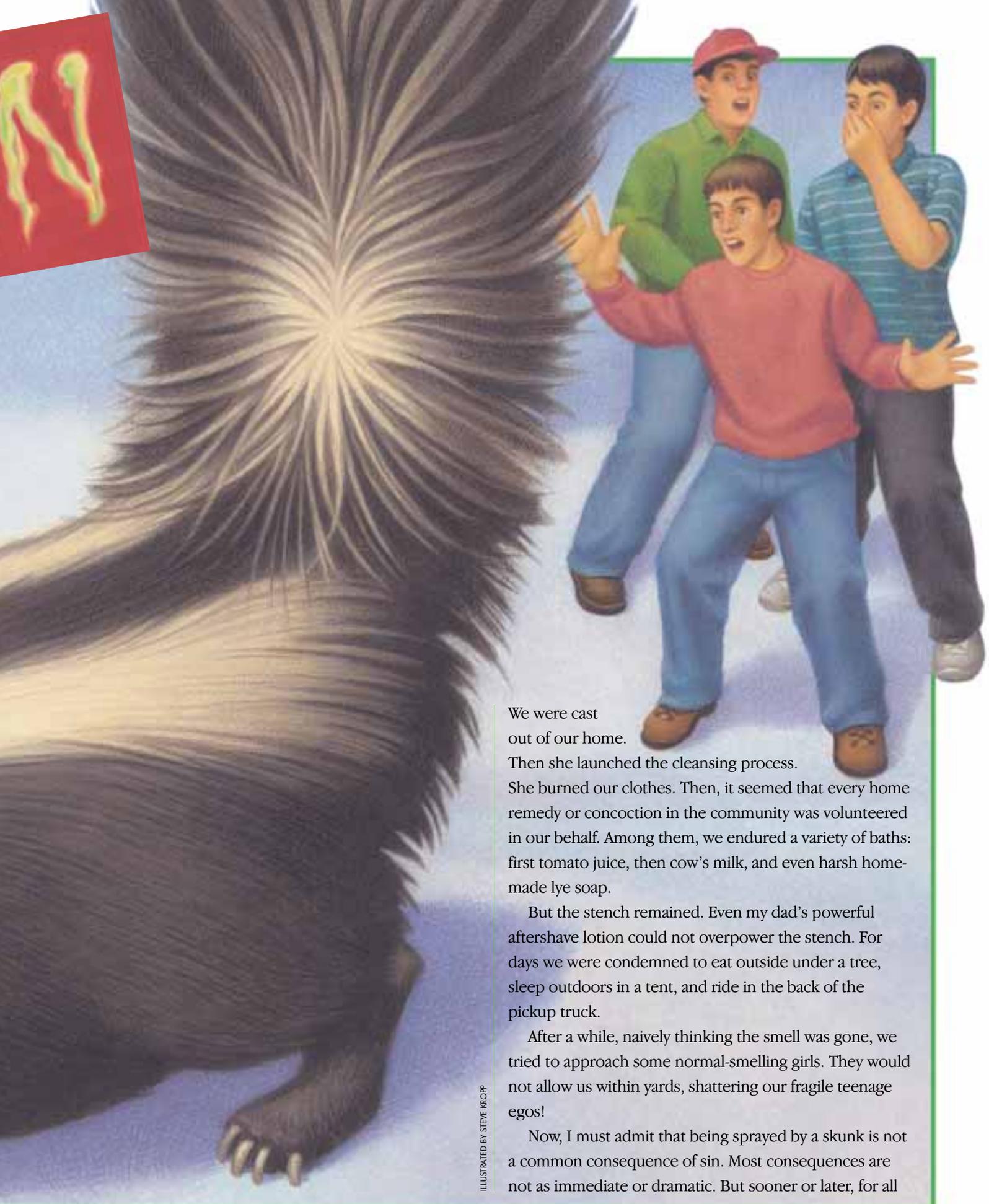
I grew up in what some of you might call a boring farming community: Virden, New Mexico, population 135. One summer night when I was a boy, my cousins, some friends, and I were looking for ways to create some excitement. Someone suggested we play a harmless prank on a neighbor. My conscience whispered it was wrong, but I didn't have the courage to resist the enthusiastic response of the group.

After performing our mischievous act, we sprinted down the dark country road to make our escape, laughing and congratulating ourselves as we ran. Suddenly, one of the group stumbled, crying out, "Oh no, I kicked a cat!"

Almost instantly we felt a very fine mist settle over us. It carried a horrible odor. What my friend thought was a cat was actually a skunk. It had sprayed us in self-defense. Very few odors are as nauseating as skunk spray, and we smelled terrible.

Dejectedly, we went home in search of a little parental comfort for our pitiful plight. As we stepped inside the kitchen door, Mom took one sniff and shooed us out into the yard.





ILLUSTRATED BY STEVE KROPP

We were cast out of our home. Then she launched the cleansing process. She burned our clothes. Then, it seemed that every home remedy or concoction in the community was volunteered in our behalf. Among them, we endured a variety of baths: first tomato juice, then cow's milk, and even harsh home-made lye soap.

But the stench remained. Even my dad's powerful aftershave lotion could not overpower the stench. For days we were condemned to eat outside under a tree, sleep outdoors in a tent, and ride in the back of the pickup truck.

After a while, naively thinking the smell was gone, we tried to approach some normal-smelling girls. They would not allow us within yards, shattering our fragile teenage egos!

Now, I must admit that being sprayed by a skunk is not a common consequence of sin. Most consequences are not as immediate or dramatic. But sooner or later, for all

sin, a consequence will be paid.

At times, consequences of sin may appear to be very subtle to the sinner. We may even convince ourselves, as we did before approaching the girls, that no one will be able to detect our sins and that they are well concealed. But always to our Heavenly Father and often to spiritually sensitive leaders, parents, and friends, our sins are glaringly apparent.

While attending a youth fireside with Elder Richard G. Scott, I noticed five youths scattered among the congregation whose countenances or body language almost screamed that something was spiritually amiss in their lives. After the meeting, when I mentioned the five youths to Elder Scott, he simply replied, “There were eight.”

Isaiah prophesied, “Their countenance doth witness against them, and doth declare their sin to be even as Sodom, and they cannot hide it” (2 Nephi 13:9; see also Isaiah 3:9).

God has declared, “He that sinneth and repenteth not shall be cast out” (D&C 42:28). Just as my cousins and I were “cast out” of our earthly home as a consequence of our prank, we will be cast out of our Heavenly Father’s home if we do not repent.

“When we undertake to cover our sins,” as I tried to do with my dad’s aftershave lotion, “the heavens withdraw themselves; [and] the Spirit of the Lord is grieved” (D&C 121:37).

We lose our spiritual gifts. The Lord has declared, “He that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received” (D&C 1:33).

Each one of us has the light of Christ, or a conscience. It constantly prompts us to choose good. Good choices yield good consequences. On the other hand, delaying repentance and continuing to commit sin is like continuing to kick the skunk. The stench will become stronger with each sin, alienating us further and further from God and those we love. Soon we could become like Laman and Lemuel, who, after continually making bad choices, became “past feeling” and could no longer feel the still small voice (see 1 Nephi 17:45).

If I had responded to my conscience when it first whispered that the prank was wrong, I would have

avoided the whole stinking ordeal.

Through Nephi, the Savior taught that “no unclean thing can dwell with God; wherefore, ye must be cast off forever” (1 Nephi 10:21).

But our loving Heavenly Father, with a foreknowledge of our frailties, and knowing that you and I would all sin and become unclean, provided a cleansing process from sin that—unlike tomato juice, milk, and lye soap—actually does work.

He sent a Savior, His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to atone for our sins (see Alma 22:14).

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Christ demonstrated perfect obedience, His anguish caused Him, “even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19:18). Then He allowed Himself to be “lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world” (1 Nephi 11:33).

“He suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. . . . And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth!” (D&C 18:11, 13).

The Savior has indicated how to know “if a man repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43). Then comes the miraculous promise, “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18).

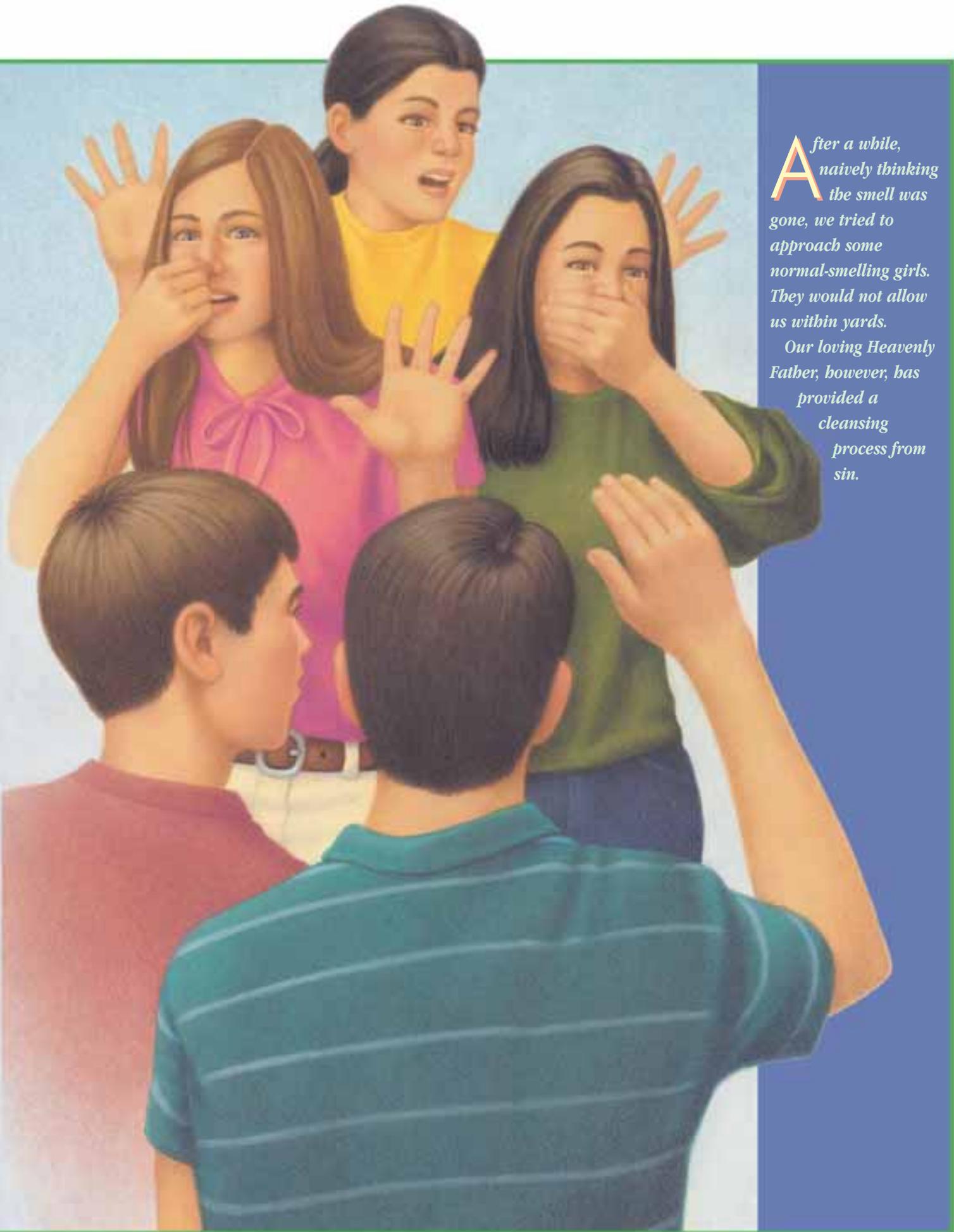
If the Spirit is pricking your heart to correct something in your life, know this: your soul is precious. Heavenly Father wants you to be part of His eternal family.

I lovingly plead, “Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance” (Alma 34:33). Start the process now. Your bishop will help. Remove the stench of sin with the remedy of repentance. Then, through the Atonement, the Savior can wash you clean. **NE**

From an April 2003 general conference address.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

To learn more about the Atonement and repentance, read the following articles in the Gospel Library at www.lds.org: “Three Choices” by Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (*Ensign*, Nov. 2003) and “The Atonement, Repentance, and Dirty Linen” (*Ensign*, Nov. 2003) by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen.



After a while, naively thinking the smell was gone, we tried to approach some normal-smelling girls. They would not allow us within yards.

Our loving Heavenly Father, however, has provided a cleansing process from sin.

THE SIGN ON THE WALL

BY JEREMY ROBERTSON

Choose your friends wisely, for you will tend to be like them.” I had seen this little sign a million times and never thought anything of it. It was only one of many strategically placed thoughts and quotes that dotted the walls of our home. This one happened to be in the best location of all—right above the kitchen table.

When friends came over, we naturally congregated in the kitchen. Dates, late night movies, and quick lunches almost all involved the kitchen. Mom knew this and planned her attack accordingly. Years later I realized what a direct hit Mom had scored.

I was blessed with a lot of friends who are also members of the Church. We went to church and school together, and most of us went on missions at about the same time. However, there was one who was not exactly like the rest of us. His parents were divorced, and he was shuffled between their homes and the homes of friends. As a result, I think he always felt a little isolated and alone. He wore his hair long and always had at least one earring. Regardless, we loved him, and he was one of us.

During high school we witnessed him change; it was great. A short time after his 19th birthday he submitted his mission papers and received a call. A couple of months later we really understood the significance of this event.

The realization came on a cold, crisp Sunday in January. My friends and I had gathered to hear this young

It hung in a spot where we read it every day, and it changed one life forever.

man speak in sacrament meeting. I had been invited to perform a musical number, so I sat on the stand. As I gazed over the crowd, I saw all of our friends, as well as my family; it was a wonderful sight. As my friend ventured to the pulpit, his eyes were a little red.

His talk opened with a question: “Do any of you know why I am here? Well, it is really very simple. I am here because of the many

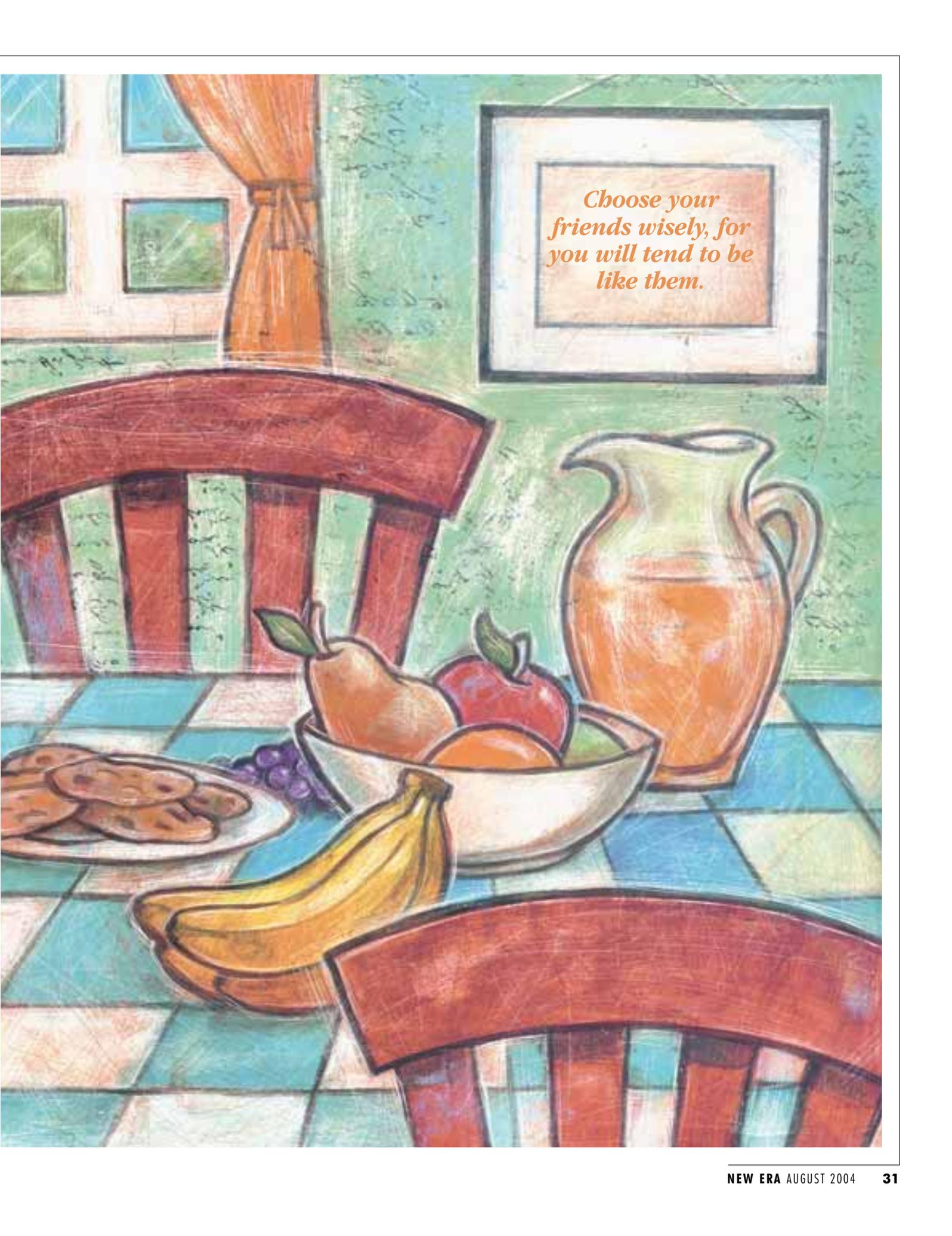
meals eaten at a friend’s table, a table with a sign above it that reads, ‘Choose your friends wisely, for you will tend to be like them.’ I want my friends to know that without their influence and love I wouldn’t be here today.”

As I looked down into the crowd, I saw my mother with teary eyes and a smile.

From that day on, I have also thought about the effects my friends have had on my life. I don’t know if I would have served a mission without their example. I don’t know what kind of a person I would be today if it hadn’t been for the strength and love I received from such wonderful people. For that, I will be forever grateful, both to them and to my Heavenly Father.

I know that no one has forgotten the message shared from that pulpit. I also know that that sign, to this day, still hangs above our kitchen table. **NE**

Jeremy Robertson is a member of the Grandview 19th Ward, Provo Utah Grandview Stake.

A still life painting of a dining table. In the foreground, a wooden chair with a curved back is partially visible. On the table, there is a large glass pitcher filled with orange juice, a white bowl containing an orange, a red apple, and a slice of orange, a single yellow banana, and a white plate with several round cookies. The table has a blue and white checkered pattern. In the background, a window with orange curtains is visible on the left, and a framed picture hangs on a green wall. The painting style is expressive with visible brushstrokes.

*Choose your
friends wisely, for
you will tend to be
like them.*

FRIENDS

IN ROOM 102

BY CONNIE MYERS

Great friendships are developed when Seminary Friends support their special-needs buddies. Below: Jimmy Carmen is friends with Stacy Allen. Opposite page, top: Devin Kunz has Jenny Blackburn as a Seminary Friend. Bottom, left to right: Diana Bautista helps Amber Rindlesbacher study in seminary.

In room 102 of the yellow-brick seminary building near a high school in Logan, Utah, 10 pairs of students recite the scripture of the week: "Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation . . ." (D&C 8:3).

Some stumble on the words. Others sign the words with their hands. After 15 minutes of diligent repetition, the grinning pairs walk hand-in-hand to record their progress on the bulletin board.

Friendly smiles welcome visitors in room 102 as they would in most any seminary classroom, but this class is far from ordinary.

Half of these students are special-needs students with an array of mental and often physical challenges. The other half are Seminary Friends, high school students who volunteer to help their assigned partners settle into class, understand the scriptures, and make new friends.

It sounds like a sacrifice, spending an hour each day for an entire semester with an assigned special-needs seminary buddy. But these Seminary Friends will tell you that the blessings they receive far outweigh the efforts they put forth.





Just ask Stacy Allen, a senior and a cheerleader. When Stacy volunteered to be a Seminary Friend last fall, she had no idea how the experience would change her life.

"I had Amber Rindlesbacher as my partner," Stacy says. "It was the first time I'd been around a special-needs student. It was an adjustment, but I just felt the Spirit really strong when I was around her. I learned so much."

Stacy felt Amber's influence outside of the classroom too. "I could tell there was a difference," she says. "I could feel the Spirit more in my life. It helped me to be happier toward my family and friends."

In fact, Stacy loved her first Seminary Friends experience so much she decided to do it again the next semester; but there was a problem: Stacy's school schedule did not have room for another noncredit class.

At Logan High School, seminary is taught during the school day. Students attend seminary classes just as they would any other class, walking off campus to the Church-owned seminary building nearby. Students plan their schedules carefully to fill high school graduation requirements and still attend noncredit seminary classes. Stacy needed one more credited class to graduate. So Stacy

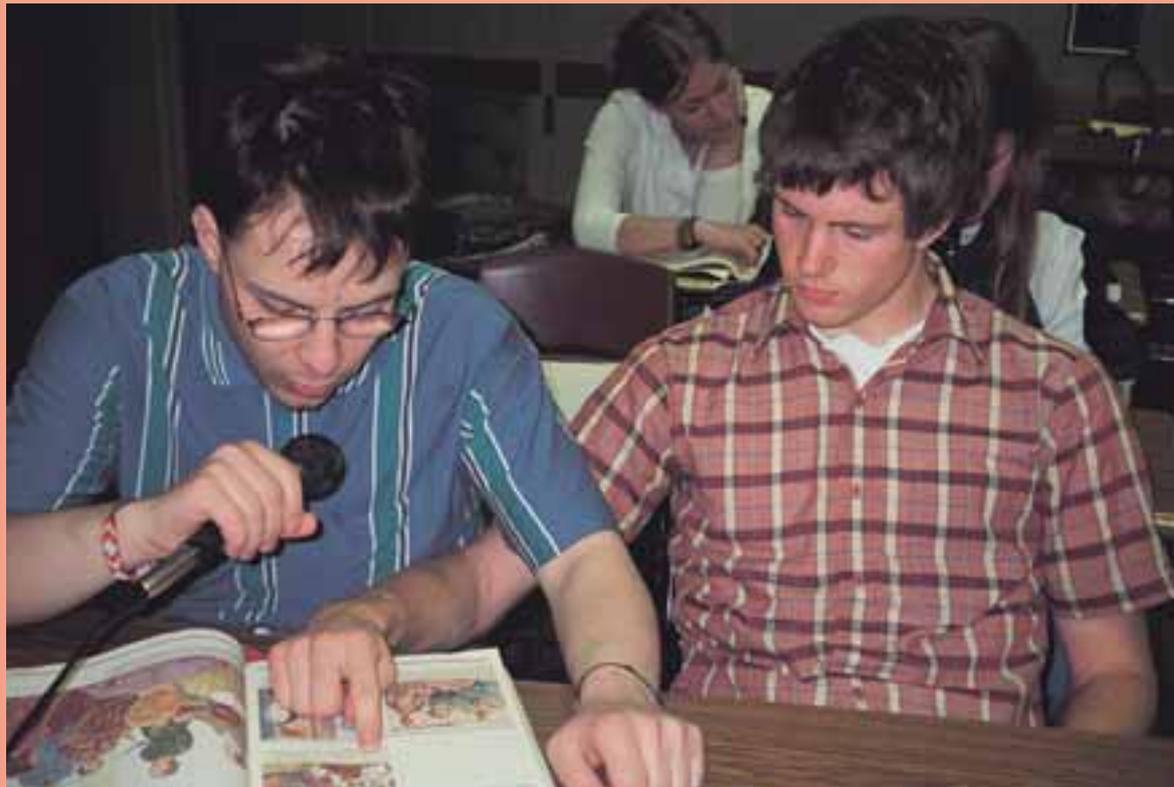
signed up for an independent study course to fill the credit requirements for high school graduation and thought she had the problem resolved.

"Then they told me that since I wouldn't have a full on-campus schedule I couldn't be a cheerleader anymore," Stacy says.

Stacy had to choose between cheerleading and the special-needs seminary. "I didn't want to let my squad down. But I



Spending time with his seminary buddy, Peter Earl, isn't much of a sacrifice for J.D. Jones (right). Below, left to right: Trisha Lee and Aja Tolley are great friends. Opposite page, top: The whole group gets together for a photo in front of the seminary. Bottom, left to right: Ashlee Broadbent, Liz Leatham, Carolyn Betz, and Claudia Estrada became friends while preparing for a dance.



really loved my seminary experience. I prayed, and I fasted for a solution.”

One night, while struggling with her decision, Stacy dreamed that she was in heaven and met Amber. In her dream Amber was whole and well. The two met as equals and as friends. When Stacy woke up, she confirmed her decision. She gave up cheerleading to serve in the Seminary Friends program one more time.

That semester, Stacy was paired with special-needs student Jimmy Carmen. He has an infectious smile and outgoing personality. Stacy says, “Jimmy makes me feel happy every day.”

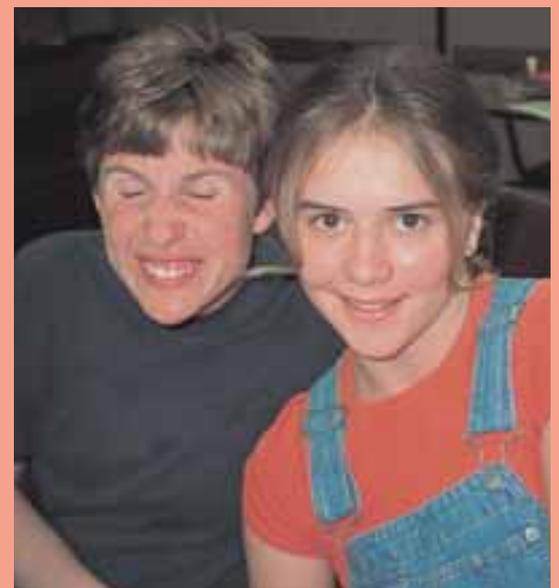
Stacy misses cheerleading but says the trade-off has been worth the sacrifice. She says, “It’s been worth it, definitely.” She feels the Spirit there and believes she’s gained more than she’s given as a Seminary Friend. “The kids teach me to be more accepting,” she says.

As the day for the high school’s Sixties Dance approached, the Seminary Friends decided it would be fun to attend with their

seminary partners. The group got together and made tie-dyed T-shirts, then organized van rides for the group of 24.

The evening was a success. The students jumped up and down together for the fast songs and held hands and danced in a big circle for the slow songs. Everyone had a good time.

For the special-needs students, the dance was a first, and their reactions were





particularly enthusiastic. "My favorite thing was dancing with the boys," says Jané Peart.

"It was my first date, but there were many, many girls," signs Timothy Smith. "I like it because I'm a good dancer."

"It was so fun to see Timothy smile and laugh and dance," says Aundi Robison, one of the Seminary Friends. She is learning sign language to better communicate with her special-needs partner. "Timothy flexed his muscles for the girls. I've never seen him laugh so much."

Like Stacy, Aundi says she's gained more than she's given through the Seminary Friends program. "It's amazing how special these kids are. They're so close to their Father in Heaven," Aundi says. "They have really kind hearts. They're very Christlike."

And by associating with their special-needs friends, the Seminary Friends find their hearts growing more Christlike, too. **NE**

Connie Myers is a member of the Cameo Park Ward, Sandy Utah Alta View Stake.



GETTING READY FOR PROM

When Ashlee Broadbent and Carolyn Betz found out that two of their special-needs friends, Claudia and Liz, would be attending the school's spring prom, they wanted to help. They helped Claudia and Liz design their own prom dresses, which were custom-made by a friend. Then they organized a group of 20 friends and rented a bus to travel to the dance together. The night of the prom, Carolyn's sister gave Claudia and

Liz a full-blown makeover, doing their hair, nails, and make-up. Ashlee took photos and waved good-bye as Carolyn, Claudia, and Liz left for dinner and the dance with the rest of the group. At age 15, Ashlee wasn't yet old enough to date.

"We wanted to give them an extra special time. It started out as a simple project," Carolyn says. "We came away with two new friends." **NE**

WHO AM I?

BOOK OF MORMON HERO

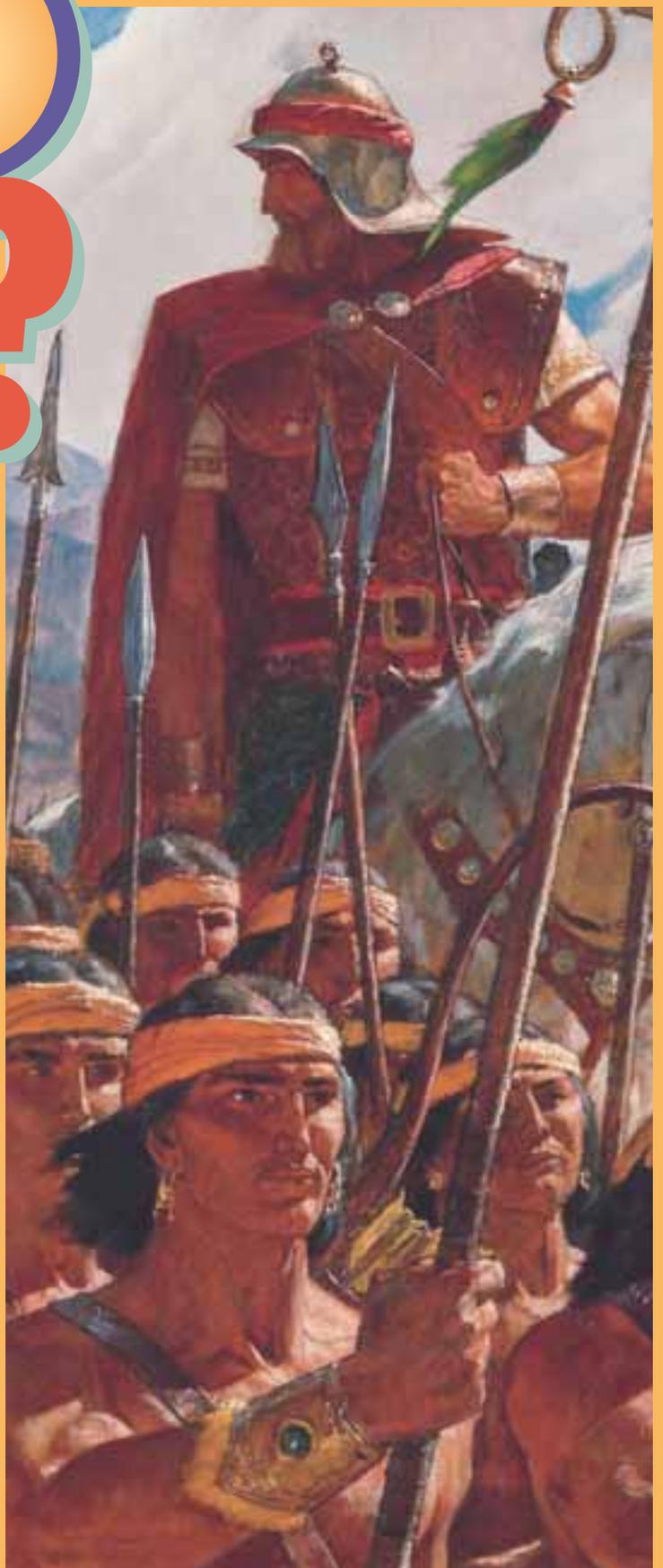
Read about my life to figure out who I am. Discover more about me from the scripture references at the end.

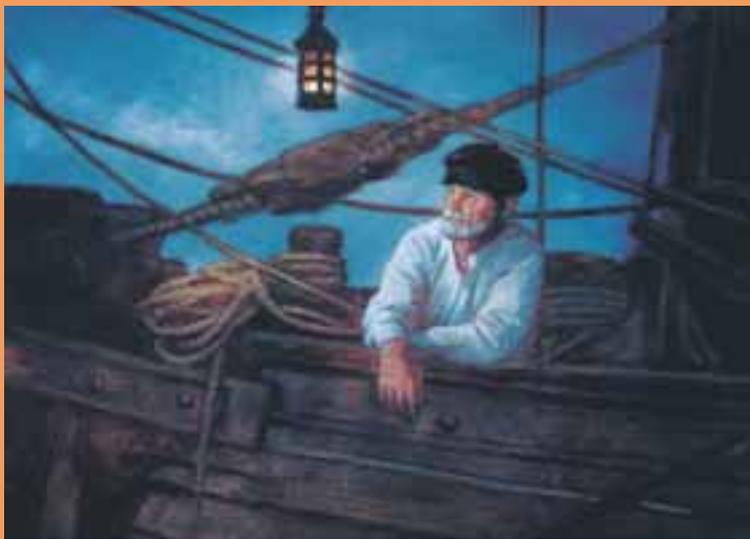
- My grandfather and father were prophets.
- The Book of Mormon mentions my two younger brothers.
- When he was young, my father was “a very wicked and an idolatrous man.”
- Later my father had a remarkable spiritual experience that turned his life around. He liked to tell my brothers and me of his wonderful experience.
- Late in his life, my father took my brothers on a mission to the Zoramites.
- After returning from his mission to the Zoramites, my father challenged me to trust in God and prepare myself to take responsibility for the sacred records, telling me “that by small

and simple things are great things brought to pass” (Alma 37:6).

- I became a leader in the Church.
- During my life a wicked man named Amalickiah wanted to become king of the Nephites.
- I was a friend and colleague of Moroni, leader of our armed forces.
- I helped persuade the people of Ammon not to go to war against the Lamanites. I agreed to lead their sons in battle.
- I fought many battles with my “sons,” and we helped drive the Lamanites out of our land.
- Before I died I returned to preaching the gospel to my people, and my younger brother took care of the sacred records.

For the answer see Mosiah 18; 27; 29:42; Alma 31:7; 36–37; 38:6–9; 45:20–22; 46:1–4, 38; 48:19; 49:30; 53:10–22; 58:41; 62:38, 45; 63:1.





“LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT”

John Henry Newman wrote this hymn while he was stranded on his way back to his English homeland. The night was dark, and he was far from home. The boat he was on was surrounded by fog, the captain had lost his bearings, and his boat wasn't going anywhere. It was no wonder he needed a “kindly light amid the encircling gloom” to lead him home.

You too can find the Light to lead you through dark times as you trust in Heavenly Father. (See *Hymns*, no. 97.)

IT HAPPENED IN AUGUST



25 August 1878 The first Primary meeting was held in Farmington, Utah (above).

9 August 1903 Russia was first dedicated for the preaching of the gospel.

21 August 1927 President Thomas S. Monson's birthday! He (left, as a young boy) was born in Salt Lake City.

14 August 1935 The Argentine Mission was organized. (There are now 10 missions in Argentina.)

BE A LEADER

President Gordon B. Hinckley has told us we should lead out in honorable causes: “Become a leader in speaking up in behalf of those causes which make our civilization shine and which give comfort and peace to our lives. . . . Do not let fear overcome your efforts. . . . The adversary of all truth would put into

your heart a reluctance to make an effort. Cast that fear aside and be valiant in the cause of truth and righteousness and faith. If you *now* decide that this will become the pattern of your life, you will not have to make that decision again (“Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1998, 72).



WRITE AWAY!

The *New Era* wants to hear about your great experiences with Church history and what you've learned about the Restoration of the gospel. Send your true stories about how you felt when you learned about an

event in Church history or visited a Church history site to:
New Era, Church History
 50 E. North Temple,
 Room 2420
 Salt Lake City, UT 84150
 Or e-mail: cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org

SOMEONE TO LISTEN

BY NGOZI F. OKORO

It was a noisy evening in my dormitory at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. There was a downpour outside, and a cool breeze blew through the window. Music of different sorts came from many rooms on my floor, and girls were singing and calling to one another.

My older sister had gone to visit friends, but I chose to stay and prepare supper for myself and my roommates. I couldn't explain why, but I had a strong feeling that I should stay behind.

As I began making soup, Ifeoma came in. She was a missionary for a church that met on campus. A discussion ensued between Ifeoma and my roommates. She preached to them for some time and invited them to attend her church. My roommates willingly accepted her invitation.

I was disappointed because my invitations for my roommates to attend The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been unsuccessful. The first time I invited them, they ridiculed me and the Church. Subsequent attempts during the following three years were also failures. I felt like a poor member missionary. But a voice within me insisted, "Don't give up." So I often

My roommates and friends ignored my missionary efforts. But I continued to pray for a chance to share the gospel.

fasted and prayed to meet someone in school who would listen to the gospel.

"Hello!" Ifeoma said, turning her attention to me. "Would you mind listening to me while you cook?"

"Not at all," I answered.

"Are you born again?" she asked.

"Yes, if you mean by 'born again' what Jesus taught Nicodemus," I said (see John 3:1–21).

"That's interesting," she said. "May I know which church you attend?"

"I attend The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," I answered.

"The Mormons?" she asked in amazement. "I understand they use a different Bible."

"It is not a Bible but the Book of Mormon," I explained. "It is another testament of Jesus Christ."

"Would you tell me what your beliefs are?" she asked.

"Certainly," I answered with confidence. I told her about the Articles of Faith and the Book of Mormon. I told her about faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, and baptism. She listened quietly. Then I bore my testimony and gave her a copy of the Book of Mormon I had intended to give to someone else.

“You mean I can keep this?” she asked.
“Yes. It is a gift from me to you,” I said.
Then I asked her to open the book and read 2 Nephi 25:26. She did so gladly: “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins.”

When Ifeoma finished reading, her countenance had become sober. I sensed she was convinced that what I had said was true.

“And I thought members of your church didn’t believe in Christ,” she said softly.

I invited her to attend church the next Sunday, and she agreed. “Thanks, Ngozi,” she said. “I have never felt such a warm feeling as I did today while talking with you.”

WHAT DOES YOUR CHURCH THINK ABOUT . . . ?

Have you ever had a hard time answering your friends’ questions about the Church? You might try directing them to www.mormon.org for answers. This official Church Web site is designed to answer questions about basic doctrine, teachings, Church history, and organization.

She left, and I understood why I had had the strong impression to stay rather than go with my sister. I had been led by the Spirit and had at last succeeded in sharing the gospel with someone who was willing to listen. **NE**

Ngozi F. Okoro is a member of the Ibadan First Branch, Ibadan Nigeria District.





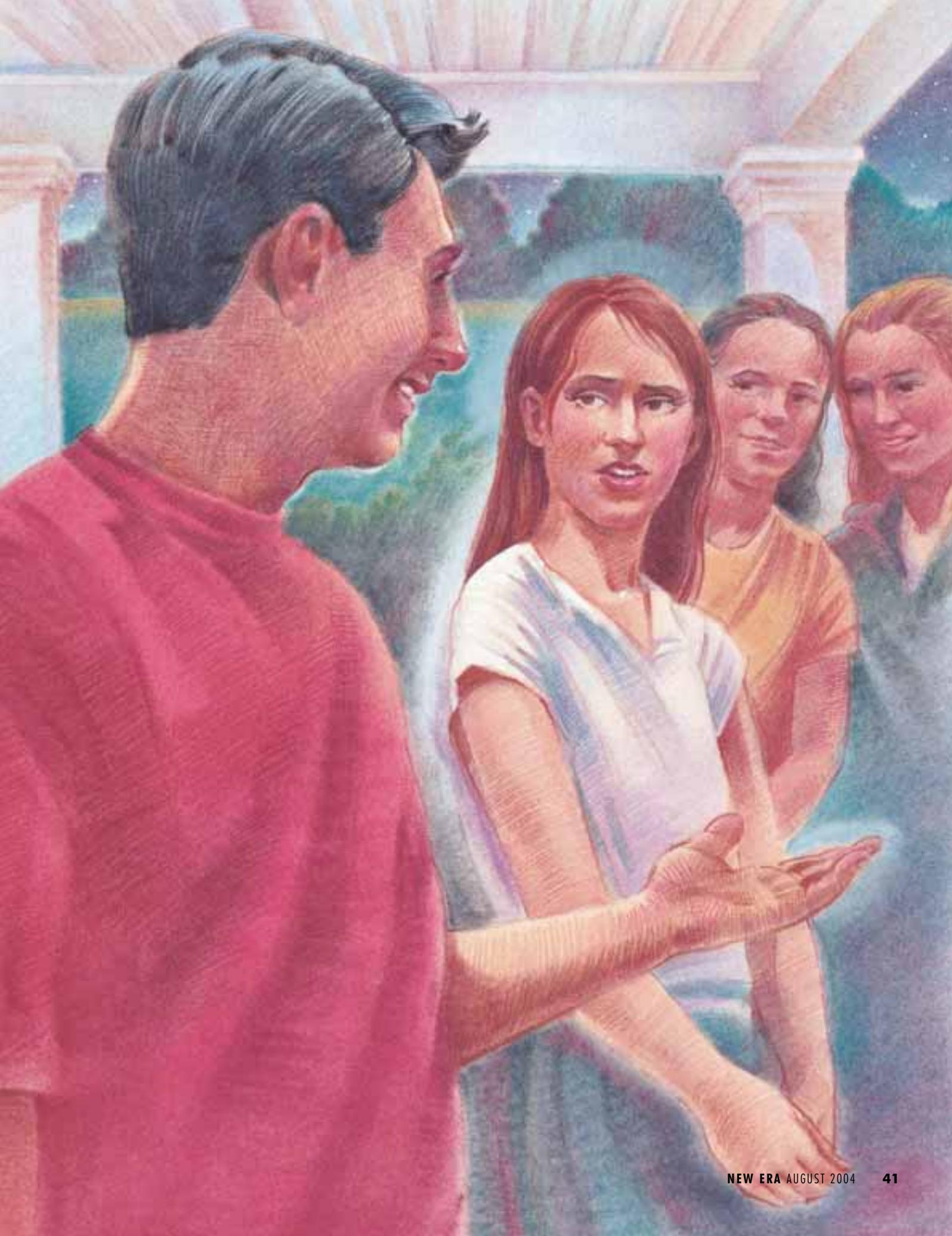
**The Best
Date
I Never Had**

I liked him, and I was pretty sure he liked me. I really needed a date. But there was this little matter of setting a good example and making the right choice.

About two months before prom is an awkward time in the life of high school girls. We want someone to ask us to the dance! For that to happen, you sometimes have to send some subtle hints in the direction of a few likely candidates.

I was starting to feel some possibility vibes from an old friend. He was not a member of the Church, but we had been square dance partners in fourth grade—a weak but definite connection. The old strategy of “his friends telling my friends to tell me” was in full force. And there was a tension, a new electricity, when we actually did talk to each other.

One night after a basketball game, we saw each other at a party. We met as I was on my way out and he was on his way in. My friends and I had realized immediately that this was not a party we should be attending. Most of the kids were drinking, and we had decided long ago



My old friend, the square dance partner, came into the bookstore where I worked. I wondered why he would be interested in Church books.

not to drink or be where others were drinking.

For a moment, he stopped to talk to me. My friends waited patiently a few steps away. But I could feel the “remember who you are” message being sent from their anxious faces. He asked me to stay. Momentarily, I thought of the coming prom and my need for a date. I knew this was his first move and my next words would determine mine. But then I said, “Oh, you know I can’t stay here.”

“I know,” he said. “I just thought I would ask anyway. That’s okay.”

I left with my friends. And he did not ask me to the prom. I went with a good friend from another ward.

A few years later, my new husband and I were attending Brigham Young University. During the holiday break, I was working at a bookstore in my hometown that sells Latter-day Saint books. One day before Christmas, my old friend—the square dance partner, not the prom date—walked in.

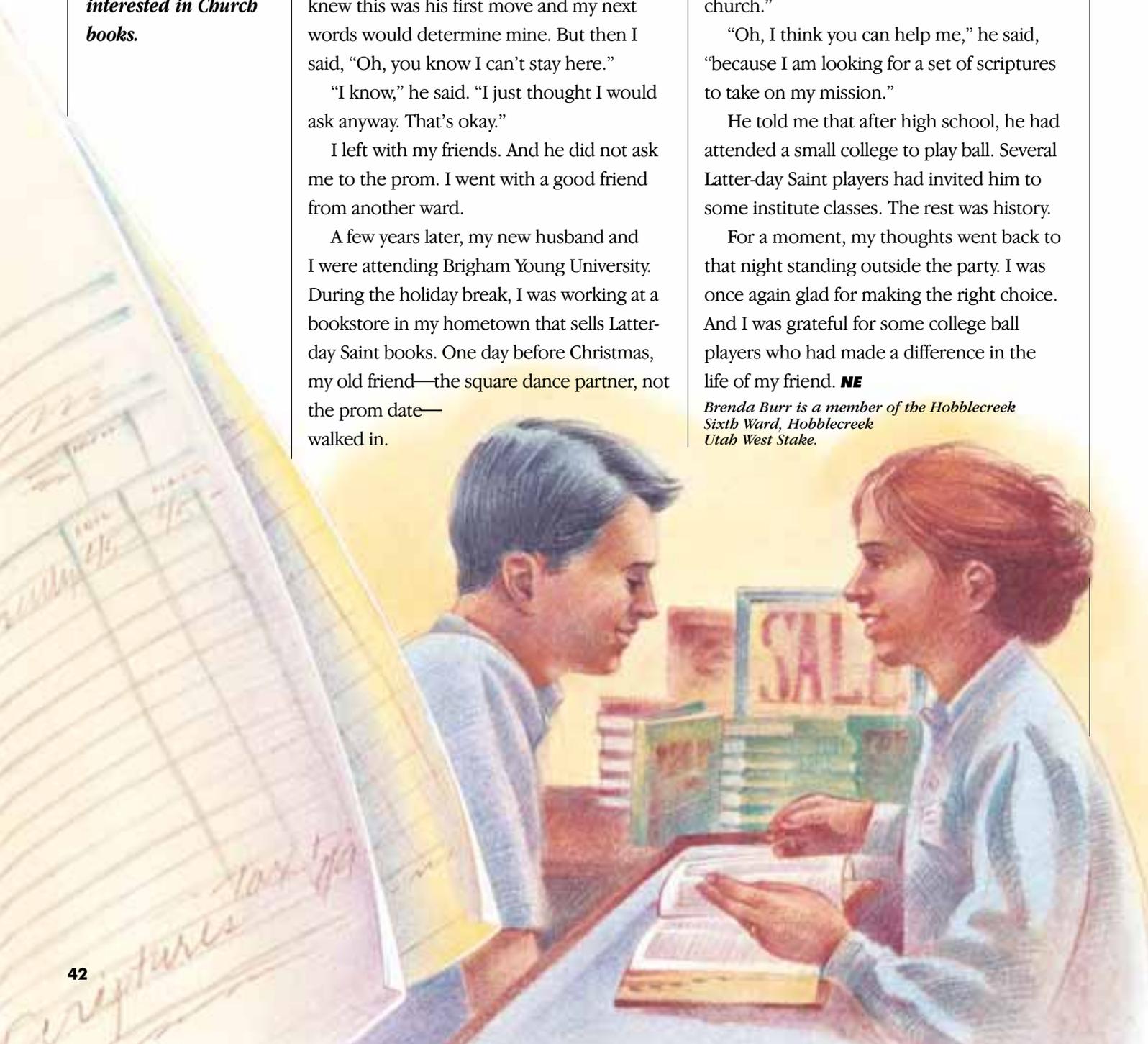
Excited at seeing old friends, we chatted for a few moments. Then I suddenly realized that he probably thought this was a typical bookstore. People often made that mistake. After all, why would he be looking for books related to the Church? So as politely as possible I said, “You know, we only sell things related to my church.”

“Oh, I think you can help me,” he said, “because I am looking for a set of scriptures to take on my mission.”

He told me that after high school, he had attended a small college to play ball. Several Latter-day Saint players had invited him to some institute classes. The rest was history.

For a moment, my thoughts went back to that night standing outside the party. I was once again glad for making the right choice. And I was grateful for some college ball players who had made a difference in the life of my friend. **NE**

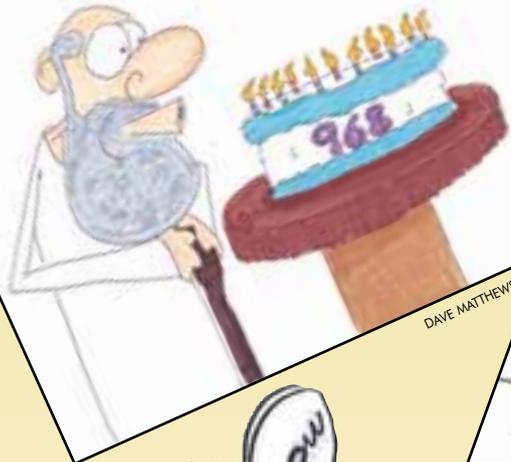
Brenda Burr is a member of the Hobblecreek Sixth Ward, Hobblecreek Utah West Stake.



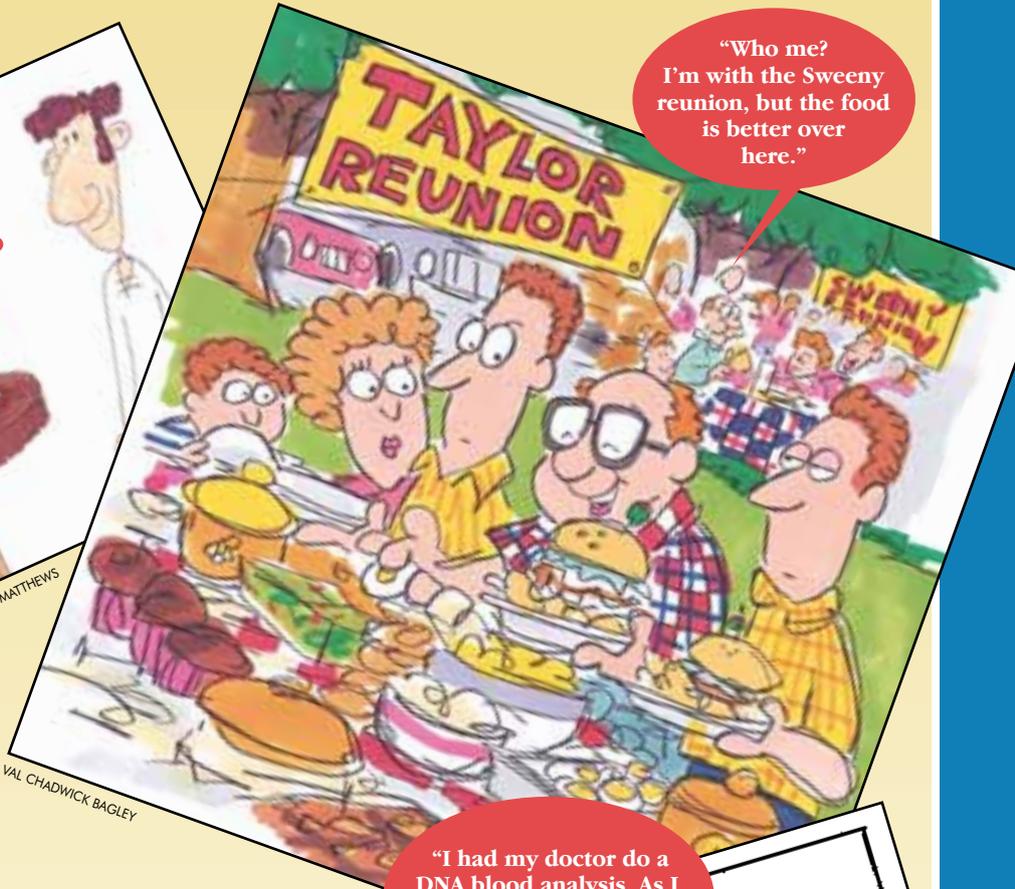
THE EXTRA SMILE

"Grandpa Methuselah's going to be mad at me when he finds out about the trick candles."

"Who me? I'm with the Sweeny reunion, but the food is better over here."



DAVE MATTHEWS

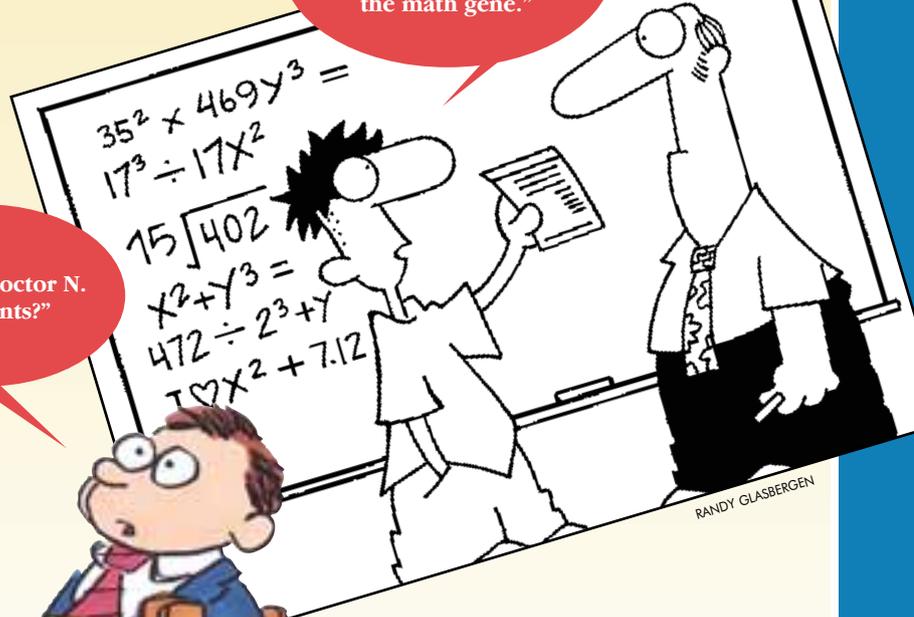


VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY

"I had my doctor do a DNA blood analysis. As I suspected, I'm missing the math gene."



"Are you Doctor N. Covenants?"



RANDY GLASBERGEN

VAL CHADWICK BAGLEY



The HEAVENS RAINED

BY ELDER RONALD T. HALVERSON
Of the Seventy



The Polynesian people have a simple faith, a deep faith. When they hear the truth and they feel it, they accept it.

While serving in the Pacific Islands Area Presidency, I had the marvelous experience of getting acquainted with the people of the islands. They are people of great faith. As I watched them and met their children, I soon learned that to be happy, you don't need all of the trappings of worldly wealth.

Once while I was in Tonga, I was traveling between islands to attend a district conference. Traveling with me were my wife, a translator, and the mission president and his wife. To get from island to island, the people travel by boat. This particular boat trip between Ha'apai and Ha'afeva took us four hours. When we arrived at Ha'afeva, the Saints were lining the shore and singing to us. We rolled up our pants, took off our shoes, and waded ashore.

We soon learned that the people there had been suffering because of a drought. In the islands, drinking water is collected in barrels from rainwater running off roofs. The islanders drink the water from the barrels. If it doesn't rain, they're out of drinking water,

and their crops don't grow either. They had been experiencing the drought for so long that they were out of water, and for dinner that afternoon, they shared with us the last of their food. I thought to myself, "What faith!" They had been fasting, and they asked if we would join them in a prayer for rain, which we did.

After the conference had ended and we prepared to leave, the people on the island prayed not only for rain, but they prayed that we would have good weather until we arrived back at our destination. We got into our boats and traveled back with good weather. But as we arrived at our final destination the heavens opened, and the islands were blessed with rain.

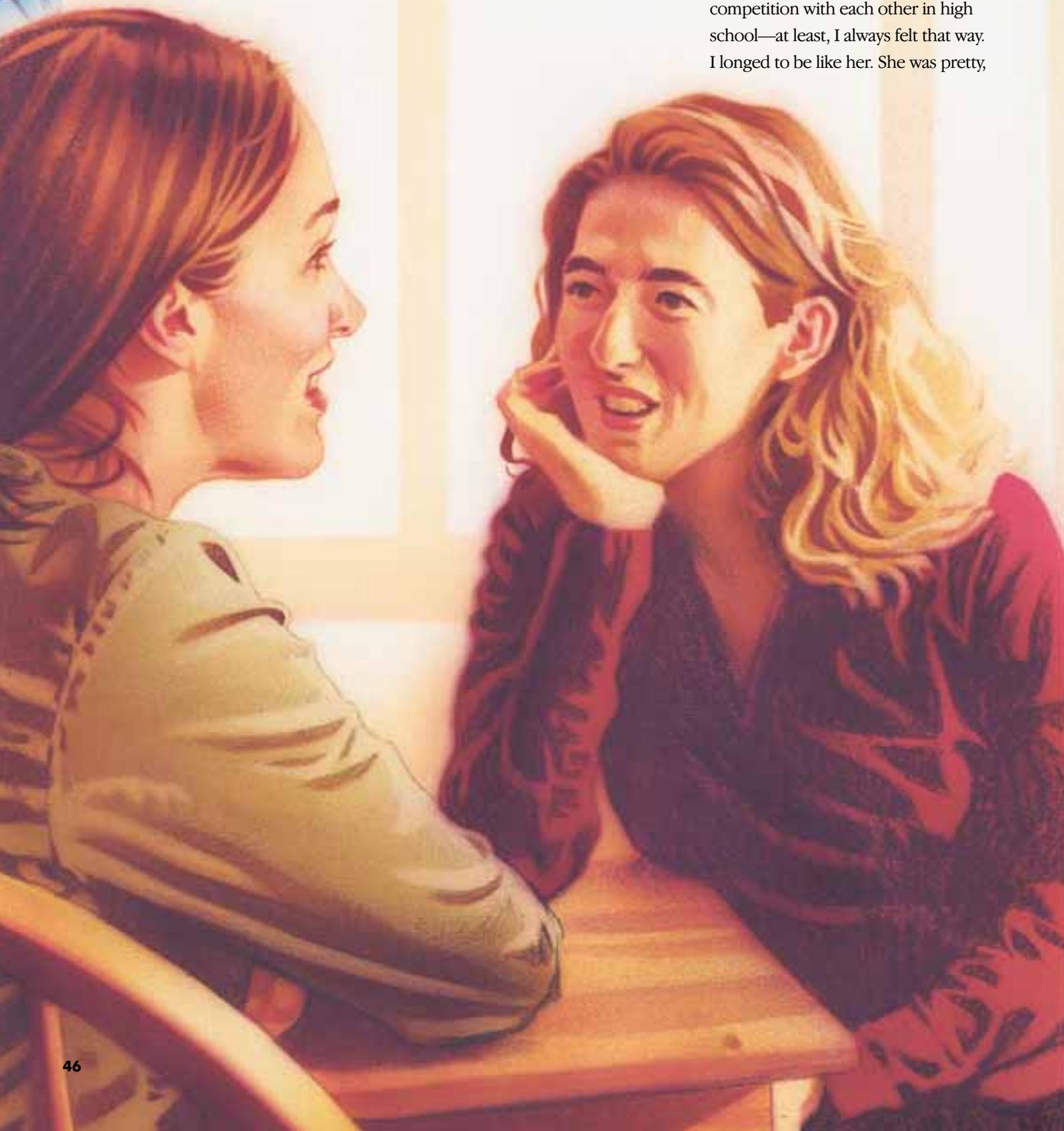
That's the kind of faith many Polynesian people have and the kind of miracles they bring about. They have a simple faith, a deep faith. They don't have to have proof. They don't doubt at all that the Lord lives and that He loves them. When they hear the truth and they feel it, they accept it. Then they build upon that testimony. **NE**



I ENVY YOU

BY ROSALYN COLLINGS EVES

I had always been jealous of Lynn. Despite a close friendship, Lynn and I had always been in unspoken competition with each other in high school—at least, I always felt that way. I longed to be like her. She was pretty,



intelligent, talented, and fun to be around. I, on the other hand, lacked confidence in my appearance and felt socially inept.

One night on my mission I knelt at my bedside, desperately asking the Lord in the first of many prayers to help me overcome this sickness. Over time, the Lord answered my prayers. I learned to value my own worth. I learned that God does not love me for my intelligence or the number of my friends or the wealth of my possessions. He loves me for myself alone.

After I had been home from my mission for nearly a year, I met Lynn for lunch. I told her how I had always envied her. She listened quietly and then looked at me in astonishment. "I was always jealous of *you!*" she said. I realized then how pointless my unspoken envy had been. I asked her if she could forgive me.

"Of course," she said. "As long as you can forgive me, too."

We laughed then and cried a little. I felt an old bitterness melt away to be replaced by peace and an intense gratitude for Lynn's friendship.

I do not mean to make overcoming envy sound easy. It isn't—at least not for me. It has taken me a long time to admit my weakness to myself and to understand the nature of my spiritual illness. I am particularly grateful for Jesus Christ, the true Healer, and for His Atonement, which allows us to overcome our weaknesses and transform them into strengths. **NE**

Rosalyn Collings Eves is a member of the State College University Ward, Altoona Pennsylvania Stake.



FACING CHALLENGES

BY VALERIE BERRY

The hymn "Come, Come, Ye Saints" (*Hymns*, no. 30) has a special place in my heart. When the song was first written, it was meant to comfort the pioneer Saints and encourage them to strive to accomplish their seemingly far-fetched goals. Those pioneers were facing new, extremely difficult challenges every day. Yet they had to keep their spirits high and strong.

Today as I sing "Come, Come, Ye Saints," I feel an overwhelming desire

to put my best foot forward and keep pushing until I reach my goals. "And should we die before our journey's through, Happy day! All is well!" No matter how hard or impossible life may seem, my journey is preparing me for a future of joy. I can only do my best and do it with a smile, trusting the Lord to help me make it all the way back home. **NE**

Valerie Berry is a member of the Russian Jack Ward, Anchorage Alaska North Stake.

FEELING SURE

BY SHAKEEL GILL

My good friend introduced me to the Latter-day Saint missionaries. At the time I met them it was hard to understand English, but my friend helped me to understand them and the teachings they brought. When the missionaries

invited me to be baptized, I found it hard to leave my old culture and teachings. They shared their testimonies and said I needed to ask the



Lord for a testimony, too.

One night I prayed after reading the Book of Mormon, and I received the confirmation by the Spirit that what I had been taught was true. I was baptized in June of 1998. I felt a strong spirit that day.

Two years later I was called to serve the Lord in the Singapore Mission. I was called to bear my testimony to others. I am eternally grateful for that opportunity.

Today my testimony grows stronger as I read the Book of Mormon. I love this Church and the teachings that come from the prophet of the Lord. I am grateful to those who taught me and changed my life by bearing their faith-promoting testimonies. **NE**

Shakeel Gill is a member living in Sialkot, Pakistan.

FREED OF PAIN

BY LEAH BLAKE

My family and I had been on a cruise, and I had become really sick. Unfortunately, we didn't have much medicine with us and were not near any local doctors to get the help I needed

for my infection and the pain I felt.

One night I felt tremendously sick. The little medicine we had was not working. I could not sleep, and my moans and groans were waking my brothers and sisters. After all that my parents and I could do, my father asked, "Do you want a blessing?"

I had never had a priesthood blessing because of an illness before. I didn't know what to say. I thought it would help, but I was still not sure. "Please, Heavenly Father," I prayed, "please let the blessing work."

"Sure, I would love one," I weakly said to my dad.

During the blessing I had a wonderful feeling inside, despite all my pain. Very slowly I felt the pain go away, and suddenly I felt very tired. I could tell that my infection had not gone away, but the pain left. After the blessing I was filled so much with the Spirit I was unable to speak.

I now know that priesthood blessings are given to help us through life's troubles. I know what to do now when I am asked the question "Do you want a blessing?" **NE**

Leah Blake is a member of the Carrollton First Ward, Carrollton Texas Stake.

INSTANT MESSAGES features personal experiences, favorite hymns and scriptures, and other uplifting thoughts. If you have a personal experience that has strengthened your testimony and you'd like us to consider it for *Instant Messages*, please send it to

New Era
Instant Messages
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

Or e-mail it to
cur-editorial-newera@
ldschurch.org

Please limit submissions to 400 words. They may be edited for length and clarity.



Mutual Activity

- In preparation for an activity for your ward young women, read the article, “Your Next Step” on page 10. Have your Young Women leaders ask the Relief Society presidency when you can combine the Young Women activity with something the Relief Society is planning.

Service Project Suggestion

- If you’ve run out of ideas for service projects, check out the *New Era* special issue on service in March 1988. One article, “Nifty Ways to Serve Your Brother,” has almost a hundred suggestions. To read the list, go to www.lds.org. Click on **Gospel Library**, then under **Church Publications** select **HTML**. From here on, click on the boxes with the plus signs in front of the titles. Choose **Magazines**, then **New Era**. Click on **1988**, then on **March**. Find **FYI** and click on the box. The article title is the last in the list. Click on the article title.

Family Home Evening Ideas

- Read the article on page 30, “The Sign on the Wall.” As a family, decide on a saying or quote you could post on your wall that represents a message you would like to teach others. Make the sign, frame it, and hang it up.
- For a really fun family home evening, ask your parents to dig out some of their favorite music they danced to as teenagers. You may have to do some advanced preparation to gather some old songs in a format that you can play on modern equipment. Have your parents teach you some of their favorite dance steps. If you need more inspiration, read “Why Dance?” on page 20.

SUNDAY LESSON HELPS

In addition to the Resource Guides (printed in May and November in the *Ensign* and *Liahona*), Young Women and Aaronic Priesthood teachers may find these additional resources helpful in enhancing lessons 30–33.

Young Women Manual 2

Lesson 30 Strengthening Testimony through Service

Connie Myers, “Friends in Room 102,” this issue.

LaRene Porter Gaunt, “Out of the Ashes,” *New Era*, May 2004, 20.

Lesson 31 The Law of the Land

Poster: “Don’t Try Bending the Rules,” *New Era*, Oct. 2002, 19.

David O. McKay, “Dandy,” *New Era*, Apr. 2003, 10.

Suzanne N. Owen, “Swim between the Flags,” *New Era*, Oct. 1994, 38.

Lesson 32 The Importance of Life

Poster: “Great Expectations?” this issue.

Adam C. Olson, “Standing on Faith,” *New Era*, June 2004, 20.

Lesson 33 The Sacred Power of Procreation

Neal A. Maxwell, “Reasons to Stay Pure,” *New Era*, Mar. 2003, 42.

Spencer W. Kimball, “Live for the Future,” *New Era*, Nov. 2002, 10.

Aaronic Priesthood Manual 2

Lesson 30 Charity

Connie Myers, “Friends in Room 102,” this issue.

Kirk J. Faulkner, “Out of the Mouth of Blake,” *New Era*, Feb. 2004, 8.

Lesson 31 Forgiveness

Spencer V. Jones, “The Stench of Sin,” this issue.

“Can I Be Forgiven,” *New Era*, Mar. 2000, 8.

Jay E. Jensen, “Do You Know How to Repent?” *New Era*, Nov. 1999, 4.

Lesson 32 Cultivating Gifts of the Spirit

Ronald T. Halverson, “The Heavens Rained,” this issue.

Gerald N. Lund, “Is It Revelation?” *New Era*, July 2004, 44.

Mel Jones, “The Man Upstairs,” *New Era*, July 2004, 42.

Lesson 33 Seek Ye Learning

Idea List: “Scripture Study Tips,” *New Era*, June 2004, 33.

Idea List: “Learning Matters,” *New Era*, Nov. 2002, 9.

Caroline H. Benzley, “Be Smart,” *New Era*, Aug. 2002, 30.

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A MODEST ADJUSTMENT

I always look forward to receiving the *New Era* and the *Ensign* every month. Lately, I have not been as modest as I should be. I came across an Instant Messages story on modesty (May 2004). Then I read a quote from President Hinckley on the back cover of the *Ensign* (May 2004). He stated: "A solemn obligation rests on us. . . . We must live as true followers of the Christ, . . . teaching by example the ways of the Lord." It hit me that I should be a better example to my friends by dressing modestly, because I want them to learn to love the Church as much as I do. I am thankful for the *New Era* and other Church magazines for their help and guidance when I need it most.

Hailey White, Naperville Second Ward, Joliet Illinois Stake

WE STAND ON FAITH

In the June 2004 *New Era*, I saw a picture of a young man who has no legs. His name is Kacey McCallister. He knows that he is a child of God. My sister also can't walk. Thank you for writing that story ("Standing on Faith"). It helps me.

Ho Youn Ellision, Rivanna Ward, Waynesboro Virginia Stake

A NATURAL SELECTION OF READERS' RESPONSES

Thanks so much for the article "My Answer to Evolution." On the same day I got the May issue, my friend asked me some of the same questions the author of that article was asked. I always hear about people bearing their testimonies, but when my friend faced me with those questions, I knew what to do. The article helped me understand so much better.

Ashley Henderson, Eastern Avenue Ward, Sacramento California East Stake



"I am thankful for the New Era and other Church magazines for their help and guidance."

I really liked the article "My Answer to Evolution" (May 2004). I was impressed by the way the author handled the situation. This article reminded me of what I had learned at church once. My teacher said to get a testimony now so that when people show you "proof" that evolution really did happen or that God does not exist, then you will know the truth. They will not be able to lead you away from what you know.

Liesl Coyne, North Shores Ward, Bloomfield Hills Michigan Stake

I found the article about evolution and the teen who bore her testimony really good. My biology class has been discussing that topic recently. My teacher says it is a controversial issue and that the evidence is beginning to point more towards "creation by intelligent design." I also believe this.

He was planning to have a debate on creation vs. evolution. I was supposed to be pro evolution. Knowing the truth of the gospel and being completely against evolution, I was having a hard time finding any worthwhile argument against the very thing I believe in. I hope that more people will come to believe and understand this issue and be able to show that life is created by "intelligent design."

Alysun Swanson, La Sierra Heights Ward, Jurupa California Stake

We love hearing from you. Write us at the following address. Please include the names of your ward and stake (or branch and district).

*New Era
We've Got Mail
50 E. North Temple
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150, USA*

*Or e-mail us at
cur-editorial-newera@ldschurch.org
Submissions may be edited for length and clarity.*

I WAS NOT THERE

BY KRISTY MONEY

I will admit I was not there
When Moses led them free.
I did not smell the salty air
While crossing the Red Sea.

I did not weep at Jesus's feet.
Not one tear did I shed
On Calvary's hill, nor did I see
My Savior's thorn-crowned head.

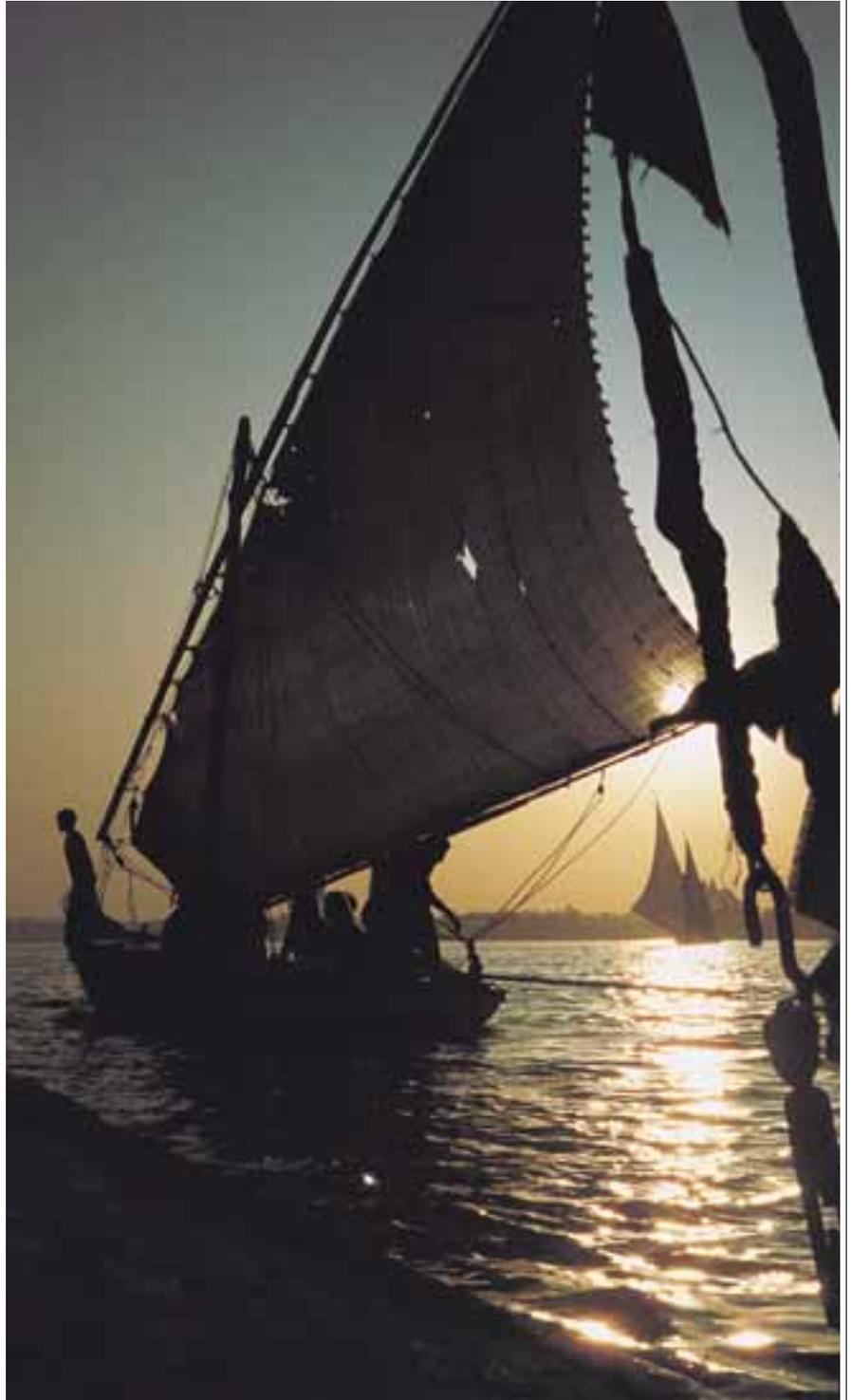
I did not wave the battle flag
Nor wield a Nephite sword
To fight for ancient liberty
With Moroni in Cumorah's war.

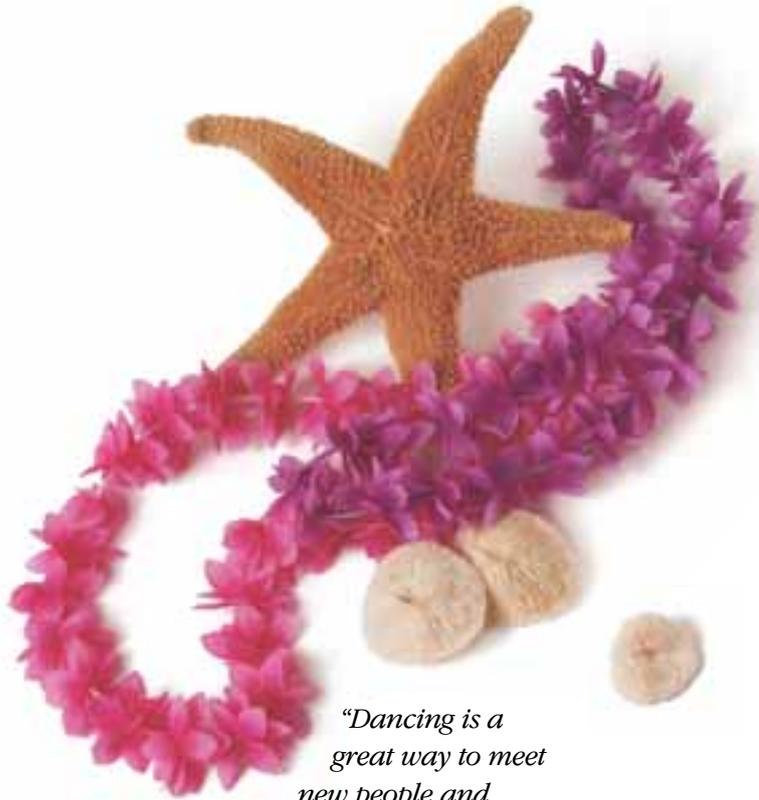
When wagons creaked and children slept
Upon the dirt and snow,
To die to reach their Zion land,
No handcart did I tow.

And yet, we have a Father who
Provided us a way
Through faith, desire, and humble prayer
To see all truths this day.

We need not have been there, my friend.
No eyewitness then need we have.
Through the still, small voice's whisperings,
Our faith in these shall live.

BY JENNIFER ROSSITER





“Dancing is a great way to meet new people and make new friends. I’ve met some of my very best friends through dance. It’s also a great way to try something new and even develop a talent.”

See “Why Dance?” p. 20.