



THE *Light* ALONG

By Julia Woodbury

The summer before I turned 16, my dad decided that he wanted to get as many of our family members together as he could and take us all on a camping trip. My grandparents came and so did many of Dad's brothers and sisters, along with their families. We made a large, rambunctious group, and I often felt like I was in heaven on that camping trip, surrounded by the beauty of the mountains and among the people I loved most.

The trip held special significance for me because that summer I had felt strongly impressed to receive my patriarchal blessing. My grandfather was a patriarch, and so I asked if he could be the one to give it. He agreed and obtained permission, and we planned for my blessing to take place the Sunday directly following our trip.

At the time my dad was also my bishop and, while at camp, we had very unique patriarchal blessing interview. One night, as the sun set and the moon began to rise, we took a canoe out onto the lake near our campsite. The water was still and serene as we glided over the surface and talked about my blessing.

We stayed out in the boat for a long time, enjoying the beauty of the stars that were beginning to come out. Then suddenly, from far across the lake, we heard singing. The sound carried easily over the water, now glistening with starlight. I immediately recognized the voices of my grandparents. They were singing Grandpa's favorite hymn, "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy" (*Hymns*, no. 335). In this hymn it speaks of Heavenly Father as a lighthouse keeper who guides His children safely in from the troubled sea. I think Grandpa's favorite part is when it calls us the keepers of the "lights along the shore." It means that while our Heavenly Father is the great guiding light, we need to tend the "lower lights" along the shore to help bring our brothers and sisters safely home.

We listened to Grandma and Grandpa sing: "Let the lower lights be burning; Send a gleam across the wave. Some poor fainting, struggling seaman You may rescue, you may save."

At the moment they started this chorus, a beam of light shone out in a bright path across the water.

Grandpa had pulled a flashlight from his pocket and, every time the song mentioned light, he switched it on and used it to guide us safely in.

Dad and I laughed with them and started rowing back to shore. I treasure that memory and will always remember my grandparents' voices and their light guiding us in over the dark water.

When the weekend of camping came to a close, we all returned home, and the following Sunday my grandfather gave me my patriarchal blessing. Just weeks later he passed away. He had been able to type my blessing and print it out, but it was my grandmother who finally sent it to me.

I am grateful that my grandfather was a keeper of one of the lights along the shore of my life. His light and example has guided me closer to my Heavenly Father. I will always think of my patriarchal blessing as a light coming across the waves, guiding me in from the dark. It is a bright beam of my Heavenly Father's mercy. **NE**

THE SHORE

A painting of two people in a canoe on a lake at sunset. A woman in the foreground rows a wooden canoe with a single-bladed paddle. She wears a blue t-shirt, a red life vest, and a dark cap. Behind her, a man wearing a green cap and an orange life vest rows. The canoe has "EDEN" painted on its bow. The water is a deep teal, and the sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow hues of a setting sun.

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