

One priesthood quorum learned a lot about service, friendship, and the worth of a soul.

Everyone knew the house—the one on the corner across from the school, the one you avoided, the one you feared. Any careless child straying from the pavement in front of that house would get a rough and sudden rebuke from the old man who lived there: “Get off of my lawn!”

Some of the young men in the Hillcrest First Ward, Logan Utah East Stake, knew that house well. It belonged to Brother Jacobsen, a less-active member of the ward. After they moved on from elementary school, the boys no longer had to pass by his house every day. But they weren’t done with that house yet.

A Challenge Answered

One day the deacons quorum adviser for these boys challenged the quorum president to select a service project—one that would require a long-term commitment from the quorum.



David Shirk

“We had prayed and fasted about it as a presidency,” says David Shirk, 18, who was deacons quorum president at the time. “One afternoon as we drove by that certain house, I just kind of had that thought pop into



Michael Althouse

my head about who we could serve. And I thought, ‘It would be cool if we could mow a lawn or something.’”

As David and his father drove by the same area later, the thought struck David again, and he told his father about it. “My dad said, ‘That was the Spirit working,’” says David.

“And he said, ‘Well, how about Brother Jacobsen here?’ And he pointed to the house.”

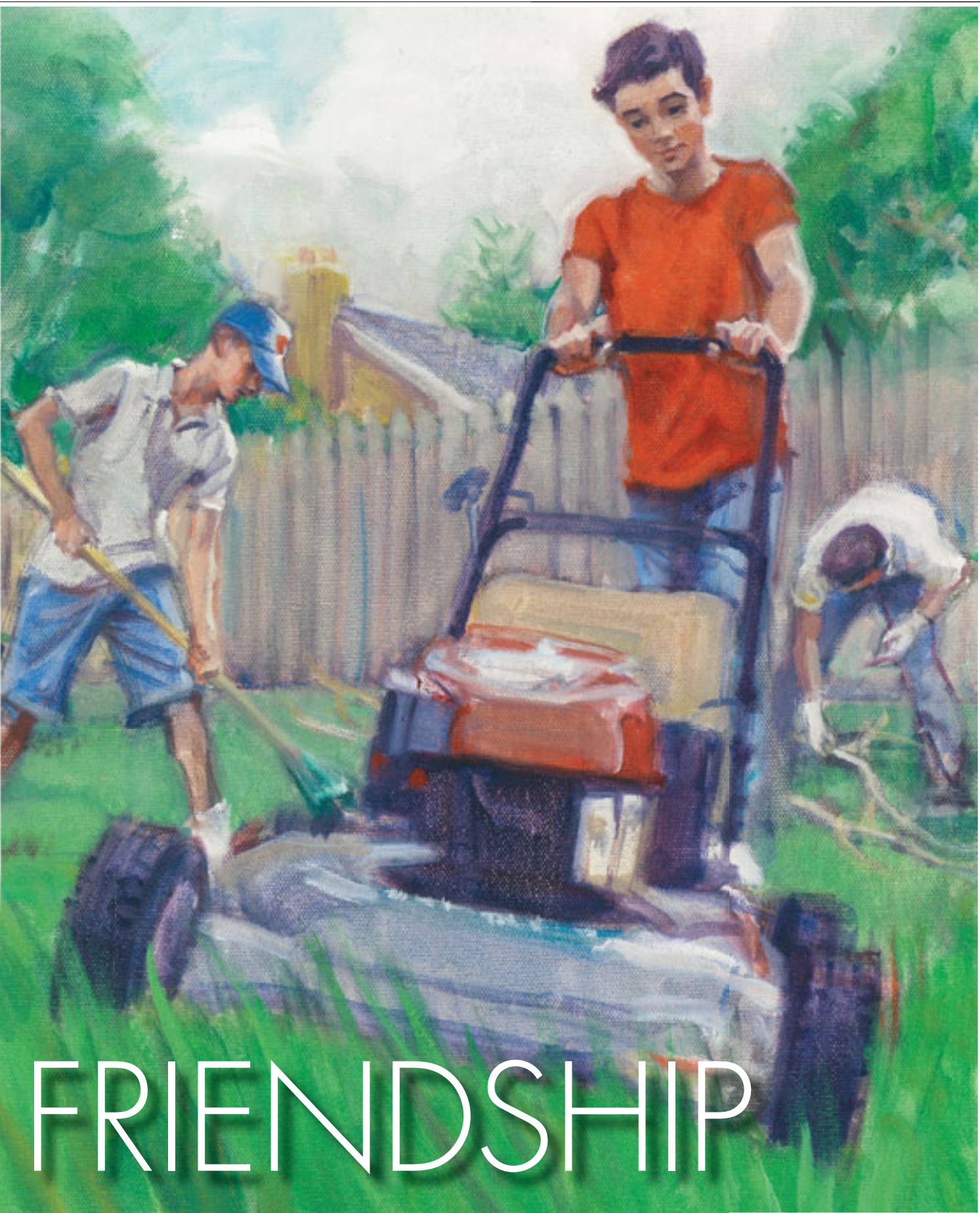
Brother Jacobsen had recently had some health problems, so the boys in the quorum decided to help him by mowing his lawn. But asking him wasn’t easy.

Scared but Serving

“We were pretty scared,” says Michael Althouse, now 18, one of the quorum members. “We had walked past his house every day on the way to school since we were young. The only time we saw him was when he was telling us to stay off his lawn. We never saw him other than in that context, yelling at us. So we were always scared to touch his lawn, and now we were going to be asking to mow it!”

When his wife answered the door, the boys felt some relief, but then they heard a gruff voice call from within, “Who’s at the door?” The fear returned. Though Brother Jacobsen was hesitant, his wife was willing to let them mow the lawn, so they made an appointment.

FROM FEAR TO



FRIENDSHIP

After becoming friends with Brother Jacobsen by serving him, the boys saw wonderful things start to happen in his life. When he died, the boys were asked to be pallbearers at his funeral, saying goodbye to their friend with one final act of service.



Jacob Harrison

During the first few visits that summer, the boys still felt a little tension, but they soon felt more and more comfortable. Of course, going home laden with Sister Jacobsen's homemade brownies or cookies didn't hurt. After a time even Brother Jacobsen began warming to them, coming out to talk to them about his experiences in World War II or about his favorite hobby: remote-controlled model airplanes.

Eventually Brother Jacobsen asked the boys to do various other chores, all the while telling them stories from his life or talking about his interests. After the next summer the appointments became less regular, though they continued to visit and help where needed. They felt that they had made a friend rather than just performing a service project.

Big Changes

Then Sister Jacobsen died. She had been diagnosed with cancer not long before, and Brother Jacobsen had started worrying that he wouldn't see her again, because they had never been sealed in the temple. He had just recently begun to reach out to his home teachers and other members of the ward, and he later began attending church for the first time since he was a boy.

Soon after Sister Jacobsen died, Brother Jacobsen was placed in an assisted living center, but he still attended the same ward, and the young men of the Aaronic

Priesthood still played their part in helping him where they could.

"When he was at church, we always tried to talk to him," says Jacob Harrison, 18. "He would recognize us at church and say hello to us. We were asked by the bishop to go to the center and teach him out of *Preach My Gospel* every Sunday. Two of us would go every week."

On these visits the boys also learned some new things about Brother Jacobsen. "They had an organ down there at the center," says Kody Klaassen, 17, "so he would play the organ for us every time. He had once owned a music shop, so he did that kind of stuff."

"When he was young, he used to write and record a lot of music," says Jared Larsen, 17. "He could play any instrument. It was pretty cool. I didn't know that about him until later on when we'd go down to the center and he'd play for us."

Brother Jacobsen even started serving others by sharing his musical talent at other rest homes for a couple of hours a week. But most importantly, he rekindled his testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, received the Melchizedek Priesthood, and eventually went to the temple to receive sacred ordinances and be sealed to his wife for eternity.

Lessons of Service and Love

As the young men prepare for missions and a lifetime of priesthood service, they know that small things, such as overcoming fear or performing



Kody Klaassen



Jared Larsen

simple service, can lead to something great. Their experiences have also taught them a number of other important lessons.

David says he now has a better understanding of the priesthood. “It’s God’s power. We have to use it righteously. And when we hold the right priesthood keys, He has entitled us to revelation for our responsibilities.

I also realized the importance of service and sustaining our priesthood leaders. Without the quorum’s support, this would never have succeeded.”

Through Brother Jacobsen, Michael saw the power of the Atonement. “You could tell that he was making an effort to make a change. And then when we started seeing him at church, there really was a big change. He seemed to have a different light or countenance about him. I think that was when I first started to understand the power and effect of the Atonement and the way it can change a life.”

“I gained a greater testimony of service and how much it can affect somebody,” says Kody. “It was really neat to see how he opened up to us through service. I don’t think any of us really knew the effect that it had on him. When I was mowing his lawn, I never thought he would be sealed to his wife. It was cool to see him gradually open up through our just doing service and the power the Spirit had then.”

“We could see that week after week we were having an effect,” says Jacob. “Our leaders kept saying, ‘When you serve your fellowmen, you serve God’ [see Mosiah 2:17]. This showed me what service can do, because Brother Jacobsen started becoming my friend.”

Jared agrees. “Becoming friends with a man you first know as the scary guy that wants you to get off his lawn and yells at you to leave—you know, there’s always a friend in someone. It just takes time to become that friend.”

Less than a year after fulfilling his goal of being sealed to his wife, Brother Jacobsen died. The boys were asked to be pallbearers at his funeral, saying goodbye to their friend with one final act of service. **NE**

