

# Character o' Missions

by Cory Bickmore

Mormons serve missions. You may have seen us from time to time, pairs of young men or young women walking down the street dressed in snappy clothes, dodging curse words and flying beer bottles from local passersby. We volunteer two years or eighteen months of our lives to spread the good word of Christ, along with all the running from neighborhood pit bulls one could hope for.

What's more, service as a Mormon missionary stamps the character with the great lessons of life. I have decided (because you can't stop me) to share through journal excerpts what my time as a missionary did for me long ago as a 19- and 20-year-old in New Zealand. So put down your empty beer bottle for a moment and take a peek inside.

## **On being self-reliant...**

Friday January 27, 1994: "Since the Oka's washing machine has broken down, we had to go to the laundromat to do our laundry. I threw my red shorts in with my load of underwear by mistake. Now I have pink underwear."

## **On loving your area of labor...**

Friday February 11, 1994: "Zone Developmental Meeting is in Huntly tomorrow. Huntly is such a hole."

## **On learning from companions...**

Monday November 15, 1993: "Elder Bennett and I went to our little chapel on Shoalhaven Street to get some baptismal clothes. It was open because people were using the Family History Centre inside. Bennett got a butter knife and commenced popping the locks on the closet doors, trying to find the baptismal clothing. We looked through every closet except the one they were in. Sister Moleni came out and unlocked it, although we could have done it ourselves with the knife. The important lesson I learned is we ought to have used proper channels to

get the clothing, but the real lesson I learned was how to use a butter knife to open closet doors at a chapel."

## **On being in the world, but not of it...**

Sunday September 24, 1995: "Elder Moir, the Assistant to the President, came down with his companion to do a trade-off with us today. Being Sunday, it wasn't much of a trade-off. The most exciting event was when Elder Moir and I went to the beach to see how wicked and sinful it was."

## **On facing adversity...**

Monday March 28, 1994: "I couldn't finish tea (dinner) at the Everndens' because I was so full. Notwithstanding, we did commit the Niapulau's three boys to baptism tonight, although I was in the next room sleeping because I hurt too much."

## **On edifying each other in the work...**

Friday February 11, 1994: "The district meeting was fairly good. I gave the Missionary Guide lesson on planning and Elder Gibb managed to involve *Star Wars* in his lesson on faith."

## **On loving the people, Part I...**

Tuesday February 15, 1994: "These people are the worst drivers I have ever beheld."

## **On loving the people, Part II...**

Thursday August 31, 1995: "We tracted out a real weirdo today. That's what missionaries find knocking on doors – the elect and the fruitcakes."

## **On optimism...**

Friday December 31, 1993: "It's frustrating going to Karen's place because of the difficulty teaching her. The only way she will accept this church as the only true church, forsake astrology, forget reincarnation, live the law of chastity, obey the Word of Wisdom, pay her tithing, remember *anything* we say, discover the Book of Mormon is true, not be "bored" with Ether or the Doctrine and Covenants,

believe in the resurrection, accept the fact that God and Jesus Christ have glorious and perfect bodies, not go church-shopping, search for truth rather than a church, and basically gain a testimony is if she will truly pray and recognize the answer. It's a good thing that quite a few of her concerns have been resolved already."

## **On avoiding idleness...**

Tuesday March 22, 1994: "I hung out in the mission office in Takapuna all day as my companion attended Zone Leader Training. I did assorted little jobs, but mostly nothing. I peeked at the shift board for a few seconds."

## **On enduring all things...**

Saturday August 19, 1995: "I had a good, positive feeling all day, even when we were verbally abused by some hooligans in Papamoa, and when a member forced me to eat too much at our tea (dinner) appointment. The Spirit is with me."

## **On the priorities of life...**

Saturday March 26, 1994: "We visited our investigator Darrell at Sunset Dairy (a convenience store). She gave me a triple scoop ice cream even though I only paid for a double! She's rad!"

## **On faith in the power of conversion...**

Monday March 28, 1994: "Nice homes + old people = We're too old to change."

## **On what it's all about...**

Friday September 29, 1995: "We talked with one very pretty lady for a while about the Church. I suppose that this is the 'joy of the work'."

Wasn't that enlightening? You feel closer to us already. I know I feel closer to you. So next time you see those missionaries trudging up the road, invite them in, but make sure you shut the door firmly on the pit bull.