

The message came much later. I was no longer a young girl full of fervor and belief and he was no longer a great big man in stature. I attended the opening of the Oakland Temple and heard President McKay offer the dedicatory prayer. Before I heard the prophet pray I had been full of questions and so spiritually hungry that I hurt deep in my soul. When he prayed, what I heard, as if for the first time, was gratitude for our relationship to God, for the mission of Christ, and for the beautiful commandment that we love one another. I came hungry and I was fed.

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ON SHAKING HANDS WITH DAVID O. MCKAY

There were advantages and disadvantages to living across the street from Brother and Sister McKay. On Sunday we couldn't play football in the street because there was always the possibility that President David O. McKay would drive up in his big, black Buick to visit his grandson. The first time he came we were caught passing the football in the middle of the street. President McKay just smiled and waved, but we felt as if we had committed a felony. Playing football on the Sabbath was one thing, but being seen playing football by the prophet was another. After the first encounter we always played in the back yard on Sunday afternoon. Whenever the Buick was spotted, we'd put the football down and walk around the house to wave and greet President McKay. We didn't see him often, but often enough that we felt we knew him personally.

This special relationship to the prophet of God was always a source of pride. Whenever I would tell my friends and relatives about it, I made it sound as if we were on a first-name basis. Each time President McKay would visit his grandson, I wanted to go shake his hand, introduce myself, and tell him that I was a Teacher in the Aaronic priesthood. But when the younger children ran right up and said hello, I kept my distance and watched the way he spoke to them. He was an old man, but his eyes and face were deeply alive. I don't think I had a very full conception of the meaning of the words "prophet, seer, and revelator," but I knew that there was something unique about this man. Something that made him easy to honor and love.

One Fast Sunday a year or two later, I was officiating at the sacrament table when I saw President McKay come into the rear of the chapel. He was coming to bless his newest great-grandchild. I didn't know of any set procedure for when the prophet came to Sacrament Meeting, but it seemed perfectly natural when everyone stood up in respectful silence. Everything took on a different significance that day. Blessing the sacrament was not just reading a card, it was blessing the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The weight of the covenants made in partaking of the sacrament also seemed heavier than I remembered in the past. The deacon who was to pass the sacrament to President McKay was so nervous that his face was red and hot

with perspiration. I was a little nervous myself, but the sacrament was administered reverently and even the babies who were to be blessed were quiet.

When President McKay blessed his great-granddaughter it wasn't loud enough for everyone to hear, and I was a little disappointed. But the prophet's presence affected the way I listened to the testimonies. Instead of my usual critical approach to everything said in Testimony meeting, I listened and even prayed that the Holy Ghost would inspire those who wanted to bear their testimonies. I didn't feel my usual embarrassment when an elderly sister bore the same testimony I had heard her bear every month since I had moved into the ward. Just when I was expecting the bishop to stand and close the meeting, President McKay got up and walked to the pulpit.

After eight years I don't remember what he said to the congregation that day, but I do remember knowing that I was listening to a prophet. I was concentrating so intensely on the man, how he looked and what he said, that everything was hazy except the prophet's face. The bishop stood up after President McKay's testimony, closed the meeting, announced that we would sing "We Thank Thee O God for a Prophet" as our closing hymn, and that his first counsellor would close with prayer. Our ward had never been known for the volume of its singing, but that Fast Sunday we made up for our previous lack of enthusiasm. I sang as loud as I dared—no particular part, just somewhere between the soprano and bass notes.

At the close of the meeting the entire congregation formed a line to go up on the stand and shake hands with President McKay. It seemed like a long time to wait to shake someone's hand, and I remember feeling a slight resentment for some of the older brothers and sisters who stopped to talk. I thought the line would move faster when the children and young people started shaking hands with the prophet. But no one hurried us and President McKay was interested in speaking personally with the children. As I got nearer to President McKay my eyes got moist and I didn't have a handkerchief. I decided not to wipe my eyes and tried to convince myself that it was just hay fever acting up. I looked straight into President McKay's eyes and shook his hand. He was smiling and I smiled and even my watery eyes smiled. The prophet turned to Bishop Andrew and said, "Bishop, you have some fine young people in this ward."

I walked down from the stand and out of the chapel into the sunny afternoon. I was glad that I could walk home by myself and think about what had happened. I hadn't even introduced myself and yet at the time it seemed unimportant. Maybe I felt the way I did because I knew that he was a prophet and spoke with God; perhaps it was because I was a Latter-day Saint and he was our leader. It was difficult for me to analyze things on an empty stomach, so I decided to forego any conclusions and go home to dinner.

That was the last time I saw President McKay at a personal distance. My life has changed in many ways in the eight years since that meeting. I've been away to school, I've served as a missionary in England, my understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ has matured, and yet my belief that David O. McKay was and is a prophet of God has remained constant. My knowl-