

# Carrying On

*Ruth Knight*

*Firm as the mountains around us,  
Stalwart and brave we stand  
On the rock our fathers planted  
For us in this goodly land.*

—Ruth May Fox  
(no. 255, *Hymns*, 1985)

ONE OF MY EARLIEST MEMORIES is of my mother pressing her freshly laundered temple clothing, folding it carefully into a special suitcase, and letting me carry it to its place on the floor of her closet. It waited there, ready to accompany her should she either seek to renew her covenants at the temple in Idaho Falls or be finally and joyously called home to her parents in heaven. Although the ceremony was too sacred to discuss outside the thick white walls of the temple, I knew that each piece of the pure white ceremonial clothing had an eternal significance, and I felt closer to salvation just for having carried it to her closet. Most people in Teton Valley did not make a temple journey often. They were snowed in during the winter, and in the summer, valley farmers had to use every good-weather minute for cultivating. At any rate, income to pay for the trip to Salt Lake or Idaho Falls came from the autumn harvest of seed potatoes. Yet somehow the massive mountains encircling us, topped by the granite spires of the Tetons, protected us, enriched us, and lent us strength as we struggled to give our lives for the building of the kingdom.

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From our ancestors' journals, we had learned that dying for one's beliefs is often a blessed alternative to living for them. During their nineteenth-century migration, my ancestors buried their dead all the way from the Mississippi River to the frozen plains of Wyoming. One of my great-great-grandmothers, who left wealth in New York, a two-story brick home in Illinois, and a daughter in a shallow trailside grave in Nebraska, went into labor only a few hours before her husband finally stopped their oxen in front of a dugout near a lake of salt. There she gave birth to my great-grandfather, whom she named Freeborn after their long-awaited sanctuary. Freeborn later married Mary, who, as a two-year-old, walked over a thousand miles with her mother's handcart company.

In the 1890s, the same women who walked halfway across a continent also nurtured large families, farmed the desert, gained major political and professional positions, and lobbied with Susan B. Anthony until they were among the first in the nation to earn the right to vote. Suddenly, because of polygamy, the government disenfranchised them, confiscated their property, and proscribed their marriages as criminal offenses. Families chose either imprisonment of men or abandonment of women and children. Lonely women were left to put potatoes in the ground and on the table.

By the middle of this century, stories of these persecutions and of the Saints' participation in the feminist movement of the last century were about as current as the Shoshone arrowhead fragments that surfaced in our Teton Valley yard every spring when the gophers got busy. Monogamous wives, who viewed themselves as "homemakers," even though most farmed side by side with their husbands, gathered on winter afternoons to quilt. Over the click of needles and the babble of babies, they reminded each other how blessed they were not to have to live like pioneer women. Somehow growing up to be anything but a full-time wife and mother seemed to be either a terrible ordeal or downright sinful.

The Church preached strict obedience to the laws of the land. Everyone in our valley joined to pray and flag wave for our National Guard when the entire unit was sent to Vietnam. We convinced ourselves that the sacrifice was necessary for the freedom of all. Though the mountains blocked most radio and TV signals and the newspapers were late, we saw and heard enough about the "way it was" out in the world to huddle together—secure, protected, encircled by the eternal mountains. We thanked God for our membership in the Church and asked him to bless our far-off servicemen and missionaries with power to soften the hearts of the wicked and to bring an end to lawlessness and sin.

In a Mormon junior college in Rexburg, Idaho, romance and anticipation were in the air. I had more dates during first semester than I had ever dreamed of. Hard-studying missionaries, just back from the field, talked seriously to me about their desire for a large family, a wife who could make home a bit of heaven on earth, and a helpmate who could inspire and support them in their careers.

But then I noticed Tommy Knight. Tommy was tall, handsome, and happy-go-lucky—a young man with a huge smile and a southern drawl. He drove a Mustang convertible with the top down, rode a mean mountain motorcycle, and was always asking for my geology notes. His wide-eyed flexibility attracted me. He had not already decided how he wanted his family set up or how his wife was to act, and he happily ate pizza while I filled him in on all the eternally important stuff, including a temple wedding, which we planned for spring.

The first part of my temple wedding was a ceremonial washing and anointing. Covered modestly with a pure white sheet, I stepped from my dressing room into a tiny, white-tiled room where a white-haired woman with a blue, blue gaze looked deep into my eyes while she anointed me with consecrated oil and blessed me. Awash in the sensible purposes of mortality which suddenly seemed both awesome and transcendent, I knew then that the physical and the spiritual were sides of the same precious coin.

Then I was clothed in holiness, and my mother helped me into the wedding dress she had made. She and I joined others in a towering room, filled with floor-to-ceiling murals depicting the earth and everything on it. The world outside seemed miles and ages away.

Women made covenants on one side of the room, men on the other. Then all moved from room to room, in in and up up, each room taller than the last, each covenant more intense. The ritual seemed totally alien, and yet not unlike the scriptures we studied each Sunday in our community meetinghouses. I kept forgetting the words and actions I was supposed to imitate or repeat, but it didn't matter; loving, white-clothed women hovered around me, prompting, patting, reassuring. I looked across the room to see my tiny father trying to untangle my tall Tommy from his temple clothing, and I was overcome with love and thankfulness.

Later, kneeling at a velvet altar reflected endlessly in the mirrors on the walls, I sealed my forever life and energy to the forever life and energy of my husband, thinking with my head that I was taking Tommy's name and becoming part of his family, but feeling with my heart that he was taking my lifestyle and would carry on the traditions that were mine.

That summer we lived in Teton Valley feeling like little kids playing house and trying to earn money for school. We moved to Brigham Young University in the fall with insufficient money to last the year. If we didn't pay my tuition and I earned money waiting tables, we would have had enough money to see us through. But Tommy pushed me to register, arguing that it would be better to go into debt to prepare me to earn a living then to risk unpreparedness should he die in a motorcycle accident.

I wanted to major in history or English but registered for elementary education because elementary teaching jobs were more plentiful than high school teaching jobs, and nursing did not appeal to me. I did not think a woman could do anything with history or English except teach high school.

Professors rewarded me with excellent grades and I, in turn, longed to have Tommy become a professor. I imagined him writing wonderful history books with my silent, invisible help, and I saw myself entertaining his fascinating colleagues. It seemed irrelevant that Tommy wanted to be a used-car dealer and that I hated to invite people over to dinner because it meant cooking instead of reading, not to mention shoveling my "organized" disarray of papers and books into a box in the bedroom in order to make the apartment presentable.

Tommy kept withdrawing from classes and wheeling and dealing with old cars when he was supposed to be studying for blue book exams in history, so I read the university catalogue and talked him into transferring into industrial arts education. He loved the auto shop, though he drove the instructors crazy by ignoring his homework while securing the auto repair business of their colleagues in other departments.

One night during their monthly visit, our home teachers told us that after four long years another couple in our student ward had successfully conceived a child with help from a fertility specialist. I felt flushed. Did they want to know why we had been married a year and a half and had no baby? I was still uncomfortable admitting that I slept with Tommy, let alone discussing its consequences with other men. The silence in the room was unbearable, broken only when one of our visitors reminded us that the prophet had admonished that education was no reason to postpone having a family.

I graduated that spring, but Tommy had two and a half years left before he could get a teaching certificate. I was feeling guilty about not being pregnant and frustrated that Tommy took school so lightly. When I was offered a teaching position in Provo, I told Tommy with a long face that a woman's place was in the home and that I was giving up on his becoming a teacher. I thought he would quit school and go to

work, so we could start a family. Instead, he promised that if I would take the teaching job, he would make sure he was teaching in two years.

I dearly loved teaching second grade and never felt so torn as when we delightedly announced the due date of our first child. My principal informed me that because of my pregnancy, my contract would not be renewed and asked me to write a letter of resignation. I said nothing about the baby and listed moving out-of-state as my reason for departure.

For the next few years we moved from state to state, following automechanics teaching jobs. I met people whose religious ceremonies involved using peyote or dancing with rattlesnakes writhing live between their teeth. I met atheists and agnostics. I met liberals and fundamentalists who said they disliked Mormons even more than they disliked each other. I met people who boiled mutton stew over open fires to eat on fry bread plates, people who picked poke salad by the roadside and cooked it with fat back, people who complained about flying all over the world on business, and people who had twenty-four-hour uniformed security guards to protect the art pieces hung in the halls of their columned mansions.

But because my strongest ties were always to the Church, and the Church seemed much the same wherever we went, I never realized I was really "out in the world" until Tom lost his job teaching auto mechanics and told me that if I didn't get a job to help out, he was going to sell our little Appalachian country house and use the equity to buy a nearly bankrupt body shop. He had no business experience, and neither did I. My Utah elementary school teaching certification had run out, and I was fifteen hundred miles from Brigham Young University. I had been a housewife for seven years, and the eldest of our three children was in first grade.

Tom said if I would go to law school, he would donate his retirement money and take a salaried job until I graduated. But it seemed as though no one at church believed law school was Tom's idea. Friends reminded me that no success could compensate for failure in the home, that my babies needed a full-time mother, that worldliness was unbecoming to a woman. They said that if baby-sitting, sewing, and envelope stuffing did not provide enough money, I should live on faith. They assured me that the Lord would reward my obedience. A respected Church leader warned me that if I went to law school, I would be divorced in five years. He was convinced that rubbing shoulders with all those educated men would make me think that a man who worked on cars was not good enough for me. A woman who gets more education than her husband, he added, strips the man of his

manhood. Other friends distanced themselves from me as though I had something contagious. A few people said, "Go for it" but usually offered future assistance if the plan didn't work.

One Sunday a woman I respected stopped me in the meetinghouse hallway and said, "I have been asked by the stake to organize a letter-writing campaign so that interested people will let their congressmen know that they oppose the ERA. I hope that you will be willing to help."

I had never turned down a Church calling, so I said, "Sure."

"Good. We need to have you call everyone on the ward list from K to N and ask them to meet in your home. You could have refreshments and maybe type up some letters for people to sign."

"I'd get more people if I had this at the church," I said, thinking of the long country road to our home.

"Oh, no, this is not a Church calling. We must keep church and state separate," she replied kindly.

I had never given the Equal Rights Amendment much thought. If the Church told me to oppose it, I would, but somehow being asked by someone called by the Church to do something that I was forbidden to do in the name of the Church or in the Church building unnerved me.

But a devil deep inside me hinted that if I were really good at acceptable politics, my friends would trust me again, so I nodded as if in total agreement. I held my letter-writing party at the home of a staunchly conservative woman with a large town home. As I tried to put together some intelligent anti-ERA letters, I began to think, really for the first time, about women's rights. I gave my party, but I sensed that it was time for me to move on.

Since I could no longer stay in my nest, I prepared to fly.

Law school for me was like coming in halfway through an Air Force training movie, yet being expected to take wing using the strategies discussed at the beginning of the movie. I wore the proper uniforms and tried to march to one drummer at school and another at church, but in the seclusion of the back bedroom, my journal received details of both worlds to which I did not quite belong.

The height of my isolation came when I found myself graduated, working pressured overtime for a publisher of state statutes, and frantically preparing for one of the worst bar exams in the country. From my journal during that time:

I pride myself on being a healthy person. So it is understandable that I worry a little about my eyesight going bad; I read law for a living. Finally I give up and go to an optometrist, and go and go. New

contacts; thinner contacts; artificial tears; reading glasses as in "You are getting older and will soon need bifocals." Can't see across my office; can't see across my desk; can't see across my nose. Thirsty. Dizzy. Nauseated. Skin scales. Hair like straw. Stumbling. Speech garbled. Concentrate on putting one word after another—putting pencil on right place on paper. Faint. Handwriting shaky. Backache. Thirsty. Get sick if I drink but can see better when I drink. Oh, no. Deadline. Here are four more session laws to go in your title. *Deadline.*

Go to the doctor during lunch. Working in the waiting room. Working in the examination room. Worry worry. *Diabetes?* "Blood, we want your blood." Puncture. Blood sucking up a little tube. New little machine. Beep. "Not diabetes."

Urine. "Here in the little cup."

"Can't."

"Have to." Concentrate. Need to be working, studying, mothering, wifing, doing laundry.

"Not lupus either."

"Stress? Is that all? The dehydration made my contacts stick to my eyeballs? Eeeei!"

"Take these little pink pills for anxiety attacks."

"Pills? Drugs? I don't take drugs. I don't even drink coffee!"

"Well, I could prescribe a lot of *beer*. . . ."

"Gimme the pills."

Back to work until 11:00 p.m. Stacks of pages pages. Alone in the big black building late at night. Night. Morning. Work work.

Knock knock. The boss looks nervous, angry.

"We need to talk. When exactly do you plan to leave to study for the bar?"

I already told the man. I show him again on the calendar: five days to study and three days to travel and take the exam (the two-day exam with twenty-four subjects plus multistate when other states only have six subjects or eight or none. Obscure subjects like equity and worse).

"No, you cannot have the time off."

"But you said . . ."

"I realize you are new here, but these things must be in writing."  
(Silence.)

He shrugs. "Well, finish up to the point that you can send the copy to the copy editors. And go. But understand that you are hurting the company."

(Pause.) "I didn't realize I would hurt the company. I don't like to think of myself as the sort of person who would do that. . . . I won't take the exam."

“Oh, no, you go ahead and take it.”

“I really don’t WANT to.”

“I INSIST that you go and take the test. . . .”

Work work workwork—sixteen-hour days through the weekend so as to be taking fewer days off. Then study study. I never had conflicts, creditor’s rights, crim pro II, equity, local government, negotiable instruments, sales, secured transactions, unsecured transactions, suretyship, mortgages, bankruptcy, tax II. And I never understood civil procedure. Try try. Water water. Pills pills. Study study.

I tell people I’m not studying. I am going to flunk, and I want to be able to say I didn’t study. I didn’t learn anything in law school. Yes I did. I just didn’t learn this stuff.

On the other hand, this is beginning to make sense. Wonderful. Amazing how much I know. I know enough to write a soap opera—but not enough to pass the bar.

Maybe I do. Yes, I do.

No, I don’t.

No time to study for the Multistate part of the exam but I was passing the multistate practice tests I took last summer. I’m pretty good at multiple guess.

Take a pill. I am going to pass. Pill wears off. I am going to flunk. Take a pill.

On the morning of the exam, friend Sheila pops pills as she drives on the interstate highway. She has many bottles with different colors and shapes in each. In a little over an hour, we exit into the bowels of the state capital. We pass tall buildings on one-way streets during rush hour. Rush rush.

I ask questions about “payable to order or bearer a sum certain in money.” Was it a terminable interest or a qualified terminable interest?

Sheila wants to talk about her new marriage. Her husband is rich, but he doesn’t give her any money. Doesn’t buy her daughter anything. She says sex is good.

I remind myself that a lawyer has twenty-one days absolute right to file, but after that he or she may only file with leave of court.

He bought her a ring that cost five figures and is taking her to Hawaii as soon as the bar is over but won’t help with groceries. She lives just as always—scrimping.

What was the difference between summary judgment and directed verdict?

Should she sell the ring to pay off her college loan? Would that get his attention?



Sheila has been studying two hours every day since she got too sick to take the exam six months ago. The last three weeks she has taken time off to study full time. She knows everything. Ten days for this. Twenty-one for that. Ninety for something else. She knows about the new appellate court and who goes there. I didn't even know about it, since it was new in January. She is an encyclopedia and afraid *she* will flunk. She has memorized twenty-four subjects and taken thirty timed mock multistate exams.

Traffic stops completely for a caravan of big red Barnum and Bailey trucks. One truck pulls a train of tiger cages into the coliseum. One powerful cat stares me balefully in the eye and then continues pacing in circles the size of her trap.

Our hotel is right next to the circus. I take a pill.

Bellboys in red with plumes on their hats approach us. We doggedly carry in our own bags—paper bags and picnic coolers, cardboard boxes of books—through the lobby with live piano music and people holding crystal goblets.

I am trying to remember the elements of negotiability while riding to the twelfth floor. A distinguished-looking woman tells me not to worry. The best thing is not to worry. I ask if she is taking "it." She says no, she is *giving* "it."

Sheila takes the shades off all the lamps in our room. Study study. Then Sheila strips and does frantic calisthenics. Kickkickbendbend.

I review the implied warranties and try not to look at Sheila.

She showers, goes to bed, and wraps a pillow around her head. It is 9:30. When she gets up to go to the bathroom, I ask why she is wearing pink plastic gloves.

She can't talk until she takes the football player's mouth guard out of her mouth. Her voice is thick from medication. "I wear th' mouth guard so I won' grind m' teeth, an' th' gloves so I won' claw m'self in m' zleep."

Good thing her husband only sees her on weekends.

Study study. I will be okay, I say, as I chew my pill. Don't be foolish and not sleep. In bed. Lights out. Toss and turn. Every muscle jumps and twitches. I close my eyes and practice relaxation techniques.

Sheila asks, "You wwwwant wwwwone ovvv mmyyy pillsss?"

I say, "No!" and nearly jump out of the twelfth story plate glass window. Dear dear. Heavenly Father, help me. Can you hear me? . . . You can, but I came where I didn't belong, so I am on my own. I should've taught school. No matter how hard I try, I can't do this, and I don't even like it. Dear dear.

Finally I get up and take creditors' rights to the bathroom. It feels better to study.

*Crash.* I jump and drop my papers all over the bathroom floor. Suddenly framed by the doorway stands Sheila in curlers, mouth guard, and gloves. "Ahmmm soorri. Ah vv nightmares. Please leave the bathroom light on when you go to bed. . . ."

In the morning I drink a lot of juice and hope I can make it three hours without the bathroom. I go over state procedure because procedure is supposed to be most important. When we emerge business suited, other similarly suited persons come out of other doors. We all look alike.

The crowded elevator ejects us into a huge hall where slender men in suits mill around. Blue and gray. A third of these people will fail. Gray and blue. I walk miles in a ballroom with crystal chandeliers before I find my card on a table next to a man who tells me he didn't take the bar last summer; he got sick the night before. He thinks I think he failed last summer. Who cares? All I'm thinking about are the elements of negotiability.

"Your number will be on your blue composition book. Place your number on your place card. A monitor will pick it up." The nice woman in the elevator is in front in a suit. Is she a bar examiner? No. She is the monitor. "You have ten pages. Count them. Ten. That is all you get. One page, front and back, for one problem. Ten problems. Eighteen minutes per problem. Please do not leave the room; leaving the room disturbs people. Does everyone have a test? You may begin."

Dates, service, cross claim, and the statute of limitations. Rape, peremptory challenges, motion to strike. Directed verdict, judgment N.O.V., twenty-one days to modify, and the jurisdictional amount of punitive damages.

I need to go to the bathroom. Mecklenburg Prison. I really have to go to the bathroom. Police reports. I am going to be sick. Confessions and fingerprints. No one is leaving. Conversion-hearsay-bailment-gratuitous-for hire-actual or apparent authority.

I cannot concentrate until I go to the bathroom. The pain in my abdomen feels like cramps, but it couldn't be. Return of attorney's fees. Oh, no, it IS cramps. I can feel the stickiness, draining. It will go through my suit. Easement. Guardian ad litem. I have to go out. I run quietly, hoping nothing shows or runs down my leg. Where is the bathroom????? When I try a door, it is the other door to the exam! I ask a man who doesn't know. A woman does.

Gross. Need a . . .

"You may take nothing in the examination room except two pens."

I don't have my purse! I don't have a quarter. We only have one room key, and Sheila has it. Could I bum a quarter? No one stands

outside the door. One person inside is throwing up; I can see her gray suit under the stall. Wad up a giant blob of toilet paper.

The bar review professors said to *engrave* your test, because all failing papers had messiness in common. I have already scribbled out, written in the margin, and tacked on another point as I was already into the essay. I may as well not go back in. I am no attorney. I am messy. I carve things out of blobs of matter; I can't make a skeleton and flesh it out. Is there any reason to go back in?

I have to go back in simply because I am not a quitter.

Bar examiners glare at me as I enter.

Necessary parties, inheritance, proceeds, and shipments of lumber. Divorce a mensa et thoro; I know what that is. So what?

Time. It is one-fourth over.

At noon I meet a bright, spunky, tiny woman who chatters. She is Vietnamese. She went to law school in France. But the United States wouldn't recognize her French degree, so she went three more years here. She failed both the state and multistate a year ago and again last July. The French write long flowery prose, so on the exam she wrote everything she knew. On one state question the examiner replied, "You have the right answers—enough for a perfect score of ten—but when you write so much, it makes me think you are unsure. A lawyer must be sure." He gave her a six, and that failed her. She has two children in college. She speaks many languages. She doesn't need money. "I just want to help my people. . . . You know . . . they stay together . . . like that (hand gestures) . . . I hate that . . . they don't know how to belong here. . . . After all these years they feel strange . . . if I can just pass . . ."

I wrote long flowery prose. I wrote every question as if I were unsure. Who *wouldn't* be unsure???? A bluffer I am not. Oh. . . . At least tomorrow's multistate is standardized and multiple choice. Thank the Lord for small favors. Sheila says she finally understands con law.

Glad for midnight, I lie darkly in bed, leaving the light on for Sheila. Why try? I didn't have time to prepare for the multistate.

I tell myself to stop carrying on like this. If pioneer women could walk across the plains, I can try for one more day. I peer nearsightedly at the clock every hour. Sheila's gloves clutch her pillow. The clock says four-thirty. I *must* sleep. Tick tock. Time time. Black.

Is Sheila up? Is she stealing study time? Does she have legal pads in the bed under the covers? Is she studying so she will pass and I won't? I turn to confront her, but she is there soft and soothing. She

smoothes my hair. She says she will help me, and I will pass. She tries, but my pencil is stuck in my legal pad that is a honeycomb. I cannot mooove. My hand is sticky. She says, "I tried, honey, but I cannot help you if you cannot write fast. I am sorry, but I must go." She jogs away across the desert, and I am alone, stuck, sucked into the honeycomb.

The alarm rings.

I shake for a moment and then put on my glasses. Sheila takes the guard out of her mouth and brushes her teeth. She reviews some notes, then we go downstairs. Sheila says, "Do you ever have nightmares?"

I shake my head, "No," lying.

This time we sit at the same table with our pencils, closed test booklets, and answer grids full of orderly rows of little ovals.

"You may begin."

At the end of the first hour I feel great. Right on time. I knew the answers. Okay . . . Then I begin to need the bathroom again; to look at the doors. When I hit a long, long contracts problem, I get sleepy—and behind. How far behind? Fifteen or twenty minutes. Push. I must do every problem in one minute, so I skim through, guess, and go on. Now I must do each one in thirty seconds. No time to read carefully, remember the analysis, and choose the best response.

"Five minutes." I mark BCBC down a column. Part III is over.

We have to be out of our rooms before one o'clock. So we trudge out past the bellboys with our loads of stuff. I see a little man about two feet tall, wearing a sequined costume, and running across the street with the light. His legs are so short he must run to keep up with other people who walk when the light says "WALK."

I go back in for part four. I try to pace myself eight and one-half questions every fifteen minutes. I can't tell where my pencil goes on the answer sheet. I blink and blink to clear my eyes. My contacts must be sticking to my eyeballs. I am marking in the wrong grid. Erase. Blink. Sheila's pencil is moving rhythmically down her answer sheet. Why am I watching her? She is not watching me. Now I am not watching anything because my eyes are blurry. People begin leaving and bumping my chair. Leaving and disturbing is okay in the last hour of the exam, just not in the first two hours. I would stand up, but my body is too heavy. Am I smiling at the leavers and bumpers? Is it foggy in here? My pencil is stuck somewhere in the answer grid.

Back home, when I take my shoes off, I have so many charley horses that my toes curl up to my knees. Tom is watching football. Then he is watching me. He holds me gently and tells me to stop tearing at my hair.

*And we hear the desert singing:  
Carry on, carry on, carry on!  
Hills and vales and mountains ringing:  
Carry on, carry on, carry on!*

— Ruth May Fox  
(no. 255, *Hymns*, 1985)

The scores told me I did a good job on the impossible state exam. If I had just finished the multistate, the possible national exam, I would have passed. Still I was utterly terrified to face the ordeal again. I knew if I could take my time and be tested in Teton Valley under a tree, I would do fine. Perhaps the ability to survive under pressure was what bar examiners really tested. The issue for me was not whether I knew the legal concepts. The issue was endurance.

I asked myself whether I would feel less pressure if I belonged to the group that thrives on the stress of the legal profession. Did I have any more energy for strategies in logic that made little sense to me? I wrote questions in my journal until I could finally ask myself what I had inside that I could use to finish this journey I had started.

I knelt beside the bed and tried to ask Father in Heaven how to go about making a place for myself in a world where I felt so awkward, or if that didn't work out, how to find the promised land again. I knelt there listening but heard nothing. My knees hurt and I felt silly. Finally I went to bed and tried again the next night and the next. I began to carry the prayer around with me. Finally when I addressed Father in Heaven, I began to feel as if he wished he could tell me the answer, but he couldn't.

Then I began to think about my Heavenly Mother. After a while a slow smile spread out in my heart.

What I needed was *female power*. Holy Ghost/Mother in Heaven/whatever it really was/*inside power*—inside me all along if I could figure out how to use it.

Home became a quiet refuge where I relaxed in warm baths, talked to my mother on the phone, and read poetry aloud to myself. I took time to look at the trees, at my children sleeping, and at Tom's feet sticking out from under a 1963 MG.

I ritualized my preparation for the next bar as if it were an important ceremony.

Tom went to the exam with me. When we found the hotel, I saw the Vietnamese woman running in the parking lot. She was reading from a Bar/Bri book as she ran. This was her fourth and last try to pass the exam.

I tried to review in the hotel room. Tom watched TV and ate potato chips. I told him I couldn't study with rock video accompaniment. He tried to sleep and then snored. I gave up and went to bed before ten o'clock.

Suddenly, I woke, as if by music. The sun was shining through the latticed windows like diamonds. I put on my glasses and studied the beautiful old woodwork, the polished antique furniture, and the brass lamps.

Then I heard something inside me (or maybe I just remembered it from long ago Seminary):

"Awake, awake; put on thy strength . . . put on thy beautiful garments. . . ."

I got up and walked into the bathroom. The light was very bright, shining on the antique white porcelain and ceramic tile. It was the whitest room I had ever seen. As I ran the bath water, I leaned back against the old-fashioned tub back and gave myself to the warmth. Again I began to hear language inside me—clean and clear. Words I seldom remembered through the entire temple ceremony filled me, more sacred than secret. Words about health and strength, loyalty and cleanliness, sacrifice and consecration, and the power promised to me and to my posterity if I can but realize my own potential, courageously using free agency to seek wisdom. Suddenly the words meant much more than remembering them to repeat at the appropriate time. I saw that belonging to a state bar association based simply on "repeat-it-back" learning was worthless unless I made it a meaningful rite of passage, leading me to contribute toward the building of a kingdom I cared about.

When Tom woke up, I asked him to give me a blessing the way I used to ask my father. He did. He was not eloquent. He was Tommy Knight. Wearing sweats and tennis shoes, he escorted me to the coliseum. Hundreds of would-be warriors in the chain-mail suits waited for the opening of the doors, grinding the remains of their tobacco into the plaza near a fountain. Nobody but me appeared to be enjoying the fountain.

I sat next to a man from Alabama who failed last time because he couldn't last three hours without a cigarette when he was nervous. We began. No recognizable questions. Hairline distinctions. Out and out tricks. Red herrings. I breathed deeply and kept at it. Sure enough, the impossible question appeared. Using the process of elimination, I skipped and dodged and doubled back until I felt almost exhilarated.

Tom was waiting with hamburgers and milkshakes. I didn't mind returning to the exam.

As I turned in my last test when time was called, I saw the Vietnamese woman. She was frantically trying to finish, alone in a wide, wide sea. The monitors took her answer sheet. She lay her head on the table. I heard her voice six months ago—"I just want to help my people. . . ." And I knew that the pure in heart do not always pass bar exams or find the sanctuary they seek.

The knowledge hurt me, but the hurting healed me, too.

Sometimes a body just doesn't survive the war, or the winter walk through Wyoming. But the collective spirit of strength lives, carried along inside when we find ourselves traveling outside our circle of familiar spires.