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## My Blessing Day

Becky Andersen

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*Becky Andersen*

IN OUR FAMILY ALBUM IS A PICTURE OF my father sitting between my grandfather and great grandfather. Dad is holding me—it is my blessing day. I was shocked when I found out it is him who is holding me—he looks about fourteen years old. Dad wasn't fourteen though, he was nineteen, the same age I am now.

I can remember one night when I was about five years old. I was lying in my bed, crying, the covers over my face. I was afraid to go to bed because I was frightened of having nightmares.

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*Becky Andersen is a special education major from Royal City, Washington.*

It was very late and my dad, exhausted from work, walked in the room and sat on the edge of my pink bedspread. He pulled the covers down from my face and asked why I wouldn't go to sleep. I told him I was afraid of the dark—it made me have bad dreams. My dad picked me up, straightened my nightgown, brushed the hair from my face, and carried me downstairs. He took me to the bare cement basement of our little run-down house. I started to scream and clung to him, afraid he was going to leave me there alone. I buried my head in his neck, but, gently, he made me look around the room. He asked me if I saw any snakes or spiders or monsters. Instead of answering I just cried even harder. Dad gave up trying to cure my fear of the dark and took me back up to bed. He must have been frustrated at my senseless tears, but he held me close until I cried myself to sleep.

My grandma told me that on my blessing day Dad was very nervous. He was afraid to bless me because he wasn't sure if he would say the right things. She said I never cried but lay quietly as my grandfather, my uncles, and my father encircled me.

When I was fourteen years old, my family took the blue station wagon and went on a camping trip. That first night was my parents' wedding anniversary; we celebrated with dinner at a nice restaurant. On the way back to the campsite it was my turn to sit in the front seat. I felt happy and secure sitting between Mom and Dad as we traveled down the highway. I thought about what it must have been like when they got married, and then about what it must have been like when I was born. I wondered how long they had waited to have me after they were married. I decided to count the months.

"Let's see," I said to myself. "Their anniversary is March 7, 1970, and I was born October 10, 1970. April—one month, May—two months, June—three months, July—four months, August—five months, September—six months, and October—seven months." I knew I hadn't been born prematurely; they

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must have been married in 1969. I turned to my mom and asked, "Mom, what year were you married?"

"Nineteen-seventy, why?" she replied, stroking my hair.

"Nothing." I must have counted wrong. Yes, that was it. So I counted again. It was still seven months. When I asked Dad how that could be, Mom began to cry. Dad just said, "What took you so long to figure it out, Becky?"

I can see why some babies cry when they get blessed. It must be very hot and airless in that tight circle full of strange faces and mixed smells of cologne.

My father had already received his mission call when my mother found out she was pregnant. He stopped by her dorm on the way to the mission training center, and she told him; she had just found out herself. Not only did Mom and Dad have to face their families, they also had to return to the ward that had just listened to him give his missionary farewell.

After my father blessed and named me, there was a family dinner. With all the commotion and bodies, I became scared and started to cry. Mom gave me to Dad to see if he could comfort me. She told me he always could. She said he would hold my neck and back with one hand and my legs with his other hand. Then he would softly bounce me away from his body so it was like being rocked in midair. That always stopped me from crying. Mom says after that, Dad would hold me close and sway his body back and forth till I fell asleep.

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The Mormon temple nursery attendant walked through a side door to the sealing room and handed me to my father. He put me on the altar and I sat up and smiled at everyone as my parents and I were sealed together as a family. I wish I could remember that. Mom has told me everything I know about that day, including the part when a father picked up his one-year-old daughter and cried while she patted his face.