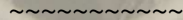
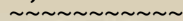


“Is Great-Grandpa older than the *Titanic*?”

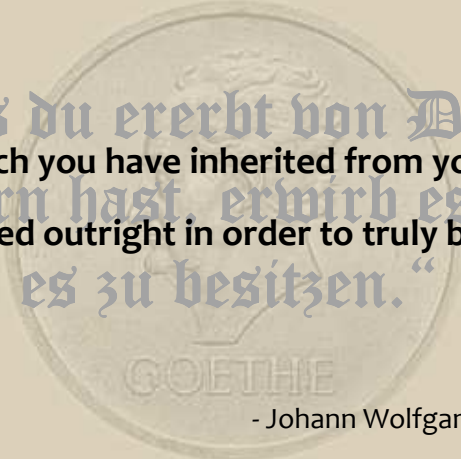


A child’s simple question spawned an astounding journey into the past, revealing the ultimate tests of love, loyalty, and discipleship through the ages. The journey began with a single facsimile, then followed students and soldiers, farmers and fishermen, prophets and poets, priests and politicians around the world, tracking their contrasting courses through a century of unprecedented calamity and innovation. As one deeply personal story after another sprouted like new branches from a burgeoning tree, each epic tale became larger than life and unearthed bonds that came right back home to the heart – a heart penetrated by and permanently turned toward fathers and children alike. It seems that – when we choose to look closely enough – life itself does indeed come around...

full circle.



“Was du ererbt von Deinen Vatern hast, erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.”



- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

FULL CIRCLE



BY KREY HAMPTON

Full Circle

By Krey Hampton

Please note: This unabridged volume is intended solely for distribution to family members and is not suitable for publication in its current form. While generally based on real experiences, contemporary names have been changed to avoid misrepresentation. Until adequately documented, these contents – including each of the characters and personal narratives – should be considered fictional.

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In memory of “Grandma Hose-Nose”
Marjorie Teudt Price

~~~~~

- To Kent on his **70<sup>th</sup>** birthday

- To Jaedin, our future author,  
at age **12**

- Celebrating Eldred G. Smith, the 4<sup>th</sup> Nephite himself,  
on his **104<sup>th</sup>**!

~~~~~

and commemorating:

20 years since the founding of the Germany Berlin LDS Mission,
the **125**-year anniversary of L.D.S. High’s Founders’ Day,
the **80**-year anniversary of its closing,

and the **100th** birthdays of
Hampton, Homer, Gordon, Rulon,

and the rest of the L.D.S. High Class of **1928**



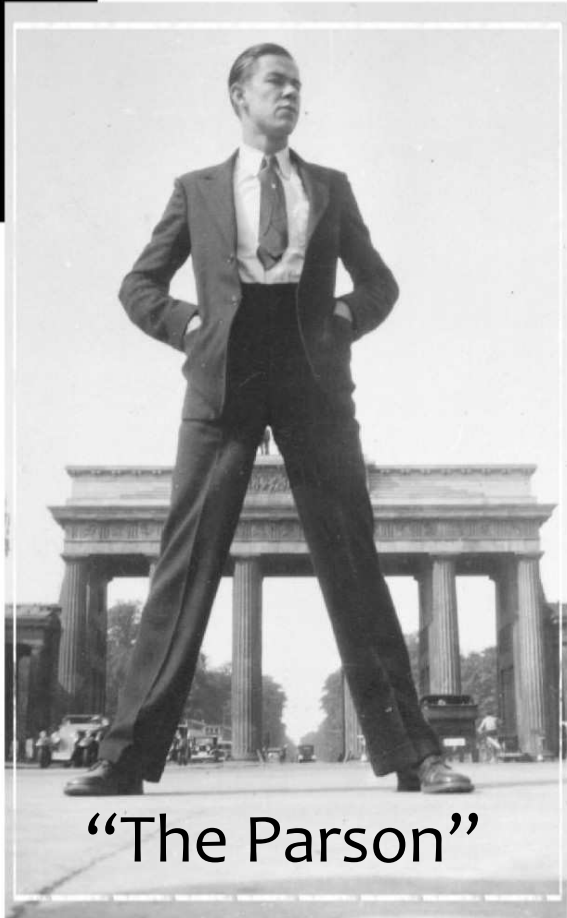
Even prophets have a *Bacon Number*

Foreword

On Boxing Day in 2004, LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley sat under bright stage lights in the newly built Conference Center, hoping he had made the right decision in consenting to an interview with Larry King.

Larry King, incidentally, had recently interviewed William “Captain Kirk” Shatner, who – back in the day – had played opposite Leonard “Spock” Nemoy, who sat in a futuristic chair on the set designed by Eero Saarinen, whose father, famed Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen, mentored the father of modern Philadelphia, Edmund Bacon, whose two teenage sons, Kevin and Michael, would end up forming a band known as the Bacon Brothers. Kevin, of course, danced his way through the Lehi Roller Mills and ultimately personified the phenomenon of connecting celebrities within a few degrees; Michael, on the other hand, turned up as a soundman for *Larry King Live...Helter Skelter!*

My late grandfather was by no means a celebrity. Wikipedia makes no mention of him; in fact, when I dove into the details of his history a few years ago – looking to connect my own life with his – not even Google’s informational powerhouse could cough up a single trace of his existence. As I embarked on my own odyssey to trace his path around the world, however, within just a few random steps I found myself connected through him not just to Gordon B. Hinckley, but to the likes of Charles Lindbergh, Osama Bin Laden, Mitt Romney, and even the Ramones! Every time I branched out on a new tangent to explore another path, the trail kept bringing me, *full circle*, right back home again. Hope you enjoy the ride!



Charles Hampton Price: Larger than Life
at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, 1933

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Full Circle
By Krey Hampton

Part I : Older Than the Titanic

Chapter 1. Homecoming

“Grandma’s not expected to make it through the night...”

There was no quiver in Dad’s voice over the telephone, though he paused and let out a sigh as he conveyed the news of his mother’s imminent passing – not that he wasn’t deeply touched, but everyone knew she had no regrets and made no apologies. She had lived her life to the fullest every day, and everything about her character shouted, “Take me as I am!” In her final months, she had willed herself to live just long enough to snap a five-generation portrait with her newborn great-great-granddaughter; that framed photograph was her crowning trophy.

We had fortunately already had a chance to say our goodbyes, having hit the highway on the initial news of her failing health just a few weeks before.

I hung up the phone and sat up in bed, gradually letting the news sink in. It didn’t seem right to go back to sleep while she embarked on her final journey out of mortality, so I tiptoed downstairs and paced around aimlessly. I spotted the camcorder on the TV cabinet, sat back in my “Papa Bear” chair, and rewound the tape with the footage of our road trip. After watching the tape in its entirety, I sank back further into my oversize recliner and



Marjorie Teudt Price: an infant in her mother’s arms,
Salt Lake City, 1917

just stared at the ceiling. My mind wandered back to that last meeting with Grandma.

~~~~~

“Be very careful around her,” I had warned our four young kids as we pulled up to the nursing home after the long trek from Oregon to Orem, “She’s really old!”

“Well is she older than the *Titanic*?” scoffed my eight-year old son Jaedin, who, obsessed by his latest interest, had cleared every *Titanic* book from his school library’s shelves.

“I don’t know,” I answered, “but I’ll get online later and check for you.”

My wife rolled her eyes, having instantly recognized a habitual, masked attempt to use the kids as an excuse for checking e-mail on vacation. After plucking the kids out of the tight confines of our car, we lined them up against the wall outside the nursing home entrance. Knowing a lecture was coming, they preemptively rolled their eyes in unison; I tried to hide my own smile as I debated whether the familiar gesture had been inherited or learned.

“Now remember, each of you,” I said sternly, regaining my composure and ignoring their collective groan, “when you step inside, I don’t want to hear one WORD about the smell!”

They each nodded and went cross-eyed as my index finger passed directly in front of their noses.

We made our way to Grandma’s room as cautiously and quietly as we could manage. We had just seen her the previous year, but at first sight she seemed decades older than I remembered. It wasn’t long, though,

until her sense of humor broke through and proved that, despite her recent ailments, she was still as young at heart as ever. We had some good laughs with “Grandma Hose-Nose” and her pet oxygen tank, but soon the laughing alone seemed to sap the energy right out of her.

I glanced at her fancy dresser, on top of which stood the most valuable of her few remaining earthly possessions, poised within an arm’s reach of four volatile bundles of energy that stood on the brink of bursting, having just been released from a marathon, 12-hour incarceration. Besides demolishing these treasures, I feared that our wrecking crew might pass along an unseen, airborne virus, overwhelm her with their excited clamoring, or otherwise do her in right then and there.

With a number of these frightful scenarios seizing my mind, I started nudging the kids and hinted to Grandma that we needed to leave. Though we kept the visit as brief as we could justify, we did manage to capture the whole event on video to prepare for that distant day when our precious and very rambunctious children might actually appreciate the significance of the occasion.

After strategically posing each of them for an individual picture with their great-grandmother, we gave her frail shell some loose hugs, bade her farewell with a small hint of finality, and checked into a nearby motel to put the kids to bed.

Jaedin was half asleep by the time I remembered my purported justification for checking e-mail. When I opened my notebook computer, the screen’s glow instantly lit up the dark room. I covered myself and the

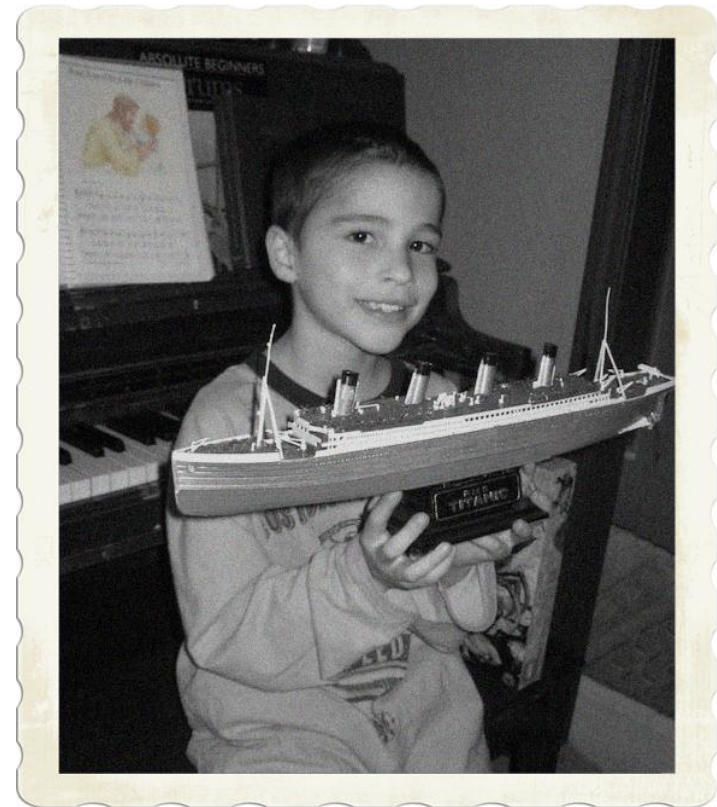
notebook with a blanket so as not to wake the younger children. Inside my makeshift tent, I typed “*Titanic*” into a search engine and emerged again after a few quick clicks.

“No Jaedin,” I whispered to him upon finding the answer to his earlier question, “not quite.”

He rolled over, altogether unimpressed, and muttered, “Then she’s not all that old.”

I kissed him on the forehead. “It’s been a long day, son,” I said with a smile, “Now get some sleep!”

~~~~~



Jaedin shows off his model of the RMS *Titanic*



Hamp and Marge clowning around, ca. 1965

Chapter 2. Gone Missing

The recliner had swallowed me whole, and my vigil didn't end up lasting long at all; my reminiscing soon gave way to a world of dreams in which I imagined Grandma being ushered past the sentinels standing guard on her voyage home. In her honor, of course, they were singing her favorite parodies and were dressed in crazy outfits – the kind she loved to wear to costume parties!

I awoke a few hours later with a kink in my neck; the telephone was ringing, the sun was rising, and sure enough, the phone call confirmed that she was gone. By the time she passed away early that autumn morning in 2006, she had already been a widow for almost twenty-five years; our sadness at her passing was thus tempered to some degree by the thought of a joyful reunion in the heavens with her eternal sidekick, Charles Hampton Price.

“Hamp,” as my grandfather was known to his friends, had been a meticulous record keeper, almost to the point of what today might be considered a diagnosable case of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. When we made another trip to Utah to attend Grandma's funeral the next week, we sorted through her possessions and found among them Hamp's detailed timelines, maps, journals, photographs, and other records that he had kept. I thumbed through the materials, and they quickly drew me in. As the hours passed, I attacked the annals with a late-night fervor, perhaps aided by a bit of inherited OCD of my own.

I didn't have the chance to know my grandfather well while he was still living, but I found a renewed interest in researching his life as I dove headlong into over 5,000 pages of journal entries. I was particularly enthralled by his mission journals; we had served LDS missions in the same area of Germany sixty years apart, and his journals described people in their youth whom I had known as elderly pensioners – people who had endured the rise of Nazism, a world war, and forty years of Orwellian rule in the interim.

In my few memories of Hamp, I can still picture the Patriarch. A retired lieutenant colonel with a distinguished career in the U.S. Air Force, he was a soft-spoken giant – bigger and taller than anyone else I knew. His eyes revealed that he had stories to tell, but his voice, though gruff, was calm and soothing enough to put me to sleep whenever he would start into his narratives.

He would get caught up in the minutest details of his stories – details that, though uninteresting to me as a young child at the time, continued to intrigue me long after a 21-gun salute punctuated his passing in 1982. To this day, for example, he is the only LDS Stake Patriarch I have ever met who had a tattoo (the culmination, I had been told, of an unfortunate night of bad decisions after his high school graduation.)

As I dug through his memorabilia after Grandma's funeral, I felt compelled to discover more about his roots – and his youth in particular. I had taken a bit of a haphazard approach to my research, so I decided to start from the beginning and scan all of the records into electronic files. My attempt to put his journals in order,

though, left me with an unfortunate gap; his high school years were conspicuously missing from the pile of journals. As it turned out, he had misplaced that particular volume many years before his death, and it had never turned up again.

As I read the detailed descriptions of personal and historical events in his other journals, I found myself with a growing list of unanswered questions about his youth. For that time period, sadly, I was forced to conjecture his thoughts and experiences based on the sparse documents I could gather: a yearbook, a commencement program, and a few scraps of notepaper.

I found that he had attended a high school known as *L.D.S. High*. I opened the embossed cover of the yearbook and thumbed through its pages, wondering why I had never heard of the school. I found Hamp's portrait and stared at some of the others on the page. Who were these people? They must have known him; maybe I could ask them some questions myself! I got excited about the idea and optimistically Googled one name after another to see if there might be any hint of classmates who were still alive and kicking. Each time, however, the search ended with a death record. I saw no promising leads among the first few dozen names I tried, and I soon admitted to myself that the idea of locating living contemporaries was a fruitless path.

What was I thinking anyhow? The entire class would have been approaching centenarian status; the ranks of those who might have provided a first-hand account had long since thinned, if not completely disappeared. Looking at the death dates on my computer

screen, I realized that I had only missed my chance by a couple of years.

I wished I had begun the project earlier, but I can't say I hadn't been warned:

“Don't wait until it's too late,” a college family history teacher had admonished over a decade before – back when many of Hamp's fellow graduates in the Class of 1928 could still have granted me an interview.

We had all nodded our heads in affirmation, but without any actual intent of doing anything about it until we ourselves had become old and boring. The warning had fallen on deaf ears; along with the rest of the BYU Class of 1995, I had been much more interested in rock climbing and skiing than in sitting around some smelly nursing home or spending my precious free time glued to a microfiche screen in the dark dungeons of the library.

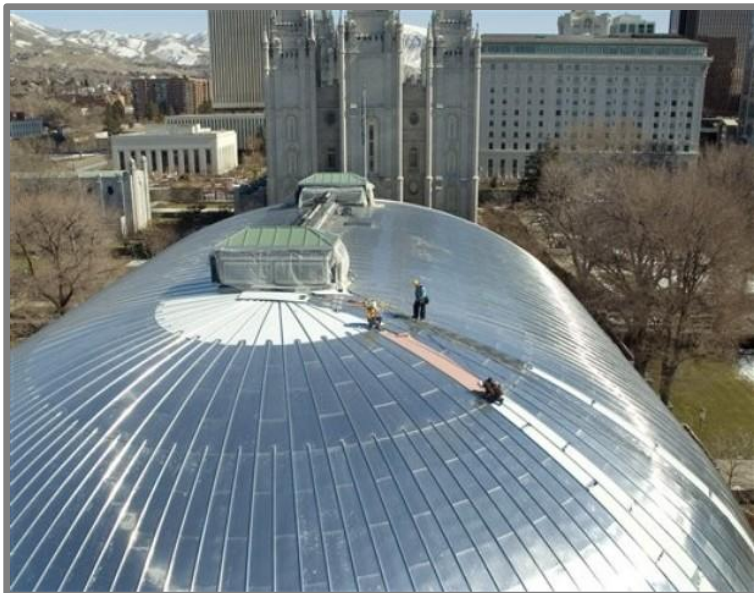
As a tell-tale sign that I myself had aged in the meantime, I recognized that I would now happily give up a day on the slopes for the chance to sit down with someone who could provide a personal account of the time period missing from Hamp's journals; unfortunately, though, the chance had evaporated. Why are old teachers always right in retrospect?

“Guess I should have listened to Sister Fischer,” I said to myself, closing the yearbook and acknowledging my failure to heed her warning. I shook my head with an air of disappointment, accepted the consequences of my procrastination, and moved on to other projects.

~~~~~



Sorting through Hamp's many boxes of articles, journals, maps, and albums



The Tabernacle's dome is readied for the 2007 rededication



President Hinckley rededicates the Tabernacle in the April 2007 General Conference

### Chapter 3: Larger than Life

President Gordon B. Hinckley stood to rededicate the Salt Lake Tabernacle in a General Conference the following spring. I turned to Jaedin and pointed to my computer screen. “Listen closely to this talk,” I told him, tapping on the screen, “President Hinckley is getting very old!”

Having forgotten about Jaedin's standard of measure, I laughed when he asked, “Well, is he older than the *Titanic*?”

I wasn't sure of the answer, so I popped up a search window right next to the streaming General Conference video and within a few seconds was browsing through an online biography. Sure enough, on the day Bryant and Ada welcomed their newborn son, Gordon, into the world, RMS *Titanic*'s un-christened hull was still being formed in the womb of her dry dock.

“Well?”

“Yes, Jaedin, he is older than the *Titanic*.”

“Wow, that's old!” he remarked; he tuned in for a few minutes once armed with this astounding bit of trivia but soon got bored and stood up to leave.

“You know, your great-grandfather was born less than a year after President Hinckley,” I told him, trying find something online that might hold his attention a bit longer, “in the same year as Ronald Reagan, Roy Rogers, Lucille Ball, and Vincent Price.”

He gave me a blank stare in return; of course none of those names meant anything to him.

I gave it another shot, thinking perhaps Michael Jackson might do the trick. “Vincent Price is the one with the evil laugh in *Thriller*,” I continued, “Who knows, maybe he’s even related to your Great-Grandpa Price!”

“Cool,” he said, “can I leave now?”

I nodded reluctantly and turned back to the computer. The dedicatory prayer itself had only taken a few minutes, and the Tabernacle Choir was already punctuating the moment with *the Spirit of God* – that standard anthem of all LDS dedications. The Saturday afternoon conference session wound to a close, and the television cameras panned from the restored, rededicated Tabernacle to families strolling around the Temple Square grounds and relaxing on the lawns. As the Bonneville Communications credits began rolling, I kept scrolling through a timeline of milestones in President Hinckley’s online biography.

The year 1928 – the final year missing from the pile of Grandpa’s journals – jumped out at me in particular: “1928: graduated from *Latter-day Saints College*,” read the biography.

I poked around on my bookshelf and dug Hamp’s high school documents out of a folder. I knew he had attended *L.D.S. High* – which used to be located where the Church Office Building now stands along North Temple – and I wondered if it might be related to Latter-day Saints College. A bit of online sleuthing revealed that the term “college” in those days – as is still the case in the English-speaking countries of the Commonwealth – merely referred to a secondary school. As I discovered, *L.D.S. College*, a private secondary school operated by

the LDS Church, comprised both *L.D.S. High* and *L.D.S. Business College*, the latter of which is still around today.

A few more clicks revealed that back in 1928, *L.D.S. High* was a three-year high school for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. *L.D.S. Business College* was at the time a one-year junior college vocational curriculum that could be appended after the senior year of high school – designed for those not quite ready to leave the campus for their chosen trades or universities.

Having learned that *L.D.S. High* and *L.D.S. College* were essentially one in the same, I went back through the names of the graduates on Hamp’s commencement program with renewed interest. Sure enough, I found “Hampton Price” and “Gordon Hinckley” among the list of high school graduates, confirming that they did, in fact, graduate together. I felt like a detective stumbling across new evidence in a case.

Looking through the evening’s agenda, I saw that Heber J. Grant, James E. Talmage, and a number of future General Authorities and history makers had addressed the graduates during a program held in the Tabernacle on the first day of June, 1928. One glance through the names of the other graduates revealed both the heritage and the future potential embodied by the students in attendance with them that night: Ashton, Cannon, Kimball, Monson, Nelson, Nibley, Osmond, Romney, Smoot, Snow, Taylor...

I’d love to hear the speakers and see the reaction of the audience members as they were advised concerning the open slate of their yet unwritten future. What advice, for example, did the young Gordon

Hinckley take to heart as the speakers took to the pulpit? Could he have imagined – as he marveled at the technological miracle of the pulpit’s newly installed microphone – that he would be called to stand at that same pulpit hundreds of times over the ensuing years, addressing an ever-expanding audience?

What would he have thought if someone had whispered to him during the graduation ceremony that eighty years later he would stand at that very pulpit to dedicate a newly refurbished Tabernacle? And that in the process, his every word would be ciphered into fifty languages by an army of translators who would instantaneously send their signals out to space to be intercepted by manmade moons hovering overhead? Then, after being bounced from the satellites back to earth, that his words would be telecast, simulcast, webcast, and podcast at light speed around a global transmission network? And that the streaming video would promptly appear on thousands of computerized gadgets – some no larger than a pocket watch – each capable of storing an entire library of books within their microscopic circuitry?

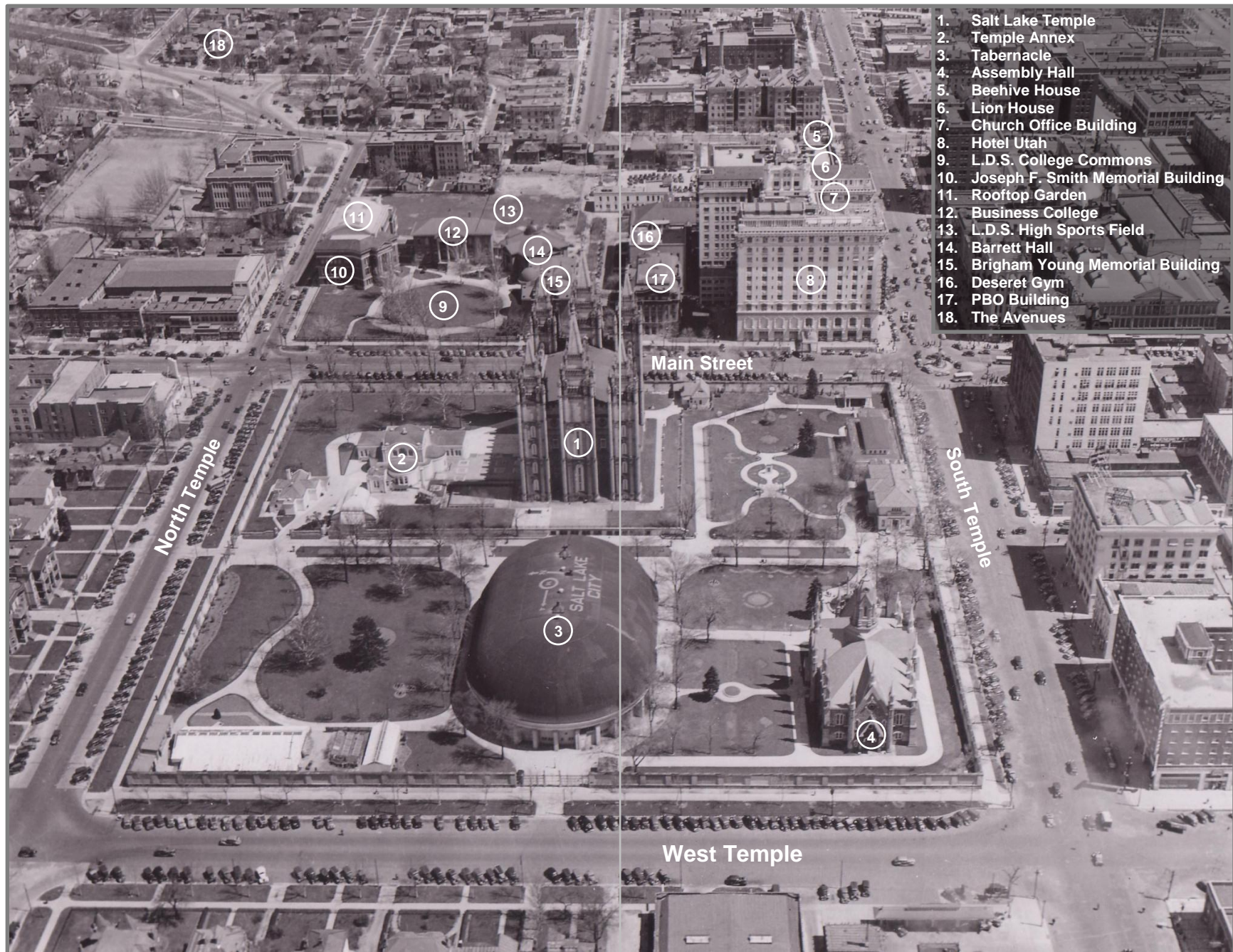
“And by the way, young Gordon, you will be the hard-working man behind the scenes largely responsible for the Church’s media blitz!”

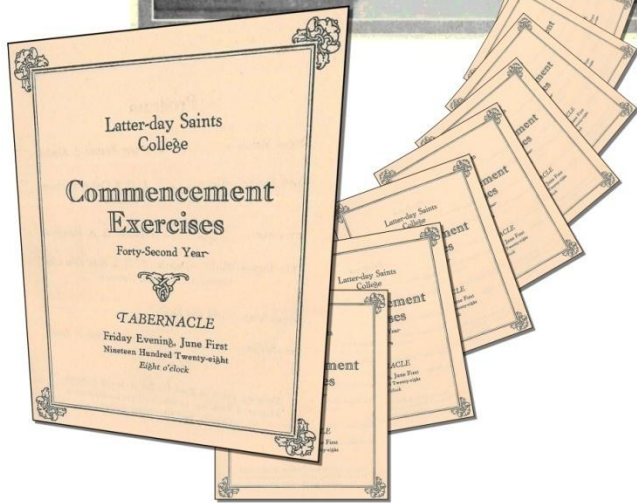
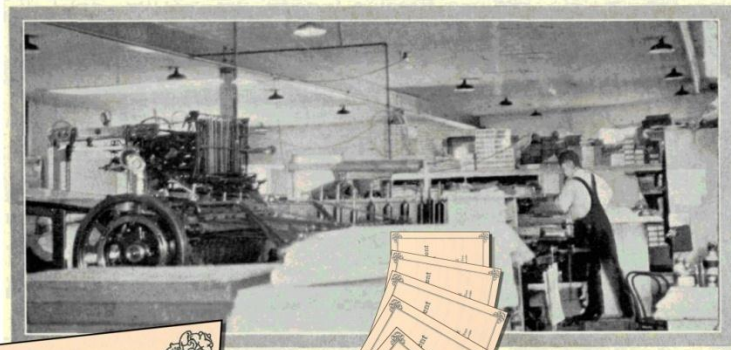
Unbelievable? Of course! Yet here I was in another century – another millennium, in fact – staring at precisely that real-time scenario on my computer screen. With my own mind boggled, I closed out a whole stack of search engine results that I had completely taken for granted, leaving only the lds.org media player on my

screen. Having been too distracted to hear much of the dedication ceremony the first time around, I pulled the scrollbar on the internet video player back to hear it again.

“Every prophet since Brigham Young has spoken from this pulpit,” President Hinckley noted in his introductory remarks. He then spoke of the generations to come, but my thoughts went back in time. The video player’s scrollbar was stubbornly stuck within the two-hour conference block, but I pictured being able to pull it back even further to see the previous prophets speak. I imagined taking the video stream back through hundreds of general conferences and thousands of public speeches, concert broadcasts, Christmas devotionals, and funerals – all the way back to that June evening in 1928 when Hamp and Gordon were staring at the same stage I was looking at on my computer screen. The commencement program in my hands – the same piece of paper Hamp had held in his hands that night – was literally *hot off the press*.

~~~~~





George Bentine at the controls of Paragon's Printing Press

Part II. Countdown to Commencement

Chapter 4: The Paragonians

“How’s the program coming, Jim?”

Jim Owens, in his first year as an apprentice typesetter at Salt Lake’s Paragon Printing Press, carefully adds the final strokes to the new Linotype machine’s keyboard; the machine promptly spits out a fresh *line o’ type*. “All done, Mr. Bentine sir, have a look.”

Master Printer George Bentine drops the type metal slug into the wooden tray as the final puzzle piece and holds it up for scrutiny, his eye trained to read mirror images.

“Well?”

“Latter-day Saints College Commencement Exercises,” Bentine mumbles. He squints a bit and drops his voice to a whisper as he reads the subscript announcing the event’s place and time: “Tabernacle, Friday Evening, June First, Nineteen Hundred Twenty-eight, Eight o’clock.”

“All set?”

“It will pass,” grumbles Bentine, “Run the whole batch!”

Jim resets the barrel’s counter to zero and starts turning the crank. The scent of fresh ink percolates through his jacket and soaks into his skin, but he is long since immune to print shop smells.

Each of the thousand copies needs a tri-fold, and Bentine’s fleet hands dig into the process before the ink even has a chance to dry.

Jim's worn-out arm cranks away for almost an hour, with no reprieve from Bentine, who splits the stack in two the instant the last program rolls off the press.

"Finger!" barks Bentine as he wraps twine around the bundles.

Jim holds the twine in place with his finger while Bentine secures the knots. "Ouch!" he cries as his finger is inevitably caught in the impatiently tightening noose.

"Go, go, go!" shouts Bentine, pushing Jim out the door with a bundle under each arm. Bentine nervously squints at the clock on the far wall: *Five o' clock*. He wants to be sure the programs are in place before the early birds arrive for this evening's commencement. He has good reason to be nervous. Just down the street, Deseret Book Company's business is expanding at an alarming rate. Paragon just barely managed to underbid Deseret to print this year's annual for L.D.S. High. The yearbook job was a tall order for a small shop and they had run behind schedule, barely getting the printed pages to the bindery in time for tonight's distribution.

Now, after running twelve hundred yearbooks, the big press is getting an overhaul; printing the commencement programs is a nice little side job to keep some income rolling in while the big press is out of commission. Bentine can't afford to lose any ground; running a full-page advertisement for Deseret in the yearbook was a hard enough swallow for him, but a late delivery might make Miss Madelyne Stewart, a strict young English teacher and the school's director of publications, doubt her decision to go with Paragon.

"Not while Bentine is running the show," he shouts confidently as he pats one of the presses in his captive audience. He walks out to the street corner, his eyes trailing Jim as added security.

Jim is a bit winded after sprinting the two and a half city blocks from Paragon to Temple Square. He slows to a brisk walk as he passes inconspicuously through the West Gate behind the Tabernacle, and then nonchalantly places the stacks on two specially prepared tables outside the main Tabernacle doors. He pulls his knife out of his pocket and cuts the strings loose. A few of the programs at the top start to flutter in the light breeze, and he scans the grounds for a solution. Two rounded stones from beneath the rose bush ought to do the trick; he bends down to dig them out.

"Well, Mr. Owens, how do you do?"

Jim quickly spins around, brushing the dirt off his new paperweights. "No worries, Miss Stewart, we've got your order right here."

"Wonderful!" she replies, "It looks like Bentine made good on both of his promises today. The annuals arrived from the bindery just a few minutes ago." Miss Stewart has her own, much larger table set aside for the Saints' "*S*" *Book* distribution. "Now will you be a dear and help me with these boxes?" she asks persuasively.

Jim helps her heave six cases of the three-hundred-page yearbooks up onto the table, producing quite a sag in the middle. Miss Stewart stacks the books into neat piles for distribution and pulls out a checklist of paid-up seniors. The underclassmen will receive their books another time; this is the seniors' day.

“What about these over here,” Jim asks, eying a separate, unopened box.

“Oh good, I was afraid the fancy ones wouldn’t arrive in time,” exclaims Miss Stewart, pulling out a second check list of seniors who had paid a hefty surcharge to have their names embossed in gold on the cover.

Jim opens the box and picks up a yearbook, unwittingly leaving inky fingerprints on the crisp pages as he thumbs through it. All the school year’s activities are included through the previous week, but unfortunately tonight’s ceremonies aren’t immortalized in print – a deliberate choice Miss Stewart made in order to give the seniors a chance to sign each other’s books before they disseminate across the country, pursuing whatever lies on the exciting road ahead.

In verifying her numbers, Miss Stewart wonders if she has miscounted; she reads the purchase order on the box aloud several times over, “Salt Lake Engraving Company, 30 pieces,” checking each of the covers against her list. They are all accounted for; she’s puzzled until she sees Jim with one of the engraved books in hand.

“Give me that!” she says bluntly, realizing simultaneously whose book Jim is holding and how dirty his hands are. She places the yearbook by itself on the table.

“So sorry...” Jim says shyly. With a line of students beginning to form around the table, Jim has begun to feel a bit out of place and excuses himself for the evening. His exit march through the gate is slowed by

throng of arriving graduates filing in to the grounds with their families.

“Thanks again, Mr. Owens,” Miss Stewart calls from behind her table, feeling badly for having been so short with him, “and be sure to thank Mr. Bentine as well.” Her words are muffled by the roar of the excited crowd, and Jim has trouble understanding her.

“Should have finished school...” he says under his breath, the complaint triggered by a sense of envy for younger, carefree days, and cemented by the thought of spending his Friday night under Bentine’s watchful eye cleaning up the mess he left at Paragon. His downward glances contrast starkly with the upbeat optimism in the eyes of the entering graduates.

Salt Lake is in the midst of the so-called “Roaring Twenties.” If you ask Jim, the twenties haven’t quite hit the din of a roar in Utah – the local scene seems more like a purr – but nonetheless, in the eyes of the students, it is a fantastic time to be graduating. Life in Salt Lake City is more metropolitan than ever; Utah is finally on the map for all new reasons, having just begun to grow from the shadows of its polygamous past. Rather than mobilizing troops against the territory, the President’s agenda now includes actively courting the people of Utah; after parading through downtown Salt Lake City with his transcontinental motorcade just five years before, for instance, President Harding himself had toured Temple Square and addressed the nation from the city’s beloved Tabernacle.

Miss Stewart recalls the excitement of that presidential night – shortly after her own graduation from

the L.D.S. – and can't help but be thrilled for tonight's crowd as well. The Temple Square grounds fill with gathering groups of graduates, and she hands out one leather-bound volume after another until only a handful of books remain on the table. She taps her fingers on the table while waiting for the latecomers, reciting poetry to herself to pass the time.

"Mind snapping a photograph for us?" asks one particularly striking young lady, surrounded by a group of young men whose burly figures fill out their graduation robes.

"Sure Betty, not a problem," Miss Stewart responds. "Looks like you've got the whole defensive line with you," she adds with a wink, "Maybe if you wait a few minutes, you'll get the rest of the team to join you in the picture as well!"

"No, go right ahead and snap the photograph," Betty replies with a laugh, "we don't need the offensive line here too – these boys are *offensive* enough for me." She pauses to gage Miss Stewart's reaction. "Now how's that for using a homonym on the spot?"

"That's actually a heteronym, but still very good, Betty. Looks like your English lessons sank in after all."

"And I'm glad to see that you finally took my advice and cut your hair short like mine!" Betty exclaims with a grin, "I'll bet Hal really likes it."

Miss Stewart nods shyly at the mention of her boyfriend. Betty opens the case of her new Kodak Vanity camera – an enviable graduation gift that comes complete with a lipstick holder and mirror – and hands it to Miss Stewart.

"Now everyone look here!" says Miss Stewart, raising the camera and focusing it on Betty, who – in her usual fashion – strikes a pose at the center of attention.

One young man in particular keeps a jealous watch over Betty "the Beauty" Callister as she poses with the athletes. Jerry Jones, the senior class president, is quite a popular fellow; but athletic he most definitely is not, and he watches one of the athletes, Rex McKean, with a searingly scornful eye. Rex is nicknamed "the King" not just because of his first name, but because as the student body president, last year's valedictorian, and the star of the football team, he bears the triple crown as the head of the pack in popularity, scholarship, and athleticism.

Although Jerry can compete adequately in the traits of popularity and scholarship, his own accomplishments in singing and acting fall short of Rex's record on the football field. Jerry is afraid Rex's brawn might be the trump card in an imaginary, alpha-male battle for Betty's heart. Even worse, Betty has served as Rex's vice president this year, and – though the idea that he is Jerry's nemesis hasn't yet crossed Rex's mind yet – Jerry constantly fears that this "business" relationship has developed into something more. The triangle is as timeless as love itself.

Jerry's suspicious eyes dart back and forth between Betty and Rex while Miss Stewart fumbles with the camera in a struggle to capture the moment. Though the sun is behind her and low in the sky, she has to hold one hand up to block a gleam of reflected light as she finally snaps the photograph. The cranes on the horizon

are setting an accelerating pace for the new, boom economy, but Moroni still manages to glint starkly in the sinking sunlight.

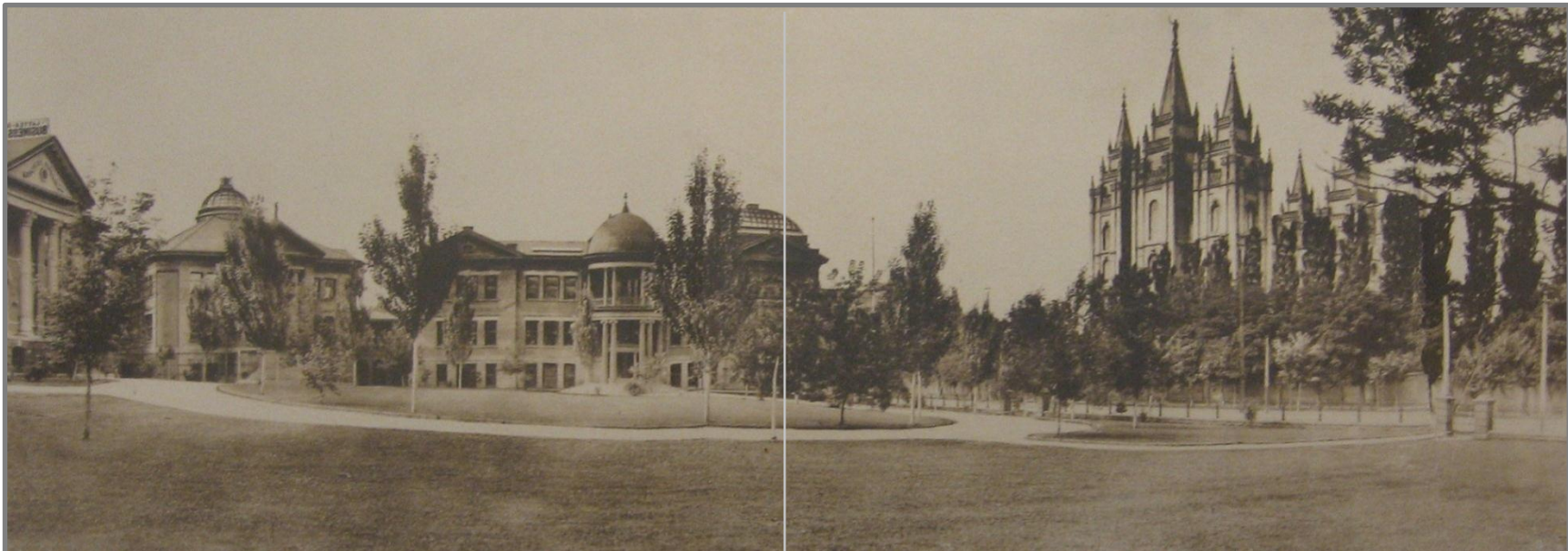
The flagpole atop the Hotel Utah's dome had captured the high ground from Moroni while tonight's graduates were still very young; not quite ready to cede defeat to the encroaching skyline, however, Moroni's trumpet still manages to lead the charge as the shadows of the temple spires spring over the east wall and make their way across the deserted L.D.S. College campus.

Overlooking them all is the State Capitol Building – also built within the students' lifetime. Its halls are likewise deserted as local legislators make their way down the hill to Temple Square. As City Hall's distant clock tower chimes six, everybody who is anybody in the Salt Lake Valley – be it in politics, religion, or business – joins the throng toward the Tabernacle.

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Salt Lake City Skyline  
with Hotel Utah's newly completed beehive dome





Betty:  
Student Body Vice President  
and Beauty Queen



Jerry:  
Senior Class President  
and Standout Scholar



Rex:  
Student Body President  
and Star Athlete



Madelyn:  
English Teacher and  
Faculty Director  
of Publications



Waldemar:  
Golden Eagle  
Aero Club President



R.J.:  
Student Body Treasurer  
and Secretary

## Chapter 5: Waldie and the Money Man

Up in the Avenues, the tree-lined streets on the Capitol's hill where most of the L.D.S. High students live, a small crystal radio cackles in a back bedroom of a modest, well-kept home. A dependable little bird pops its head through the door of the Roth family cuckoo clock – brought with them from their native Black Forest – six times in a row.

"This is your news at the top of the hour," recites the rookie KSL newsman between chirps.

The young man in the bedroom strains to catch the first headline.

"No sign of Captain Amundsen," continues the newsman, a bit of emotion apparent in his delivery.

"Valdemar!" interrupts a shrill voice from downstairs with a distinct roll of the *r*.

"On my vay," the young man shouts back in subtle mockery of Frau Roth's pronunciation. "The name's Waldemar, mother," he says quietly to the mirror as he hastily adjusts his bowtie, stressing the "w" with rounded lips over and over again to reassure himself that he hadn't acquired his mother's thick, German accent.

Advertising posters of airships, which Waldemar had acquired from travel company presentations, bedeck the room's walls on both sides of the mirror. His radio lies meticulously placed on a busy shelf between his model airplanes and a stack of Graf Zeppelin flyers, a barrage of which had been mailed out in anticipation of the Graf's upcoming maiden voyage at the end of the summer. The brochures portray even the most modern

ocean liners as outdated dinosaurs, stuck to a two-dimensional sea in their ports of call; luxury transoceanic airship travel is the wave of the future, and airships like the Graf are now making the third dimension and the most remote corners of the globe reachable to everyone.

The world is shrinking, and – at least to Waldemar – the progress seems unstoppable; in fact, an international crew had just landed an airship at the North Pole the previous week, and news reports regarding the crew's fate have kept him glued to his radio longer than expected tonight. He initially held out hope not just for the crew, but for the lost rescue team as well – a team that includes Waldemar's aviator hero, South Pole pioneer Roald Amundsen. His hopes fade a bit after tonight's bleak news report, and he turns off the radio's dial.

"Guess that's the price of progress," he says to himself as he runs down the stairs, forcing the disappointment from his face.

Waldemar darts out the door, snagging a wrapped liverwurst sandwich, a bag of laundry, and a peck on the cheek from Frau Roth. As he jogs down the street, the rushing waters of newly covered City Creek – another victim of so-called progress – compete with his feet in a buried pipe. He slows to a walk to gulp down his sandwich as he nears the business district. Though it is a few blocks out of his way, he had agreed to drop off the dry cleaning for his mother. Checking his pocket watch as he sets the bag on the cleaner's counter, he begins to regret the offer.

He happens to glance through the large plate-glass window of the clothing store next door and spots another

classmate running late. Waldemar lets out a laugh as he pokes his head through the door "Well if it isn't the money man!" he mocks, finding it ironic to see the school's treasurer digging through his pockets for change, "How do you do, R.J.?"

"Oh, hi Waldie, I'm just looking for a tip. I bought the suit here, so there's no charge – see?" He points to the lettering on the door: *Hibbs Clothing: no charge for pressing suits bought here.*

Waldemar nods at R.J.'s familiar frugality, but still looks puzzled. "Well either way I'm surprised to see Mr. Early Bird running late – especially on your big night! You know distribution of the annuals ends at seven."

"I know," says R.J., turning to Waldemar, "I tried until the last minute to talk my father into coming tonight." The disappointment on his face shows through, and he lets out a sigh. "No luck, though."

Waldemar knows R.J. and his dad are at odds with each other, but missing commencement – that is unheard of for any parent. "Sorry to hear that," he says quietly.

"Well, I think we'll still make it in time if you want to hitch a ride."

Waldemar nods in agreement.

"I'll just be a minute," says R.J., who ducks into a changing room and emerges shortly, sporting a sharp look for a bargain suit. R.J. places his street clothes, neatly folded, into the trunk and they hop into the old Studebaker. His father had amassed a small fortune – including the Studebaker – through bartering. Though they disagree on many things, he has never doubted R.J.'s

sense of responsibility, and he didn't give a second thought to letting him have the car keys tonight.

"Oh, hi Leona!" says a startled Waldemar, "I didn't know you were waiting out here."

R.J.'s little sister is in the back seat of the car. She has just finished her first year at L.D.S. as a *junior-junior*, a new term coined and voted on by her classmates with the apparent hope of avoiding being labeled as *sophomoric*. In any case, she knows it is quite a treat for a junior-junior to attend the commencement exercises in the company of upperclassmen. "Just waiting patiently for Mr. Fancy Pants!" she says, poking R.J. in the back of the head as he climbs into the driver's seat.

"Oh hush," R.J. says, drowning her out by turning over the Studebaker's noisy *Big Six* engine.

"Now there's a sound I love to hear," Waldemar says from the passenger seat. "I heard that Studebaker plans to make a *24-cylinder* engine for an aeroplane – biggest in the world! I'll be working on some engines at the airfield myself this summer, you know."

R.J. looks a bit disinterested – engines are definitely not his thing.

"What are your plans this summer?" asks Waldemar, sensing he should change the subject.

"I'm hoping to get an accounting job," says R.J., perking up. "The market is really booming – I'm thinking about investing any money I get for graduation into the stock market."

Waldemar nods but stops listening to the rest of the financial advice that continues to come his way as

they make their way along North Temple toward the Tabernacle.

"He sure loves to hear himself talk," Leona says from the back seat, "especially when it comes to money!"

"Hey!" R.J. says defensively.

No one can argue with the current boom; by all counts it's a great time to be in the money business. Doomsayers are claiming that the margins cannot be sustained – some are even predicting a looming stock market crash – but no one in his right mind would have predicted the onset of an unprecedented, Great Depression just a year away.

Could Leona or any of the other underclassmen at the L.D.S. imagine that, with tithing funds dwindling, rising costs and scarce tuition money would force an exodus to public schools and that the exodus would, in turn, force the closure of their beloved high school before many of them even have the chance to graduate? Unthinkable! In the meantime, the future looks bright indeed, and the underclassmen certainly have as much to look forward to as the graduates.

L.D.S. College – including the high school and business college that are wrapped into a single campus adjacent to Temple Square – comes into view on their left. The fledgling junior college is not yet well known outside of Salt Lake; "The L.D.S." as a high school, however, has become quite prestigious in academics and dominates the sports scene in its league. Even the campus itself seems caught up in the recent boom economy: Many of its buildings are being prepared with an overcoat of scaffolding as the facilities are upgraded over the

summer to accommodate the ever more abundant academic and extracurricular activities of the students.

“Well, next year you’ll be there all alone, Leo, what do you think of that?”

Leona despises R.J.’s nickname for her and refuses to grace him with an answer. But inside, her nerves acknowledge his insinuation.

Scores of new cars, a tell-tale sign of the boom economy, seem to have overtaken downtown. Unfortunately, the city infrastructure hasn’t kept pace. The angled parking spaces lining both sides of the street are completely filled on any given day; an event in the Tabernacle makes finding a spot nearly impossible. The trio round all four edges of Temple Square, searching in vain for a spot.

“There’s one,” Leona finally shouts from the back seat, “and it looks like a perfect spot, right by the entrance!”

Waldemar and R.J. read the sign in unison as they pull closer: “Reserved – Grant.”

R.J. looks dejected, “I guess we’ll have to park down the street.”

“Just pull into that driveway,” says Waldemar, pointing to one of the few remaining residential buildings adjacent to Temple Square, “They’re not likely to be going anywhere tonight.”

But R.J. is a stickler for rules, and the thought of a parking citation tonight – or worse, a visit to one of the City’s new impound lots – makes him cringe. “No, we’re bound to find a legal spot around here somewhere.”

“Well, how about if you get out here and I go find a spot?” counters Waldemar, “You can’t be late, after all, not tonight!”

R.J. is torn, but he is anxious to arrive. Besides, he knows Waldemar has already been at the controls of an airplane; he uses that argument to justify entrusting Waldemar with his father’s keys. “Don’t you dare tell father, Leo!” he warns as they climb out of the car. She shakes her head and zips her lips.

R.J. turns to Waldemar. “Thanks!” he says, “I’ll pick up your annual for you if it’s not too late.”

As R.J. and Leona approach the Temple Square grounds, laughter and chit-chat echo off the walls. Leona isn’t much for socializing, and she heads straight into the Tabernacle to beat the crowd. R.J. makes a quick stop at the sagging “*S*” *Book* table.

“I was afraid you two weren’t going to make it tonight,” says Miss Stewart.

R.J. turns over his shoulder to see Waldemar sprinting to the table, quite out of breath. “That was quick!” R.J. says to him.

“I found something real close,” replies Waldemar, gesturing ambivalently toward the north gate. R.J. already has his hand out, anxious to get the keys back.

Miss Stewart checks two of the last three names off her list of engraved books.

“Did we make it into the book?” asks Waldemar, turning to Miss Stewart after handing over the keys to R.J.

“Oh, sorry Waldie, I haven’t had time to check,” Miss Stewart replies.

Waldemar stays at the table, nervously scanning the pages of his yearbook. He has just finished his tenure as president of the Aero Club, founded earlier in the year, its membership still growing when the cutoff for yearbook pictures passed. Waldemar, his head buried in the book, finally emerges with a grin when he sees his club's photo, including his own clean-cut mug shot.

"We had quite a year," he says, trying to strike up a conversation with Miss Stewart. "*The future's up in the air!* That was the club motto that I thought up. Do you get it?"

Miss Stewart nods as she begins to disassemble her setup.

Waldemar points at the sky in a last-ditch effort to grab her attention. "You hear that buzz?"

Miss Stewart glances up and strains but can't hear anything above the laughter and commotion of the crowd.

"It's a Ford Trimotor – same as the one that Lindbergh flew." His excitement seems to grow with the approaching sound, and soon Miss Stewart can hear it, too.

The top of the Tabernacle's dome is painted with a huge compass and Salt Lake's call sign; pilots use the landmark – affectionately known to airmen as the "burgeoning tortoise" – for orientation to line up their landing approach to nearby Woodward Field. Flying machines criss-cross overhead on a daily basis now, but this approaching aircraft still manages to attract the crowd's attention. All eyes turn skyward for a moment. Waldemar starts to explain the Doppler Effect but

changes the topic when he realizes Miss Stewart has tuned him out.

"Isn't she a beauty?" he shouts over the buzz as the volume peaks, "That plane will be taking off with tomorrow's mail before the sun comes back up!"

The sound diminishes, and conversations in the crowd resume after a brief lull. The plane disappears below the tree line on its approach to Woodward, but Waldemar's eyes are still fixed in its direction, recalling Lindbergh's landing at Woodward the previous year. Like Lindbergh, Waldemar hopes that the people in his native Germany will again build the world's finest planes and believes firmly that the future, indeed, is in the skies.

Lindbergh's visit had piqued an interest in air travel not just for Waldemar but for many other L.D.S. High students, helping to swell the ranks of the Aero Club. The entire student body still see it as an honor that *Lindy*, arguably the biggest celebrity in the country, had traversed their very own campus on his way to an overnight stay in the Hotel Utah.

Waldemar emerges from his daydream. "Well, Miss Stewart, if you look overhead during next year's ceremony, you'll see me at the controls."

Miss Stewart gives him a stern look. "Well, if your grades are any indication of your piloting skills, I'll be sure to run for cover."

Waldemar suddenly feels the sting of being a bit out of place without his graduation robes. He had the chance to graduate as a junior this year, prevented only by a failing grade in Miss Stewart's English class. On top of his summer job, he will be taking a few remedial



classes at East High to make up for the time he had already spent mingling with the mechanics at Woodward.

“You’d get addicted, too, if you had the chance to fly,” Waldemar replies, a bit defensively – then adds with a smile, “You know, the Aero Club will be looking for a faculty sponsor next year.”

“You boys wouldn’t know what to do if a woman showed up at your club’s fraternity meetings.”

“Next year will be different, mark my words,” Waldemar retorts, “In fact, I hear there’s a lady looking to follow Lucky Lindy’s path across the big pond. If *Lady Lindy* makes it, girls will be lining up to join the Aero Club.” As they speak, the ambitious flyer is on her way to Nova Scotia to attempt the first ever Atlantic crossing by a woman.

“Let’s hope she makes it,” says Miss Stewart, pausing to stack the empty boxes around her table, “and earns herself the right to be called by her own name in the process.”

“Hmm...” Waldemar nods his head in agreement, never having considered that Ms. Earhart might just despise the nickname. “Well they’re already calling her the *Queen of the Skies* in the press,” he adds, “so maybe that will stick!”

“Well, Waldie, I still have one last annual to distribute. I wish you all the best for the summer.”

Waldemar looks around and finds that R.J. has already entered the Tabernacle without him. Finding himself otherwise alone, he excuses himself awkwardly. “Yes, you too Miss Stewart,” he says, “I hope to see you

again – well, I mean I guess I’ll see you around...again...I hope.”

Miss Stewart nods with a smile.

Waldemar walks away, debating whether or not he had discerned the hint of a wink accompanying her parting smile. He scans the crowd intently for fellow Aero Club members to sign the club’s page in his yearbook. Who among them will be the next Lindbergh or the next Earhart? Waldemar can easily imagine someone from his very own club on a future *Life Magazine* cover. As his eyes dart back and forth through the crowd, he can only imagine who else among his classmates might change the world.

“Jack!” he shouts, redoubling his excitement as he spots a club-mate. “Well, we made it into the annual!”

They exchange books and each simultaneously draws a fountain pen out of his jacket pocket. With so many clubs and activities to choose from, every senior was pressed for time this year, and Jack is no exception. Jack has a soft spot for music and was leaning toward joining the glee club earlier in the year, but Waldemar convinced him that the Aero Club would give him more practical career skills.

As they part ways, Waldemar opens his book to read the signature. “Here’s to the future...up in the air – Jack Salmon.” Waldemar smiles when he sees that Jack has lent creed to his slogan, glowing with the success of having won a convert to the skies. His upbeat mood reflects the undeniable sense of excitement in the air tonight.

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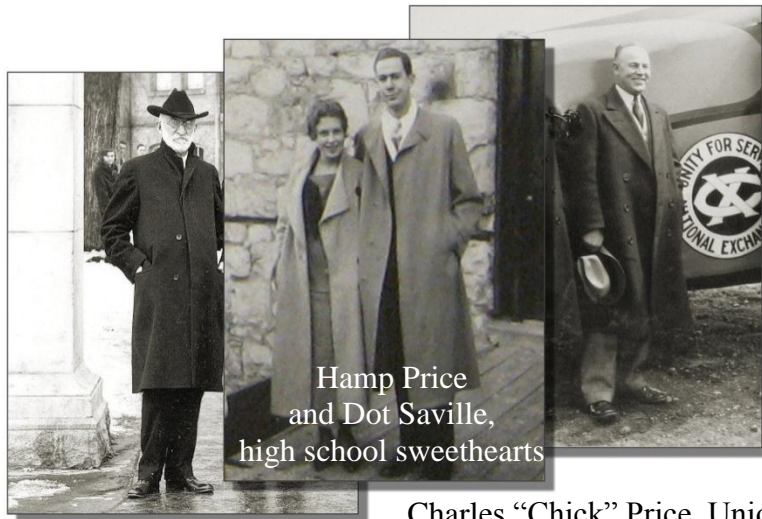
Chapter 6: Chick's flick

Waldemar wanders through the crowd once more, mingling meticulously as he looks for classmates to sign his yearbook. "Hamp!" he shouts as he spots another friend.

Hampton Price is hard to miss; already six feet four and growing, he always manages to stand out in a crowd. Waldemar tried in vain all year to get Hamp to join the Aero Club. Not that Hamp isn't interested in airplanes – on the contrary, the ride he had taken in Lindbergh's plane at Woodward had inspired him for life, and he had even named the Price family dog *Lindy* – but another interest has captured his attention recently.

Hamp waves back, but as Waldemar approaches with his yearbook to exchange signatures, he realizes that it wasn't a wave at all, but rather a signal to back out of a picture. Hamp's other arm is around Dorothy Saville, another classmate graduating tonight, and they are posing for a picture to immortalize the occasion.

Hamp and Dot have been sweethearts since junior high school, when the Savilles had first moved "up on the hill" in the Avenues and became neighbors and family friends of the Prices. Mrs. Saville disapproves of their dating, however, so despite their sweetheart status, they have each compiled a collection of prom and other formal dance photos with other, platonic partners in arm. A graduation photo together is, however, quite obligatory, and Mrs. Saville isn't around to object tonight. As Charles "Chick" Price, Hamp's father, snaps a photo of the couple, Waldemar sets off in another direction to find



Hamp Price
and Dot Saville,
high school sweethearts

Heber J. Grant, Church
President and Chair of the
Education Board

Charles "Chick" Price, Union
Pacific Railroad conductor
and flying enthusiast

more of his classmates; a tall figure in a Homburg hat brushes shoulders with Waldemar and approaches the small group.

“How do you do, Brother Price?”

The senior Brother Price quickly withdraws his hand to push an exposed pack of cigarettes further inside his vest pocket. “Very well, President, sir, how are you?”

President Heber J. Grant is a familiar sight around campus and in the Avenues. He serves on the Church’s Board of Education by virtue of his position and takes a personal interest in L.D.S. High, seizing any opportunity to be among its students and faculty. “Doing well myself, thank you very much...though I walked a bit farther than planned as someone had taken my parking space.”

Chick nods and nervously straightens his jacket.

“Maybe it’s just as well tonight, since I’ve had a lot on my mind,” President Grant continues, “Brother Brigham always told me when I was a young boy that shaking the body up with exercise gives your mind a chance to rest – ‘course he was talking about dancing – but that’s a still a *word of wisdom* to the wise!”

Chick cringes at the not-so-subtle insinuation. He is used to flicking away his cigarette when he sees President Grant approaching, but this time he has been caught off guard. He is much more at home among his fellow railroad men than in the almost exclusively Mormon company that surrounds him tonight, and his usual confidence always seems to crumble around this particular authority figure. His duties for the Union Pacific include serving as President Grant’s personal rail car attendant on longer trips, making sure the ride is

comfortable and the food palatable. He knows from experience that President Grant gets a kick out of making him squirm. On their last trip, he had been particularly successful:

“Would you be needing anything else?” Chick had politely asked after delivering a fancy meal to the cabin.

“Why yes, as a matter of fact, this meal hasn’t been blessed yet,” answered President Grant, knowing full well that praying aloud was foreign to Chick – who then proceeded to stumble through what was allegedly the shortest prayer ever uttered. When he looked up, though, all of the Church dignitaries in the party still had their heads bowed, so he kept repeating the prayer until everyone finally said, “Amen.”

That story had spawned a tradition around the family dinner table: Whenever hosting company for a meal, Chick’s wife, Mimi – a contrastingly staunch Mormon herself – always tells the story with great amusement before blessing the food herself.

A flood of mail had followed after this occasion as President Grant – ever the zealous missionary – sent one religious tract after another to Chick’s home. He had even addressed a personally inscribed Book of Mormon to “Elder” Charles William Price, a subtle reminder of Chick’s priesthood office in the Church. As it turns out, graduation night provides yet another opportunity to make Chick uncomfortable:

“You’d make a great missionary,” says President Grant, extending his hand to Hamp.

The gesture convinces Hamp to give up his arm around Dot in exchange for a firm handshake and some inevitable advice.

“People already look up to you,” President Grant states, “so you’ve got that going for you already.”

Hamp nods, standing on his toes in jest to make himself look even taller; President Grant is over six feet tall himself, but Hamp is one of the few graduates tall enough to actually look down on him.

“And besides,” President Grant adds with a further jab at Chick, “it’s in your blood!”

Hamp is descended directly from pioneers; his namesake, in fact, is his maternal grandfather, Brigham Young Hampton, who had been adopted (and named) in Nauvoo by Brigham Young himself. Despite this heritage, his family is obviously not entirely religious and a church mission is far from his mind.

Turning to Chick, President Grant says, “Well, what do you think?”

Though he very much objects to the idea of having his son postpone further education with missionary service, Chick decides to humor President Grant and answers, “Well then you can call the rest of your missionaries home, ‘cause he’ll convert the world!”

President Grant chuckles and – not one to give up the last word – answers, “How about giving him a head start by letting him practice on you at home?”

There isn’t much Chick can say in response. He knows enough not to challenge President Grant’s persistence in these matters; any excuse is bound to just dig the hole deeper. *Jeddie*’s persistence in turning

childhood weaknesses in baseball, penmanship, and singing into personal strengths were becoming legendary in Mormon folklore even before he took office as the head of the Church. Chick also knows that President Grant – after fulfilling a childhood promise to finally build his widowed mother a watertight home – had dug himself out of deep personal debt one sale at a time as a developer in the Avenues, including a modest commission earned on the original sale of the Price family home. With no avenue of escape, all Chick can do is smile and nod.

President Grant gives him a solid pat on the back. As he draws a deep breath, Chick feels the pack of cigarettes jab him in the chest a bit more sharply than usual. President Grant thrives on challenging others to overcome vices, and confronting substance addiction strikes a particular chord with him. The lengthy fights between his mother and his drunken step father – and uncle – that led up to their divorce still haunt him, as do the memories of a close friend who smoked and drank his way to the grave right after returning home from a mission. In the latter case, President Grant had made a graveside promise to the Lord to rid the Church of alcohol and tobacco’s influence.

As Church President, he has preached incessantly on the subject and ultimately made good on his commitment by making abstinence from these substances compulsory for priesthood advancement and entry to the temple. The notion was opposed by quite boisterous foes, whom President Grant silenced in his many sermons on the “little white slave” by saying that anyone sick and

tired of hearing about it only complains because he is *full the stuff the Word of Wisdom tells him to leave alone*. This is not the man Chick wants to annoy with justifications, so he promptly changes the subject.

“I hear after conquering the real estate market in Salt Lake, you’ve now set your sights on New York!”

President Grant beams. He is still elated over the acquisition of the Hill Cumorah in upstate New York, formalized and announced in the 98th Annual General Conference just a few months earlier. To President Grant, it represents the fulfillment of an almost life-long dream. “If the Lord were to strike me down today and I met Brother Joseph and Moroni face to face – though I may leave some of my work undone – at least I can tell them I returned their hill safely to the fold.”

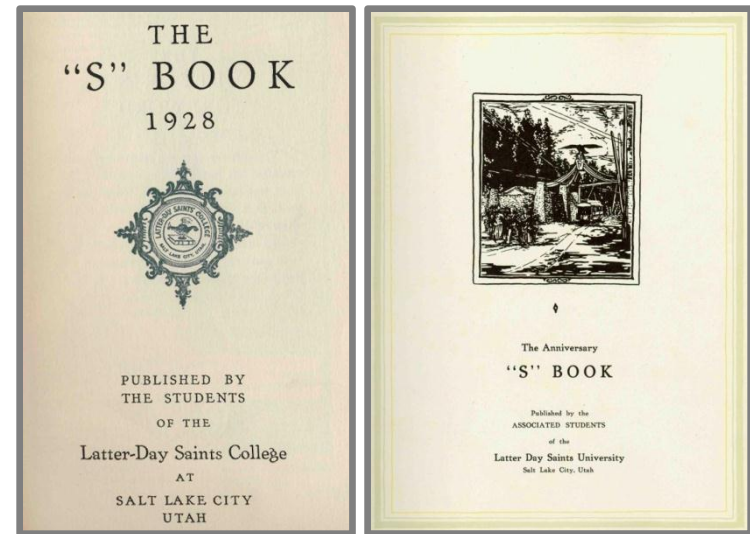
“Well if you plat it out for development like you did with the Avenues here, maybe the steam shovels will find your long-lost gold plates.”

President Grant chuckles and, yet again, refuses to cede the last word. “Don’t try me, Chick, I might do just that if it would get you back on our team!” He shakes Chick’s hand, clasping it between both of his hands as added emphasis.

Chick looks downwards, unable to summon the courage to look President Grant directly in the eye.

“Wonderful to have seen you, Chick,” he says, having spotted other friends in the crowd. “You’ll have to excuse me for now,” he adds with a wink, “but I’ll keep an eye out for you in Sunday’s services!”

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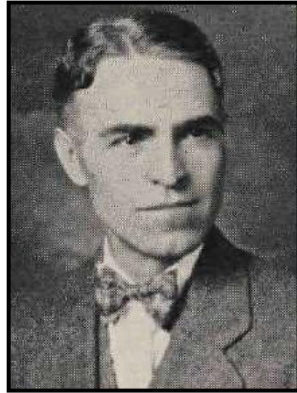


Heber J. Grant’s personally inscribed “S” Books

## Chapter 7. Gordy and the Choir Boy



Bryant, Board Member  
and former school president



George, music teacher  
and choir director



Gordy, the new man on campus



Homer, the Glee Club tenor

Hinckleys and Durhams

President Grant has caught sight of his good friend George Durham. George, schooled in the musical institutes and conservatories on the East Coast, is L.D.S. High's music director; President Grant has plans to apply his talents toward the Church's music program. "Have you saved a solo number for me tonight?" President Grant quips.

George nods his head. "Why certainly! That is, if Moroni blows his trumpet in agreement!"

"Well then, I might just call on him to do so."

George looks up at Moroni, just in case.

"And while I'm at it, I'll call down choirs of angels to accompany my solo!"

"Only if they'll drown you out completely," George replies in jest, echoing President Grant's boyhood choir teacher, who had said that Jeddie would be allowed to sing, but only if he gave the rest of the choir a head start so they could be at least forty miles away by the time he opened his mouth.

"One of these days I'll sing a solo from that pulpit, mark my words!"

George cringes, knowing the statement might as well be prophetic if that's what President Grant has set his mind to. "Duly noted," George replies, "Just let me warn J. Golden ahead of time or you'll have to have an ambulance standing by."

President Grant recognizes the insinuation and grins widely. He had set his legendary lungs to work singing one hundred hymns to his fellow travelers during

the first leg of a recent trip to attend a regional conference in Arizona. Among the trapped passengers was J. Golden Kimball, who objected to the incessant singing with his signature coarse language. To protect his ears from the vulgarity, President Grant just sang louder and longer, reaching a record of four hundred hymns sung in their four days on the road. J. Golden reportedly suffered a nervous convulsion by the end of the trip, and begged President Grant to at least invest in a faster car.

“Well if I won’t be singing from the pulpit tonight,” President Grant says, shrugging his shoulders, “I reckon your glee club will just have to do for now.”

“Thanks for your vote of confidence,” George says with a laugh.

“But I’ll keep practicing so as to be ready when the time comes.”

George grimaces. “That’s what I was afraid of,” he says.

“I’ll make you a deal if you want a way out,” President Grant says with a smile as he recalls his recent trip, “I met a young girl named Lulu at on my way back through Carbon County. She is only fourteen years old, but she already has the most beautiful voice. I told her if she comes over to the L.D.S., I’d do my best to get her some professional music instruction. If you take her under your wing and can get her to sing a solo in general conference, I’ll put her on the program and bow out myself.”

“Well if that buys us all a few years,” George says with a firm handshake, “you’ve got yourself a deal!” Just

as they strike their agreement, another dear friend approaches, taking hold of President Grant’s left hand.

“How about a Boy Scout handshake, my friend?”

“Why certainly, Bryant,” replies President Grant, an avid Scouter, “that is, if you’ll help me put in a good word for the Scouts to George.”

Bryant Hinckley, who is largely responsible for the Church’s alliance with the Boy Scout movement, responds with an inside joke: “I’ll *be prepared* to take you up on that!”

President Grant puts his arms around both Bryant and George and lowers his voice to a whisper, “You know, even though they’re graduating tonight, it’s still not too late to get your boys involved in Scouting.”

They turn to face him after he releases them from his grip. “Think it through, gentlemen!” President Grant continues, “But I’ll have your answer another time; tonight we celebrate what you have accomplished here. What a fine evening this is for a fine institution, thanks much to your service! You’ve both done such outstanding work; I hope the Lord will at least forgive me for boasting about your accomplishments.”

“Well if there’s anything to boast of, it’s in spite of me.” Bryant never had much stomach for adulation, but as one of the school’s former principals – and one who currently serves on its board of trustees – he and President Grant have a common vision for the school’s future as a pillar of gospel-centered education. “Besides,” he continues, trying to direct the attention away from himself, “tonight we’ll celebrate the next generation, not

us. Let's hope we've taught them well so there's someone to take care of us old folks when the time comes!"

Both George and Bryant look over at their sons, Homer and Gordon, who are sitting on a nearby ledge signing each other's yearbooks. President Grant points toward them and says to his friends, "As far as I'm concerned, we have nothing to worry about; if those two young men are any indication, this generation is definitely on the right path!"

Notwithstanding their stature – Homer is the shortest boy in the class and Gordon has been described by his classmates as *spindly* and *frail* – they are both well known at the school, thanks primarily to Homer's connections. The Hinckley and Durham families have been long-time friends, but Gordon and Homer themselves have only just become best friends this school year. Homer's longstanding roots at the school have been a blessing to Gordon, who had entered L.D.S. as a senior transfer student less than a year before. Among his many extracurricular activities, Homer sings high tenor in the choir directed by his father; although Gordon doesn't sing with the choir, he appreciates Homer's passion for music, his involvement in school activities, and especially his willingness to help show him the ropes.

Still, they are used to joking around with each other. As they return each other's yearbooks, they both look inside to see what the other wrote. "Don't let things go to your head," Homer wrote to Gordon, "remember, you were my height in Junior High." Homer, in turn, reads Gordon's message to him, "Surely a news carrier

can't be wrong," an inside joke jabbing at his part-time job.

"Well, well, my merry musical friend...is Gordon here giving you some advice for the future?"

Recognizing the voice, Homer looks at his feet and sighs.

Bob Toronto, his two brothers at his side, snatches Homer's yearbook and flips to an open page. "Well you can forget whatever he wrote," Bob says pretentiously, "What you really need is some dating advice from the master himself!"

Little brother John pulls out a pen for him and big brother Wallace feeds him some lines. Drawing on the dapper reputation of their well-known grandfather, Giuseppe "Joe" Taronto – the first Italian Mormon, the first Italian Utahan, and the man who had personally financed the construction of the Nauvoo Temple – the Toronto boys are born leaders. Wallace had been student body president the previous year, and Bob rode the wave of popularity with ease, supplemented with significant sports achievements of his own. John, in his junior year, is destined to follow in their footsteps.

In Gordon's opinion, though, the popularity has gone to their heads. While Homer impatiently taps his fingers on the ledge, Gordon steps in for his friend, swiftly grabbing the book back the instant Bob signs his name.

"If you're really *preferred by women* like you wrote here," asks Gordon, "why aren't they asking you to sign their books?"

Bob has no rebuttal.



“I think what you really meant was *preferred by the boys glee club!*”

Wallie and John break into laughter at their brother, who slugs them for their betrayal. Still unable to come up with a response, Bob simply says, “Let’s go,” and the Toronto boys leave to harass someone else.

Although not a loud or obtrusive character, Gordon is intimidated by no one and can always be counted on to speak his mind; with wit on his side, he is as bold as typical boys twice his size.

“Thanks for the pest control,” Homer tells Gordon appreciatively. They rejoin their fathers, who are still chatting with President Grant.

“How do you boys feel about scouting?” President Grant asks them as they approach. “We put on a bona fide pow wow last month at the U and then sent off quite a crew to the Jamboree in San Francisco.”

Homer recalls having seen a number of Boy Scout dignitaries, hosted by President Grant, at the previous general conference. “We’ll think it over,” he says.

Looking for an escape that might fall just short of a commitment, George checks his watch and signals to Homer; they both excuse themselves and hurry inside to warm up for the opening choir number.

Left alone with the Hinckleys, President Grant turns to young Gordon. “What are your plans after graduation?” he asks.

Gordon knows President Grant is hinting at a mission, but he has decided to finish his university studies first and isn’t sure how President Grant will take

the news. “Well, I’m hoping to major in journalism at the University of Utah...”

President Grant raises his eyebrows but doesn’t have to say a word to get more out of Gordon.

“...and then I’ll see where the Lord takes me from there,” Gordon adds, leaving the door open for some inevitable advice from the prophet.

“You’ve got your head on straight,” says President Grant. “You know, I didn’t get a chance to serve a mission myself – my mother was a widow my whole life and I had some family obligations at the time – but I did learn some things about missionaries while presiding over the European Missions in London.”

“And what was that?” asks Gordon, trying to demonstrate that he is, in fact, listening to President Grant’s advice.

“Well I can tell you that if the Lord had sent me a missionary with a journalism degree, I certainly could have put him to good use. In my opinion, such a missionary would help the Lord further His work tremendously.”

Gordon wonders what journalism could possibly have to do with knocking doors.

“I’ve got some ideas about how we might improve our public image,” President Grant says, “Be sure to stop by my office when you’ve finished your schooling and we’ll talk some more.”

“I’ll do that,” answers Gordon.

The invitation is sincere and not altogether uncommon. Although the Church is already two thirds of the way to its first million members, administration

remains largely in the hands of local units. Only a handful of full-time employees work for the Church. Quite literally, you can count them on the fingers of one hand. President Grant's personal secretary is generally too busy to act as a sentinel, so an interview with the President is often a matter of simply knocking on his door.

President Grant gestures out into the crowd around him. "Just don't get distracted by the fine young women around you in the meantime," he adds, "You know your father managed to find his bride right here at the L.D.S."

"No worries there, President," Bryant interrupts, "We've got the sweetest girl living right across the street from us – albeit an East High girl – but I can't even get Gordon to talk to her."

"We smothered them in football this year, but it sounds like their co-eds might be giving us a run for our money," President Grant jokes, "Well he can't very well have a sweetheart from our rival school now, can he?"

Gordon politely tries to correct the facts. "I'm not –"

President Grant glances past Gordon for a moment and interrupts him: "Speaking of sweethearts, my friends, here comes a sweetheart of a teacher now."

Having disassembled her tables and broken down her boxes, Miss Stewart approaches, clinging to a final yearbook.

"How do you do, Miss Stewart?" asks President Grant. He then turns to Gordon and says, "If you're going to be a journalist, I trust that Miss Stewart has prepared you well."

"Good evening gentlemen," she says politely with a subdued curtsy. "President Grant, I've been saving this for you!" She hands him a copy of the "*S*" *Book* with his name engraved on the cover.

"Why thank you, Miss Stewart," he says as he thumbs through the book, "I'm honored to have my very own copy..." He then chuckles and points to the inky fingerprints on the pages. "...even if it is a used copy!"

"Yes – sorry about that." Miss Stewart tries to change the subject. "Gordon," she says, "you'll be happy to know I've put you and Afton right at the front of the senior class."

Gordon glances at the page to find his senior picture leading the line-up of seniors. Class pictures in the "*S*" *Book* are traditionally not displayed alphabetically, but rather the order is arranged at the editor's discretion, with couples paired up based on the students' requests. "I have a feeling you're going somewhere in life," Miss Stewart adds, "and I just couldn't imagine squeezing you somewhere down between your other classmates."

Gordon has as little stomach for adulation as his father and shyly acknowledges her compliments with a downward glance at his shiny shoes.

President Grant looks at the caption beside Gordon's grinning portrait and reacts with a nod. "Ah yes," he says, "Brother Gordon 'B.' Hinckley, armed with that name, you now have no choice but to go somewhere with it."

Gordon glances at the page again. Little did he know, Miss Stewart had taken another liberty and added

his middle initial to the caption, making him the only member of the senior class to be listed with an initial in the yearbook. She knows there is something special about Gordon, and, whether her insights are a prelude to greatness, a preview of destiny, or just sheer luck, she has now given him a head start with this prerequisite naming convention for high office in the Church.

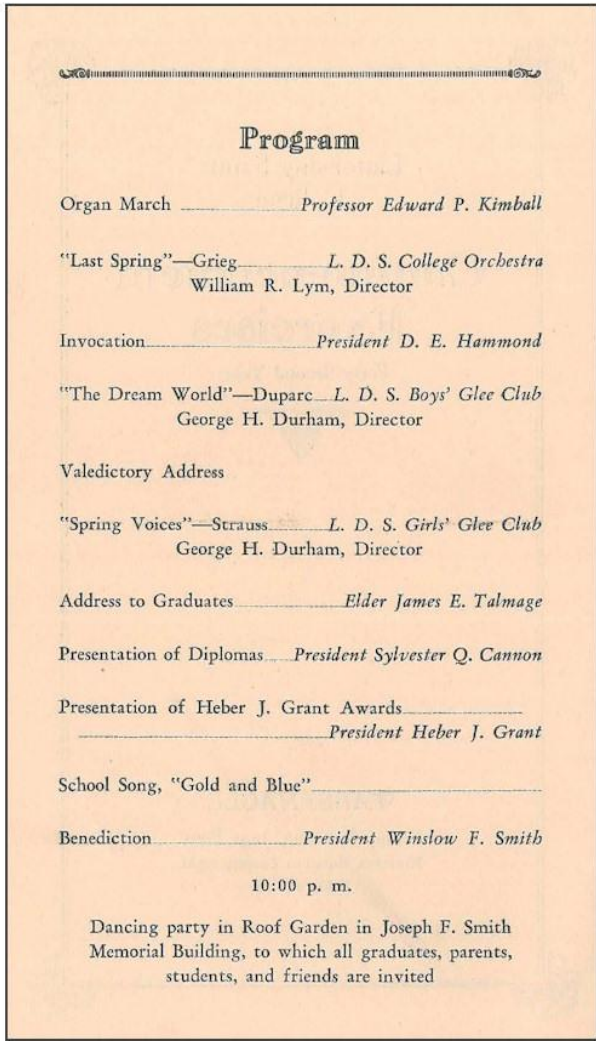
A bell rings outside the Tabernacle, and the ushers motion to those still standing outside. The roar of the crowd diminishes outside the doors and begins to swell inside.

As Gordon, Homer, and the others pass through the open doors of the Tabernacle, the last sliver of the setting sun slips over the mountains in the West Desert. The L.D.S. High seniors have seen their last sunset as high school students; yet only a few pause to think about it. The next sun rays will beam with them as proud graduates, and life will never be the same again after this milestone. In the meantime, this will certainly be a night to remember!

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The Toronto Boys: horsing around on the commons



A singular commencement program

Chapter 8. Pomp and Circumstance

The City Hall clock tower chimes eight times; each chime increasingly blends with the previous one as the sound echoes off the buildings facing Temple Square. The stragglers outside the Tabernacle – President Grant among them – scramble to get inside the building, President Grant among them. He is one of the last to enter and the ushers close the doors behind him. He is such a common figure in this setting that people don't think to rise when he enters the building as they would for successive prophets.

The graduates are already standing in line in the aisles; their designated seats are a massive void at the front of the Tabernacle. A few of the graduates switch places as they attempt to fine-tune the line into reverse alphabetical order as they have been instructed to do. The prophet shakes hand after hand as he continues down the aisle and up to the podium; he takes his seat as President Feramorz Fox takes the stand.

President Fox – a bespectacled and balding historian – has led the L.D.S. through two years of record-setting enrollment. Next year's enrollment already promises to set an all-time record for the school, and Church leaders are particularly proud to have a former graduate of L.D.S. High at the helm of the burgeoning institution.

"Will the graduates please come forward?" President Fox says; opening the ceremony, he looks toward the organist and gives him a nod.

Edward P. Kimball, who – in addition to his duties with the school’s music program – serves as the Tabernacle organist, begins the Organ March. The graduates march in formation to the front of the Tabernacle and take their seats on the notoriously hard white pine benches – painted to resemble oak by frugal and resourceful pioneers. Voices begin to soften, and the ushers urge a few latecomers to head upstairs to the balcony.

“I am proud to stand before you in this historic structure this evening,” President Fox says as he opens with his introductory remarks, “and I trust that you sense the historic nature of this milestone in your own lives.” His eyes scan the audience, not nearly large enough to test the Tabernacle’s capacity, but a good turnout for a commencement nonetheless.

“This year’s venue has given us more room than in the past; if this trend continues, in a few years we might well fill the whole Tabernacle – much like we filled the Assembly Hall to capacity last year.

“As I heard Brother Kimball at the helm of the organ, I thought of how it must have sounded sixty years ago when first played in a general conference of the Church. Some of those who attended its inaugural service are with us tonight. Though the interior of the structure was incomplete at the time, this organ now echoes the bright hope of those hardy pioneers.

“We as an institution are rooted in this same history. As you well know, our school began as the Salt Lake Academy, founded years before the State of Utah

achieved her statehood and even before the beautiful granite edifice across from us was completed.

“We have been known by many names over the years, and we have had our home in a number of locations. But we are still one body. We celebrated our fortieth birthday as an institution last year, and I hope I live to see us celebrate another forty anniversaries.

“And now as we commence this commencement, it is my honor to introduce to you your very own William Lym and his orchestra. Mr. Lym, as you may have heard, is a former member of Sousa’s Band, and we are all honored to have such a distinguished musician in our midst. We’ll hear the L.D.S. College Orchestra perform *The Last Spring* by Edward Greg, after which we’ll have an invocation by President Hammond, a member of the school’s board of directors.”

Mr. Lym is miffed at President Fox’s mispronunciation of Grieg’s name but shakes the thought from his mind as he takes the stage below the pulpit. He raises his baton emphatically, drawing all eyes toward him. Music slowly begins to fill the “acoustically perfect” hall; though the music is slow and haunting, he moves about madly in conducting the orchestra. Like his colleague George Durham, he has been educated in the nation’s foremost musical institutions and does not settle for mediocrity.

As proven by the famous and oft-demonstrated pin drop from the pulpit, the building amplifies not just the right notes, but a few wrong notes, scratches, coughs, and scooting chairs – each met with a stern glance of consternation from Mr. Lym. He has an aim to develop

the first full symphony in a Utah high school at the L.D.S. – a formidable and quite expensive undertaking. In fact, all of this year’s band concerts have served as fundraisers for the symphony’s new instruments. His mind is set on the task, if for no other reason than for the opportunity to thumb his nose right back at his East Coast counterparts and their snobby attitudes toward the status of musical education in the west.

He hears enough snuffles from the audience to know that he has managed to pull off Grieg’s number, a thought-provoking melody, bordering on somber or even melancholy. It is an odd selection for an upbeat occasion, a tune that was actually played at Grieg’s graveside and reportedly drove Tchaikovsky to tears when Grieg’s wife Nina played it for him on the piano. The tune ends so slowly that most audience members in the Tabernacle are too spellbound to applaud, although some subdued claps spread slowly through the audience as the orchestra members quickly and quietly set their instruments down.

Heads bow in silence for the invocation under a reflective atmosphere. President Hammond invokes the Lord’s blessing upon the graduates and – directing their thoughts well beyond the Tabernacle’s dome – upon the residents of Santa Paula, who at that moment are in the process of digging themselves out of the mud after a catastrophic dam failure had swept hundreds out to sea. Continuing his own mental journey, he adds the obligatory phrase, “and please help Captain Amundsen and the Collins boy be found,” a clause that had increasingly become standard prayer language over the preceding weeks as hopes faded for the rescuer explorer

and as an unfortunate mother from Los Angeles frantically called every police precinct in the country in search of her missing “*Changeling*” boy, resulting in unprecedented public support from across the nation. The audience feels the tug of sympathy, and President Fox takes the stand again after an enthusiastic, unison *amen*.

“Our thoughts are..”

President Fox turns his head and coughs in a vain attempt to clear the lump from his throat. He decides to continue with the evening’s program rather than dwell on the disconcerting news from outside.

“What Mr. Lym is to the instrument,” he says with a smile, “Mr. Durham is to the voice, and together they are synonymous with musical excellence in our school; we’ll now hear the boys’ glee club under Mr. Durham’s direction perform Duparc’s *The Dream World*.”

George, wearing his signature bowtie, steps behind the podium to face the glee club – already seated in the Tabernacle Choir’s soft seats. He smiles proudly at his son, Homer, and can vividly picture him with an outright seat of his own in the Tabernacle Choir someday.

The glee club members rise from their borrowed seats as George motions upward with both hands. With all eyes on him in anticipation, he makes a sudden turn toward the audience, having decided to introduce the song first. “I feel inclined to warn you that we’ll be performing this song in its original French. *L’invitation a la voyage*, if you’ll pardon my French, is a song about embarking on a voyage after sunset – in this case into a dream world. As we have just witnessed both a literal and

a figurative sunset tonight, let us reflect on what the sunrise will bring us – not just when we awake tomorrow morning, but throughout the journey that will take us the rest of our lives to complete.”

Mr. Durham turns back around, and the choir embarks on a musical trek through the French countryside. Hamp, seated among a sea of classmates, doesn't speak a word of French; he looks over his shoulder and shrugs for some help. Dot, seated in the row behind him, winks back at him with a smile. She is a founding member of the French Club, one of the most popular and active clubs on campus, and she uses this unique opportunity to put her sharp foreign language skills to use. She leans forward and translates for him in a whisper:

“...the setting sun clothes us in gold...the world falls asleep bathed in warmth and light...where all is harmony and beauty, luxury, calm, and delight...”

Hamp imagines their future life together, and it seems more than just a dream. It is a transcendent moment, not just for the young couple, but for everyone in attendance. Whether or not they understand the lyrics, many of the audience members are swept up in the tune – caught off guard in the dream world envisioned by the composer. Gordon is particularly moved as the music prompts him to recall the framed painting of a French field of special significance that rests on their hand-hewn mantel.

Mr. Durham is likewise caught up in the euphoria, surprisingly impressed with the increased musical quality the Tabernacle's acoustics lend to the glee club. His

mood subsides, though, as he can't help picturing the composer, Henri Duparc, who is still living but withering away in solitude half a world distant – having destroyed most of his own compositions. *Dream World* is one of the few morsels to have survived Henri's heavy hand, and as the song concludes, Mr. Durham wonders what other gems might have fallen victim to Duparc's self-destructive impulses, never to be performed. The thought leaves a pit in his stomach as the finale fades into silence, and he returns to his seat with the captivated audience applauding reverently.

“Thank you, Mr. Durham, for that beautiful piece,” President Fox says as he takes the stand again, “and thank you to the entire boys' glee club. I found myself wishing the dream wouldn't end.”

President Fox pauses, takes a deep breath, and turns to face the only student seated with the dignitaries on the stand. “It will now be our distinct honor to hear the valedictory address. This year's valedictorian has stood out in many ways: in academics, in leadership, and in service. We could let his distinguished record speak for itself, but that would rob you of the opportunity to hear him speak on his own behalf. And so, without further introduction, let's have a round of applause for your Class of 1928 Valedictorian!”

His fellow students watch especially intently as one of their own takes the stand to deliver the valedictory address. As he begins to speak, his presence captivates the audience; he certainly has a wit about him and an extraordinary way with words. The students know he has stood out from among them – that he seems destined to

go somewhere. But can any of the graduates seated in the Tabernacle imagine that their classmate, who has just approached the already historic Tabernacle pulpit for the very first time in his young life, will within their lifetime – after serving a mission and marrying in the temple – rise through the ranks of the Church and ultimately be heralded as a prophet?

Little do they know that their very own Class Valedictorian, the future leader of an entire religion, is destined to be almost worshipped by his entire fold. In the meantime, each of the graduates ponders the message he delivers, wondering what might lie ahead on the open road as they ride the Roaring Twenties into the following decades.

With an attentive look on his face, young Gordon B. Hinckley, seated in the audience in alphabetical order between his cousin Mary Hinckley and her good friend Naomi Hillam, leans forward to avoid the sarcastic commentary passing between Mary and Naomi.

As he stares at the podium, something about the speech doesn't sit quite right with him; nonetheless, he is respectfully alert. Perhaps it is the tone of the speech or the sight of secular robes and sashes in a sacred hall – or perhaps there is a slight hint of jealousy in his thoughts. The opportunities that would most certainly accompany the honor of being class valedictorian are undisputable. Every man with any notable standing in the Church's hierarchy is in attendance tonight along with giants in local businesses, government, and civic clubs. And, after tonight, they will all know R.J.'s name.

R.J. – the money man himself – thrives on the acclaim that accompanies being named as valedictorian. Gordon is definitely a bright young man, but this is R.J.'s night – his chance to both shine and bask in the envy of his peers. Gordon, for one, tries to wipe any envy quickly from his mind as the speech continues. *Adulation is poison*, he says to himself, a phrase that his father – speaking from experience at the helm of the largest stake in the Church with over 15,000 members – had taught him to live by.

Although he has an unquestionable gift for public speaking, R.J. stutters a bit when he spots Zina Brown seated in the front row directly before him. Zina makes faces at him to see if she can get him off his mark. *She's really quite attractive, if she just weren't so rebellious*, R.J. thinks to himself between sentences; then, scanning the audience, he feels the eyes of her attorney father, Brother Hugh B. Brown himself, scowling at him. He begins to feel his nerves weakening during the ever-increasing pause in his speech and decides to apply a tactic taught him by Mrs. Bolin, his stern competitive speech coach: *Expose your audience!* R.J. knows that the "B." in Brother Brown's name stands for Brown – yes, indeed, his full name is Hugh *Brown Brown!* The ridiculous sound of the name makes him smile and – feeling less threatened by his audience – he regains his composure.

"We can all be proud of our school tonight," says R.J., his nerves now calm enough to continue, "and of the constitutional freedoms that have allowed us to thrive here." True to his very patriotic nature, R.J. always seems

to be able to draw the Constitution into any speech, regardless of the venue. “We think especially of those who fought so hard for us to have the freedom to study and worship as we see fit. This very school lost some of its finest in the World War just a decade ago. Let their memory not be forgotten, let us honor their sacrifice by going out into the world, armed with our education, endeavoring to make it a better place.”

Gordon is particularly touched by the tribute and begins to feel his throat tighten. Ten years before, he had sat on a bench just a few rows behind and listened to President Joseph F. Smith relate a vision of the afterlife in general conference. The uncommonly introspective eight-year old had been pondering the message over the following weeks when a letter arrived from B.H. Roberts, who had been serving as an army chaplain in France. Braced up by his heartbroken father, Gordon had learned the awful news that Stanford Hinckley – literally his brother from another mother – had been one of the many casualties of the *war to end war*.

From that day forward Gordon had often reread Elder Roberts’ eulogy and the newly canonized vision of the spirit world, picturing his oldest brother Stanford among those “noble and great ones” whose “sleeping dust” lay just temporarily in the foreign field pictured on the Hinckley family mantel. The feeling of loss had never left him; tonight, though – in light of R.J.’s message – the lump in his throat is tempered just a bit by the thought that perhaps his brother’s ultimate sacrifice has contributed in some way toward this opportunity to celebrate.

Wrapped deep in thought, Gordon’s daydream is interrupted as the audience breaks into applause at the speech’s end, prompted by the intentional inflection of R.J.’s succinct “thank you!”

“You’ll be pleased to know that was not the last we’ve heard from this sharp young man this evening,” says President Fox after retaking the stand. “But first, let us have another treat. As you well know, in our school, we pride ourselves on giving girls opportunities equivalent to those given to the boys; in that spirit, we’ll now invite Mr. Durham back up to the stand to conduct the girls glee club.”

The L.D.S. is relatively progressive in terms of encouraging girls to get just as involved in athletics and other extracurricular activities as the boys; yet the curriculum remains distinctly divided in certain subject areas. Home economics, for instance – a required course for all girls – is taught in the Lion House, which housed Brother Brigham’s wives and gave Mark Twain many amusing anecdotes from his single stop there. In the Lion House, according to the school’s annual, “the girls of the L.D.S. are partly equipped here for their mission in life...how to sew, how to take care of a home, how to cook, etc.” In stark contrast stands the shop and metal arts department, where “boys are taught to repair cars, work in metals, and also do carpentry work.”

Nonetheless, adorned in the fashion, jewelry, and short hairstyles of the day, the graduating girls are a far cry from their antiquated ancestors. As a prime example, the winner of this year’s Home Economics award is Gordon’s yearbook partner, Afton Ashton, a class beauty

whose trend-setting flapper hairstyle hides any homeliness that one might otherwise expect from a *Daughter of Utah Pioneers*.

Mr. Durham turns to the audience first before signaling the girls to rise. “The girls’ glee club has an extraordinary treat for you this evening. If Waldemar will excuse our pronunciation, I hope you’ll enjoy this piece performed in the original German. The girls will be singing *Frühlingsstimmen*, or ‘Spring Voices’ by Johann Strauss. In case your German is rusty, I’ve obtained a few translated stanzas:

The night has hardly vanished,
When birds begin to sing again,
And the light can promise us all,
That shadows will recede again.
Spring voices bring us home,
With their sweet, sweet sound.

“Many of you graduating seniors will be leaving the nest of your homes now. Again, let us reflect on what morning’s light may bring. With that, I hope you’ll enjoy the glee club’s rendition – their last performance together as a choir.”

As the first German lyrics are sung, Hamp again turns to Dot, but this time she is of no help. They both shrug their shoulders; Hamp, with a wrinkled brow, wonders aloud how anyone could ever enjoy this coarse language that – at least in his opinion – certainly wasn’t meant to be sung. Gordon likewise cringes a bit at the sound of German words, but for him the reason is much

more deeply personal. Many other audience members likewise feel it hit a bit too close to home, knowing that German bullets had left their loved ones lying in foreign trenches after a torturous, fruitless stalemate.

Gordon pictures the sun, just having set over the Great Salt Lake, beginning to dawn on that familiar French field. Perhaps someday he will get the chance to travel – maybe just once – to a foreign land; he makes up his mind that if he’s ever given the chance, he’ll take a steamer to France to dedicate Stanford’s grave. He is still deep in thought as the song ends.

“And now I would like to introduce a man whom I have had the privilege of knowing for many year,” says President Fox after the members of the girls’ glee club take their seats again opposite the boys. “Most of you know that he presided over this institution in its infancy and that I have followed in his footsteps; what you may not know is that even before his presidency, I served as his lab assistant. In many ways I am still serving in the same role today: this is his laboratory and I’m honored to assist him in furthering this work. We certainly hope the experiments are successful! You have heard his name called out in absentia in so many general conferences; now it is our privilege to finally welcome him back among us in person. Doctor James E. Talmage!”

The name is instantly recognizable to the entire body of the audience, though most of them have not seen him in quite some time due to his latest extended absence presiding over the European missions. He has to motion downward with his hands to subdue the applause.

“Were I not presenting the graduate address this evening,” he begins, “I would be seated with you as a father, watching my son graduate.” His son John Talmage, seated in the next to last row of graduates, is glad to be back among the stateside Saints; he had found the British schools a bit stifling and snobbish, despite enjoying their academic caliber.

“As a family, we have had the privilege of being exposed to the finest institutions in the world,” Dr. Talmage continues, “and I can proudly say without any hesitation that the L.D.S. is their equal.” The audience breaks into a spontaneous applause.

“As I stand before you at this pulpit, the center axis of the temple itself crosses right between my eyes. This tabernacle was intentionally centered on that axis in a symbolic architectural gesture. Let us likewise center our lives along that axis, pointed toward the House of the Lord, following the iron rod of counsel that has been propagated from this pulpit, steering us in a line as straight as the surveyors’ sights.

“The two central steeples of the temple that mark the axis happen to represent two individuals directly behind me. And these two brethren just happen to be the two voices you will hear next on this evening’s program. The taller steeple, fittingly, represents our prophet, Heber J. Grant. The shorter of the two, excuse me Elder Cannon, is an effigy of our current Presiding Bishop, Sylvester Q. Cannon. Align yourselves with brethren of this caliber, my young friends, and you cannot go wrong. You should be proud to have them at the helm of this fine facility.”

Elder Talmage has an uncanny ability to blend the secular and intellectual with the spiritual in his speeches, and he proceeds to relate the symbolism of the constellations inscribed in the granite of the temple walls to the everyday life of the students in attendance, expounding effortlessly on deep doctrines and basic truths.

Elder Talmage’s books are already becoming almost standard works for the Church. Having spent years in a private room in the temple meditating about the Savior’s life and ministry, on any other night he could have held the audience captive for hours on end; however, tonight he notes the graduates shifting in their seats already and decides to keep his address relatively brief to avoid further delays to the post-graduation celebrations.

“I feel an added burden of responsibility knowing now that I have a steeple to live up to,” jokes Elder Cannon, the son of famed apostle George Q. Cannon, as he takes the stand. “It will now be my pleasure to distribute the diplomas. Please rise and come forward when the first person in your row is called.”

“Leith Allen.” The first row stands, and Leith, a shy, stern-looking young man, comes forward. Leith is virtually unknown to most of his class, having spent every spare minute outside of school doing chores on the family farm in the place of extracurricular activities. He gives Elder Cannon a firm handshake. Elder Cannon, his hand already sore after frantically signing almost 400 diplomas earlier in the evening, winces a bit in

anticipation of the same number of upcoming handshakes.

The graduates file through one by one in alphabetical order: Afton Ashton, whose little brother Marvin Jeremy grins with pride from the back of the Tabernacle when he hears his sister's name called; the aptly named Brain twins, Beatrice and Melvyn; Zina Brown, the rebel queen; Betty Callister, the prom queen.

The next rows of graduates stand and come forward in turn: Carlos Dodge, the class clown, yell-master, and chief cheer-leader; Homer Durham, who ducks into his place in line from the glee club's reserved seats; Major Garff, whose kid sister, inevitably named Minnie, lets out a cheer from the audience at the sound of his name; Gordon Hinckley, still annoyed at being stuck between two talkative girls; Rulon Jeffs, who has the shortest walk of all from his place of prominence on the stand; Jerry Jones, the senior class president; his rival Rex McKean, the student body president; Hampton Price, the towering graduate who easily spots Chick and Mimi in the audience and gives them a wave.

Elder Cannon pauses as he passes Waldemar Roth's crossed out name on the list of graduates. "Jack Salmon," he continues, and the Aero Club recruit steps forward in what would have been Waldemar's place. The remaining rows stand to be called forward: Dorothy Saville, Hamp's sweetheart; Orson Spencer, the national high school record holder in the backstroke; John Talmage, who gives his father an appreciative nod as he passes the pulpit; Bob Toronto, the sports star who gets a raucous cheer from his brothers. By this point, the ranks

still standing begin to thin; Elder Cannon continues and then finally breathes an audible sigh of relief after reading the last of the almost 400 names, ending as it began with a relatively unknown farmhand, "Gladys Youngberg."

"Well, you have all been sitting for quite some time, and the benches are not any softer," says President Fox after taking the stand again. "Last on our program – before our closing song and prayer – is the presentation of the Grant awards. We are lucky to have President Grant in attendance this evening to personally *grant* the awards bearing his name."

Despite the added emphasis, his pun doesn't have the intended effect on the audience, and he stutters a bit. President Grant, already sitting on the edge of his seat, springs to his feet before President Fox has a chance to finish his introduction. "And it appears that he is very eager to get things underway," says President Fox.

They shake hands as they pass each other behind the pulpit. "I must apologize," says President Grant after taking the stand, "In this setting, I have an awful habit of sitting on the edge of my seat, ready to stand up and intervene at a moment's notice. I have Elder Kimball and Elder Roberts to thank for that."

This time, the joke is well received, and laughter roars through the audience. The attendees are all well aware of the fine line President Grant maintains between Elder Kimball's mouth and Elder Roberts' doubts in conducting general conference sessions, sometimes standing impromptu to limit collateral damage, make doctrinal corrections, or otherwise comment on the previous words spoken from the pulpit.

The April 1928 Annual General Conference – held just two months earlier – had included both J. Golden Kimball with his colorful language and B.H. Roberts – the man who made it kosher to stand up to the flat-earth society and question one’s beliefs – in the lineup. That in itself would have been enough to make any presiding authority squirm, but coupled with the recent squabbles over the validity of evolution among the Brethren, President Grant can’t afford to sit back and enjoy the sermons. Some of these issues have weighed heavily on his mind, particularly in tonight’s academic setting; having jumped the gun in taking the podium, President Grant fumbles through his notes on the award recipient.

“This year’s award goes to a young man who has displayed impeccable integrity,” President Grant finally says with all the pride of a father.

Gordon leans forward, listening intently to one of his real-life heroes, a man raised by Brother Brigham himself.

President Grant continues. “He has devoted himself to immeasurable service to this school, and reached outstanding achievements in academics and in public speaking.”

“He has served you as student body treasurer for three years,” recalls President Grant. “In that capacity he learned from the best of them, having begun his first term under the mentorship of George Romney, whom many of you remember as the student body president during your first year at L.D.S. Though George labors in the mission field in Scotlands as we speak, he can no doubt rest

assured that he passed the torch to an able body of students, and tonight’s award winner has contributed in great part with his continuity of service.

“You have already heard him speak this evening, and as Mrs. Bolin taught so many of you in speech class, ‘there is no activity which so reveals the whole man as his speech.’ If that is the case – and I firmly believe it to be true – we have had a chance to witness the whole character of Rulon Jeffs this evening. Let’s have a round of applause for your Valedictorian, your treasurer, your fellow student – and now also a Grant Award recipient. Congratulations, Rulon!”

R.J. comes forward, and President Grant presents him with an engraved plaque and a lengthy handshake. R.J. nods in acknowledgment of the applause.

“My only request in exchange for this plaque,” President Grant jokes, “is that you agree to give me lessons in public speaking.”

Laughter emanates from the audience, most of whom are aware of R.J.’s achievements in competitive speech. President Grant himself is a notable fan of speech competitions; in fact, the Grant Oration, the school’s intramural competitive speech program, bears his name. He has followed R.J.’s achievements throughout the year with great interest. “For those of you who hadn’t heard, Rulon brought great honor to the L.D.S. through his speeches this year, in which capacity he very nearly topped the national competition.”

Although it was meant as a compliment, R.J. still feels the sting of the loss. He had won the local competition with his speech on the significance of the

Constitution, but was bested in the national competition by his East Coast counterparts (who, at least to R.J., suspiciously seemed to be better acquainted with the judges). National newspapers had put up a prize package that included an all-expense paid trip to Europe for the winner. A visit to the European mainland had been on R.J.'s dream list for years, and watching the chance slip through his fingers was almost more than he could bear. Tonight's applause provides some consolation for that loss, but the knot in his stomach reemerges soon after he sits down again.

President Grant scans the audience in an attempt to measure their attentiveness. He is used to speaking from the cuff; in fact, he often speaks until he, by his own admission, "runs out of ideas." Sometimes this happens after five minutes, sometimes forty five, sometimes even longer. In his previous address from the Tabernacle pulpit – in a time when general conference was often held on a weekday and didn't necessarily adhere to prescribed time limits – he took up nearly the entire first session, allowing just one other speaker to squeeze in a few points.

President Grant's voice is barely amplified by the new public address system, fabricated for the fledgling radio addresses that are just beginning to originate from the Tabernacle. Though he has been the primary proponent of the launch of a radio program to outlast all others, to President Grant, the structure's natural sound system seems better without amplification, and he purposely steps back from the new microphone to allow his raised voice to fill the room.

The audience comes to attention at the change in tone, but there's no hiding the body language signaling a degree of discomfort at the length of the program. President Grant takes note of those shifting in their seats and decides to keep his address short. Nonetheless, his brief words about their future role in the Church, in the community, and in their own families and careers leave a lasting impression on the graduates, many of whom had not yet allowed the finality of the moment to sink in.

"You've noticed by now that the benches are as hard as they were sixty years ago," President Grant quips in his closing remarks.

Gordon shifts his weight and makes a mental note to use that joke if he ever has to speak in such a setting.

President Fox stands once more to thank President Grant for his words and for his influence on the school. "And now," he says, "let us let out all the energy we've been accruing in our seats and stand to sing our school song, *the Gold and Blue*, one more time. All of you former graduates in the audience are welcome to join in as well. If you have forgotten the words, I trust that each senior, in his first chance to sing the song as an alma mater, will raise his voice sufficiently to remind you of the lyrics. Following the school song, Brother Smith will offer our benediction."

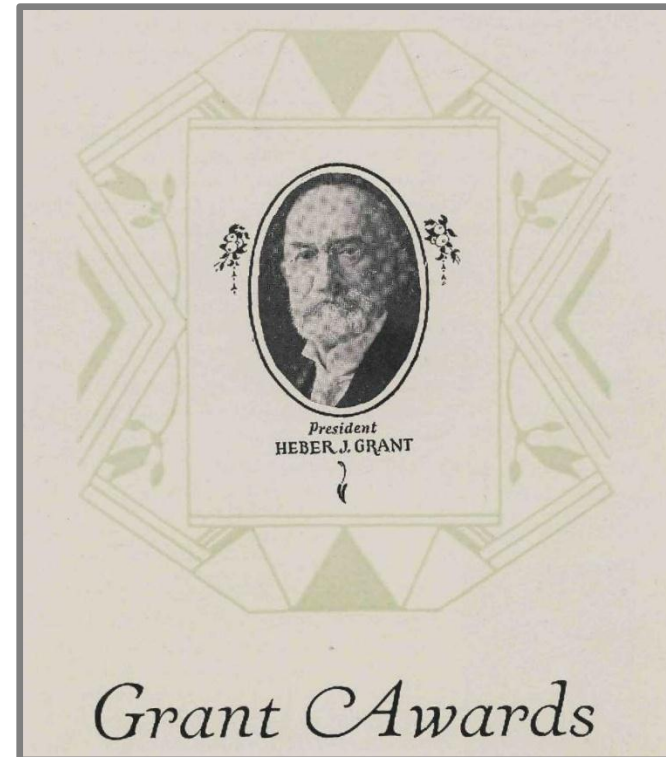
The band strikes up the fanfare, and the volume of the chorus is deafening as proud voices join in unison to pay tribute to their beloved school. Hardly an eye is dry by the time the last stanza is sung and the song ends, exposing the ambient silence. Sniffles quickly become audible as George Albert Smith's brother, Winslow F.

Smith, closes with a touching benediction. A split second after the *amen*, the youngest in the crowd quickly shoot up out of their seats to stretch; the oldest are a bit slower to their feet.

“Before you stray too far, let me remind you of the open invitation listed in your programs,” states President Fox, taking the stand one last time in an attempt to regain the audience’s attention, “All graduates, parents, students, and friends are invited to a dancing party in the Rooftop Garden of the Joseph F. Smith Memorial Building across the street. Tickets are one dollar each; assuming we can pay the band from the ticket sales, the music will strike up promptly at 10:00 pm. That leaves us just fifteen minutes; please keep your mingling brief so the band will not have to play to an empty room.”

The night is clear and warm as the fresh, young graduates storm through the exits, their families trailing behind. Shouts soon fill the air as friends and relatives try to find each other in the ambience of the temple’s floodlights. With the ceremonial preface out of the way, there is yet a sense that the evening is just beginning.

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L.D.S. High yearbook page for the Grant Awards



Heber J. Grant’s famous signature – after having improved his “hen track” handwriting



1927 L.D.S. College Commencement Exercises: The packed Assembly Hall forced a move to the Tabernacle in 1928



1929 L.D.S. College Student Body on the steps of the Joseph F. Smith Memorial Building

## Chapter 9. Rooftop Garden

Hamp approaches his father outside the Tabernacle to bid him farewell for the evening and receive a congratulatory, patriarchal handshake.

“Did your sister attend the program this evening,” interrupts a particularly ostentatious underclassman before Chick has a chance to voice his congratulations to Hamp.

Hamp gives a stern, sideways glance, “No, Bruce, she’s at home with mother tonight.”

Bruce McConkie has had his eye on Hamp’s little sister Margaret this year – much to Hamp’s dismay – and had hoped to escort her to the dance. “Well, please tell her I was sorry to have missed her,” says Bruce glumly, proceeding to follow the throng through the east gate.

Hamp nods in annoyance, and turns back to his father. “Well, don’t wait up for me tonight,” he says, half-jokingly, hoping to judge his chances for a late night by Chick’s reaction.

“Don’t cut things off early on my behalf,” replies Chick, granting tacit rescindence of the ordinary midnight curfew. Dot is not so lucky. Mrs. Saville, afraid of the potential consequences that a night of reveling might have in store for her daughter, had forbidden her from even attending the dance. Dot waits in a crowd for Chick to leave so that she can bid Hamp good night in relative privacy.

She approaches as Chick departs. “I’ve told Carlos and Betty to keep an eye on you at the dance, so you’ll be covered from all sides,” she tells Hamp. The



forced humor in her voice can't disguise the fact that she is dead serious. He gives her a peck on the cheek and hands her his yearbook.

"Well on the bright side," he says, "you should have plenty of time to write a sizable sermon in my book tonight."

"It's a promise," says Dot, backing away with a wave and a wink, "Be good, and tell me all about it tomorrow!"

Diplomas, robes, and yearbooks are handed over to parents as the students lighten their load for the dance. As Hamp joins the current pushing toward the campus, he finds himself walking alongside Waldemar. "Guess I'll have to wait until next year to know the feeling..." mutters Waldemar.

"Well at least you'll get to savor it here a bit more," replies Hamp in consolation, "I'm afraid I'm really going to miss this place."

R.J. and Leo, walking just in front of them, are bickering a bit. They stop dead in their tracks, slowing the whole throng.

"Aren't you heading over to the dance?" Waldemar asks R.J.

"Father doesn't want Leo out that late. I had planned to run her home before the dance started, but things seem to have taken longer than expected." R.J. jabs her in the shoulder. "I've been trying to talk her into staying anyway," he adds, "but she'd rather go home."

"Looks like you should have kept your sermon shorter," jokes Waldemar, "I can drop her off if you'd like."

"No, that's fine; I can do it...so long as I can find where you parked."

"Oh, come on," retorts Waldemar, a bit anxiously, "you've got to make a grand appearance; after all, you are the man of the hour."

R.J. hates the idea of missing the beginning of the festivities; having already conceded the keys once, he decides to give in to Waldemar once again. "Just be sure to drop her off at the end of the driveway," he says, "so they can't see who's at the wheel."

Not only does he fear that his father might discover Waldemar driving the car, but R.J. also knows that his father seizes any opportunity to preach his beliefs to anyone venturing too closely to the house. David Jeffs, a staunch polygamist, especially enjoys debating the topic with the young, impressionable students of the L.D.S. It's not something R.J. is particularly proud of, and he hopes Waldemar will heed the warning.

While Hamp and R.J. re-join the growing throng, Waldemar and Leo head out the north gate and approach the Studebaker. "I told you you'd get a ticket for parking there," Leo chides.

Waldemar cringes, but as he picks the paper off the windshield to weigh the damage, a smile emerges on his face.

"What a coincidence that we share the same initials," reads the note, "We'll have to meet sometime."

"You're lucky he didn't ring the constable," Leo chides.

As they pull out onto the crowded city streets and begin to make their way toward Sandy, Waldemar gets

caught up in the revelry and begins honking the horn; others soon follow suit.

Recognizing the wailing sound of the car's horn from a distance, R.J. shakes his head at the instigator. As he and Hamp wait to cross Main Street, Homer and Gordon walk up behind them. A larger crowd soon piles up behind them.

"Tell me when it's clear to cross!" Homer jokes, his view obstructed by Hamp.

"We might just have to step out and stop the traffic," says Gordon, "that is, if we want to make it in time to hear the band strike up the first number."

They nudge their way out into the street until a passing car finally catches the cue and lets the crowd cross. They make their way up the front steps of the Joseph F. Smith Memorial Building, entering between the two oversize columns. From there it's a race up the stairs to the Roof Garden; the out-of-breath students pause for a moment at the top entrance, where a line has formed. Though it has served as the venue for so many of the school year's social activities, the scene seems singular tonight.

Hamp points around to the extravagant decorations after they make it past Jerry Jones and the other ticket takers. "What do you think of that?" he asks.

R.J. looks around and nods his head, a bit on edge. He is more at home in an academic setting than in the social scene, and he feels a bit out of place in this setting.

"I'd like to start on the hors d'oeuvres, but we might have to wait until the line dies down a bit," he

remarks. He had hoped for a grander reception, having pictured a line of classmates gathering around to congratulate him on his speech and his awards rather than being focused on the food. He blames the lackluster reception on the low lights, figuring it might be difficult to recognize faces from across the room.

"Well I'm just curious to hear how well the band plays," replies Homer, "We heard them perform at Saltair's season opening last month, and father hired them on the spot."

"Looks like we made it just in time," says Gordon, "so you'll know soon enough."

The bandleader stands to introduce his fellow band members, but decides that his lone voice can't compete with the noisy crowd. He turns back to the band instead, snaps his fingers to set the rhythm, and all twelve pieces of the twelve-piece band simultaneously strike up a hard-driving swing popularized by Benny Goodman and the Pollack Orchestra.

Recognizing the tune from the dime store label, couples rush out to the dance floor. Hamp and R.J. step back, instead, taking their places against the wall. After scouting out the surroundings for a few minutes, Hamp grabs two chairs from a nearby table.

Homer and Gordon join them just as Hamp pushes the chairs into place. "Thanks for thinking of us!" Homer jokes, and he and Gordon take the seats. Hamp laughs and grabs two more chairs from another table; he and R.J. likewise take a seat, and the four friends collectively decide to sit out the first dance number together.

Homer places his yearbook on the table – the only one of the four to have brought it along to the dance. “I just came for the music,” he jokes as he sits back and puts his feet up on the table. “What’s your excuse?” he asks, nudging R.J.

“I’ve got some light reading to do,” says R.J., picking up the yearbook. He passes the challenge along to draw the unwanted attention away from himself. “Gordon won’t admit it,” he says, “but his mind is over at East High right now.”

“I just need to gage my surroundings first; then I’ll be warmed up,” Gordon counters.

Hamp chimes in with his own excuse: “Well I’m going steady, and my date’s not here.”

“Oh, she won’t mind you just dancing a few numbers, will she?” asks Gordon.

“Dot? Well actually, now that we can’t go to dances together – thanks to her evil mother – she’s got me under strict orders.”

“But I thought you went to prom together,” says Homer, a bit puzzled.

“Well, when prom came around, we struck a deal to circumvent the wicked witch’s strict orders: we’d each ask someone else and then go on a double-date as a foursome. So she asked Carlos; that was fine by me, because I knew he’d keep us all laughing.”

Homer taps his fingers on the table, waiting for Hamp to finish his explanation.

“But when I told Dot that I had asked Betty,” Hamp continues, “she got quite upset. ‘I thought we had a deal,’ I told her.” Hamp then tries his best to imitate

Dot’s voice: “Well I didn’t think you’d ask *Betty!*” she said. So now I don’t know what to think! All I know is that Carlos has been tasked as her lookout, and I’m not about to get in another fight with Dot just over some lousy dance.”

“Well if you do ask a girl to dance tonight, it sounds like you just have to make sure she’s not as pretty as Betty,” says Homer with a shy grin.

Gordon quickly turns his head and says quietly to Homer, “Watch what you say – here she comes now!”

“Well hi there, boys!” says Betty in an overly flirtatious tone, “Could I get a picture of the four of you?”

They scoot their chairs a bit closer together and give her sheepish smiles as she snaps a photo with her new camera. “It’s probably too dark for a photograph,” she remarks as she folds up the camera, “but isn’t it just a beautiful night?”

Hamp knows better than to get caught in her trap this time around, so he deflects her greeting. “Well Betty, as a matter of fact,” he says, “we were just talking about you.”

The dim light can’t hide the redness in Homer’s face as he cringes at what Hamp might say next.

“Is that so?” asks Betty.

“Why yes! Homer was just telling me he wishes you would sign his annual,” says Hamp.

Under the table, Homer kicks Hamp in the shin as subtly as he can manage.

“Well I’d love to, Homer,” answers Betty, “Hand it over.”

He anxiously grabs his book away from R.J. and hands it to her. She scribbles a brief message and hands it back.

“Well, I hope the four of you aren’t just going to sit there all night and leave us poor girls without dance partners,” she says, giving Hamp a wink, “otherwise I might have to settle for Jerry on the dance floor. He may be a singer, but that boy sure can’t dance.”

“Well, you’ve got that one right,” Homer says, pointing to Jerry – who had confidently stepped out onto the dance floor, but is now struggling to keep his steps up with the music’s quick tempo. Thinking he might score some points with Betty by further berating Jerry, Homer adds, “Just look at him out there; his *Lindbergh Hop* is looking more like the *Lindbergh Flop!*”

“Oh no!” says Betty with a giggle, “He certainly does look like he could use some help.”

The papers in New York are already calling the new dance the *Lindy Hop* – a newly coined phrase courtesy of Harlem dancer Shorty Snowden – but Utah youth still include the aviator’s proper, full name. The Charleston is still the standard in Utah’s dance venues, but the hop is certainly catching on quickly with the local youth of Great Salt Lake City.

“Well, if you do give him a dance lesson, tell him I want my dollar back,” says Homer, “I lost my ticket to the dance tonight and he charged me another dollar at the door for a replacement.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” Betty says, “after I get more of the boys to take the dance floor.”

“Maybe you should start with Rex and his football crowd over there,” says R.J., “that is if you can get Coach Ashton to stop rambling on with his football stories.”

Their eyes all turn to the varsity team members huddled together on the sideline. In the center of the crowd is Coach “Wid” Ashton – Marvin and Afton’s uncle – who had signed up as a chaperone tonight. He is sorry to lose his graduating seniors but still wants to keep a close eye on his boys in case they get out of hand.

“Be my guest,” says Gordon, “I certainly wouldn’t want to cross a man who has spent his life lugging around ice blocks.”

Coach Ashton is a brute of a man who runs an ice company in addition to his coaching job.

“I heard he can halve a commercial-size block with a pick in one fell swoop!” says R.J.

“You might think he’s intimidating,” Betty adds, “but he definitely had a horrible time trying to teach them to Quickstep through the tires during football practice.”

“Well if you manage to teach them some steps,” says Hamp, “Wid may hire you as an assistant next year.”

“They may be athletes,” remarks Homer, “but you may want to take it easy on them – any exertion at all and they’ll be sweating even more in their Gold and Blue.”

Though it is much too warm for sweaters, many of the school’s athletes – including Rex – couldn’t help taking advantage of the last chance to show off their school pride by donning the signature gold and blue sweaters, embossed with a large letter “S.” Their oversize figures had already been sweaty by the time they shed the graduation robes before the dance.

“Guess that’s why they call them *sweaters*,” says Homer, attempting to hold Betty’s attention just a bit longer.

Betty forces a smile and Homer grimaces at his own flopped joke. She politely excuses herself and makes her way toward Rex; as she nears, the “*offensive line*” parts and the letter sweaters form a tight circle around her.

Homer can’t wait to see what Betty might have written to him, and he puts his nose in his book the instant the circle closes. He reads her note silently to himself:

“You have proved that small boys can have a whole lot to them,” it reads. It isn’t quite the kind of acknowledgement Homer had been hoping for.

“What did she write?” asks Gordon.

“I’ll show you in just a minute,” says Homer. He turns around, hiding the book from view, and, turning to a blank page, writes his own version of Betty’s note in mockery of himself. “Egad, how I love the ground you walk on,” he writes, and then adds in parentheses, “I sure think you’re perfect; you only lack about 1 foot.”

Homer hands the book to Gordon and points to the latter message. Gordon recognizes Homer’s handwriting right away, giving away the true author, but they both have a good laugh about it anyway.

Gordon takes the yearbook and begins to leaf through it. “Let’s have a look at the funny papers,” he says as he reaches the humor section. “Take a look at this: the list of synonyms starts with *Betty* and *Jerry*. Bet Jerry did that just to make Rex sore.”

“Good! I hope it worked” says R.J. Rex, the classic scholar-athlete, had been the junior class valedictorian the previous year; R.J. had narrowly edged him out this year, leaving a bit of a rift between them. It actually gives R.J. some pleasure to see Rex caught on the losing end of the love triangle.

“Not so fast, R.J.,” says Gordon, “You made it into the funny papers yourself.”

“Yep,” says Homer, “Jerry sure got you good this time! It might even be enough to make you want to side with Rex.”

“Let me see that!” says R.J., but Hamp intercepts the book first. He laughs after glancing at the page and passes it on to R.J. “Say what you will about Jerry,” Hamp says, “but you can’t deny that he’s got a good sense of humor!”

Knowing Jerry was the yearbook’s humor editor, R.J. had tried not to cross him this year. As he reluctantly peers at the yearbook page, he realizes his efforts have been in vain. The jest jabs R.J. close to the heart: His appointment as valedictorian is listed under the heading, “Signs that the L.D.S. teachers can take a joke.”

“Well, it looks like he nicknamed you *Bull Durham*,” R.J. says, a bit defensively. “You know, he was banned from baseball for a bar fight and had to change his name before they’d let him pitch again. Now that’s quite a character to be named after!”

“I’m glad to know I’ll at least be remembered. It’s quite an honor to be immortalized in the annual’s funny papers, don’t you know!”

Hamp laughs. "Thank you very much, but I must say, I'd rather be forgotten."

"Don't think you avoided the honor entirely," says Homer, "check the senior class' last will and testament." He hands Hamp the yearbook.

"We, the Dilletante Club," Hamp reads aloud in his best Shakespearian English, then turns to the side with a subtle remark under his breath, "of which, I, of course, was a proud and distinguished member..." Hamp pauses, stands, and clears his throat. "We, the Dilletante Club, leave to the school memories of long, boring, tedious vaudeville shows."

Homer laughs. "Well I rather enjoyed them, I'll have you know."

"At least we have one patron of the arts in our midst!" replies Hamp, taking his seat again. "Let's see what else our class will leave behind."

The foursome gather their chairs into a circle and look through the pages together. "I wonder if Betty saw this yet!" shouts Homer, having spotted Jerry's name at the top of the list. "I, Jerry Jones," Homer reads aloud, "bestow upon the underclassmen the right to date Betty, at least once in a while."

They all break into hysterical laughter. "And what did Betty leave?" asks Gordon. Homer flips to the next page. "I, Betty Callister, leave for one good reason, and his initials are Jerry Jones."

Their laughter resumes, almost drowning out the music. As the night progresses and the dance floor fills to capacity, the four graduates stay seated in their circle, basking in the evening's merry mood. They take turns

flipping through the yearbook, each page bringing with it amusement, reflection, and a story from their fledgling yesteryouth. What a night it has been! Though the dawn will transform adolescence into adulthood, for now – for this one night – the worries of tomorrow will just have to wait until tomorrow comes. It is one of those rare occasions in which life seems to have culminated, yet still manages to promise an even brighter future; it is without a doubt the best of times.

The band plays on, churning out song after song, but the four friends are content as spectators and never do manage to break away from their table; then, all too soon, the music stops and the bandleader turns to face the crowd. The voices in the room dim in response.

"Thank you all for inviting us to celebrate with you tonight. We wish the night could go on forever, but unfortunately the clock has struck twelve and this will have to be our last number. We hope you return to your homes safely, and we wish each and every graduate all the best for the future."

Cheers greet his words, then subside as the band plays the opening chords of the last number, a slow foxtrot. The end of the evening accelerates toward the four onlookers like ground-rush to a descending pilot. Suddenly and inevitably, their thoughts turn from the past to the overwhelming, open void of the future. They silently stare at the couples dancing the night away before them. Smirks and exchanged glances break the reflective tone, but not the silence, as Betty and Jerry pass in front of them on the dance floor, Betty methodically leading

the steps: Slow, slow, quick quick...slow, slow, quick quick...

Sitting silently to the side are the four wallflowers: Hampton and Homer, Rulon and Gordon...the tallest, the shortest, the smartest, and the boldest of the graduates. Mesmerized by the syncopated rhythm of the dancers' steps, their eyes each follow a different couple's trajectory across the crowded dance floor. Though dancing similar steps, each couple takes a completely different route; mostly they avoid one another, occasionally they gently brush up against one another, and in a few random instances, a mild collision takes place. Order and chaos are embodied in harmony here, and the intertwined motions are subtly symbolic of life's unfolding saga ahead.

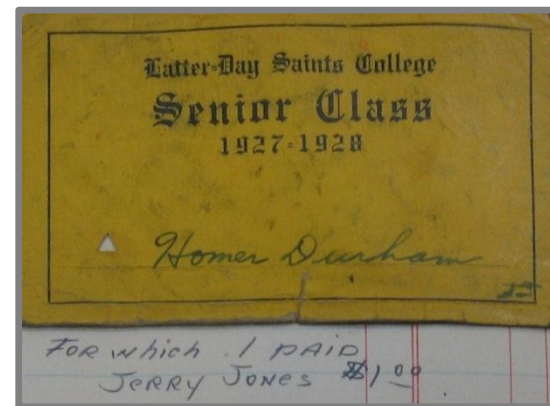
Not a word is spoken as they contemplate what the future might have in store for them. Are their paths destined to cross again? Will, in prophetic fulfillment, the *first be the last* and the *last be the first*? Will they be readily remembered or forever forgotten? These questions just barely begin to surface in their minds, but their imaginations – no matter how vivid – surely lack the capacity to picture how the answers might be fulfilled.

If a voice from the future were to whisper to them in that instant even just a hint of things to come – the amazing sights they would see as witnesses to the changing tide of history, the influence they would bear on millions upon millions of people, the manner in which they, quite literally, would change the world – they would scarcely believe it. What little do they know...

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Mr. William Lym and his 1928 L.D.S. High Orchestra



Homer's dance ticket

Hamp



Homer



Rulon



Gordon

The Tallest, the Shortest, the Smartest, and the Boldest

Part III. Four Intertwined Lives

Chapter 10: Collegians

“Dad...dad...dad...”

I lifted my head in slow response to Jaedin’s incessant tapping on my shoulder.

“Hmm?” I mumbled, looking at him through half-closed eyes.

He pointed at my forehead and laughed, having forgotten what he wanted to ask me.

As I had lapsed out of consciousness the previous night, the “S” Book had apparently become a makeshift pillow; the embossed compass on the cover had left a mirror image on my forehead.

Jaedin pointed to the yearbook. “Is that about the *Titanic*?” he asked as I went to the bathroom mirror and rubbed my forehead. I splashed some water on my face to help snap me out of my time warp.

“No,” I finally answered, “but I’ll bet if you were to dig deeply enough, you’d find these people’s stories just as interesting.”

I pointed out the yearbook photographs of Homer, Hampton, Gordon, and Rulon, and I proceeded to tell him what little I knew about each of them; once I started rambling, though, it became more than Jaedin’s interest level could bear. He suddenly remembered what he had been after in the first place: breakfast! I let it rest and went to the kitchen to make him some eggs.

Later that night, I went back online to find out what I could about the post-graduation lives of these four

classmates. I harvested anything I could gather from web searches and published biographies; luckily Hamp had started a new journal after graduation – and actually managed to hang on to it this time – so for this next era I was also armed with a daily logbook.

Once again, the search took me late into the night. I yawned as I flipped through Hamp’s journal and with glazed eyes tried to match his handwritten dates to the online information I was compiling. Jaedin had come back into my office earlier but had fallen asleep leaning on my shoulder – hoping I’d get distracted enough from my web searching for him to check Lego prices on eBay. I finally carried him to bed, and he barely stirred when I tucked him in. I thought about calling it quits for the night as well, but soon found myself back at the computer instead.

This routine continued night after night as I traced the individual collegiate paths of the four friends. The sleep deprivation was killing me, but every time I dove back in, without fail I’d find some astonishing piece of trivia about their intertwined stories that would keep me going for a few minutes more. More often than not, I’d eventually find myself dozing off at the computer; and once again, the characters on paper would come to life in my head.

Barely able to keep my eyes open, I kept finding myself transported to the past with each new photograph and biography I ran across. Though not necessarily the most effective approach, the nature of my late-night research – with the accompanying elimination of

boundaries between dreams, facts, and imagination – certainly helped bring the eighty-year old scenes to life.

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After sleeping off the party, the graduates of the Class of 1928 find that reality has set in. Within just a few days they begin to part ways to pursue their summer jobs. On top of his paper route, Hamp works as a “truck heaver” from noon until midnight every day; it is a rough time spent with a rough crowd. One of his fellow heavers even convinces Hamp to get a tattoo, and he reluctantly agrees. “Why, I never knew,” he later laments in his journal.

Homer and Gordon spend their dog days working at Deseret Gymnasium. With the exception of the administrative office, it is the only building on the L.D.S. campus that doesn’t lock its doors during the summer, since it serves double duty as a community gymnasium. Bryant Hinckley is the gymnasium’s general manager, and although he had borne a great deal of influence in getting Homer and Gordon employed there, he gives them no special consideration in dishing out dirty duties – which include scrubbing toilets, washing down the showers, and laundering sweaty towels.

R.J likewise works on campus over the summer, though in a completely different, albeit no less sweaty, environment. Norma Bryan, who had been dubbed the “absent-minded administrator” in the yearbook, had run behind in trying to manage the school’s finances during the academic year. She had amassed quite a stack of outstanding paperwork by the time summer started,

including an alarming number of un-reconciled line items in the accounts payable and accounts receivable ledgers.

Having proved himself capable of greater duties through his extraordinary job as the student body treasurer, R.J has now been asked by President Fox himself to help Mrs. Bryan catch up – a task R.J attacks with his familiar tenacity. The many scraps of paper that require sorting, stapling, and filing make it impossible to use fans that otherwise might have offset the discomfort of the summer heat wave in the administrative office.

As the four former classmates sweat away the summer – in stark contrast to their carefree high school days – they each make a separate commitment to themselves to further their own education and buy their way out of a life of menial labor.

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The first day of the new school year happens to coincide with briskly lower morning temperatures; autumn seems to have arrived overnight. The incoming junior college students file into the auditorium of the Joseph F. Smith Memorial Building for orientation. R.J is forced to swim upstream through the crowd as he arrives for work.

“Funny to see you here, R.J” remarks Hamp as he literally bumps into him, “and with a briefcase, no less!”

“Hi Hamp! By the way, I’m going by Rulon now that I’m reporting for my first day of duty as a permanent staff member.” Rulon smiles with contentment. “Can you help spread the word?”

“Sure thing. I guess congratulations are in order,” says Hamp, “but I have to admit you look a little too young to be a staff member.”

“So much for my efforts, then. I thought my new briefcase would do the trick to help me pass.”

“I guess it does set you apart from the students. So are they just keeping you on staff until you get the financial mess sorted out?”

“Actually, President Fox asked me to stay on permanently as the Assistant Treasurer,” brags Rulon.

“And who’s the Treasurer you’ll be assisting?” asks Hamp.

“Well that’s the funny thing,” continues Rulon, lowering his voice, “don’t tell any of the tenured teachers, but I’m really the treasurer, not just an assistant. Mrs. Bryan has so many other duties that she doesn’t even have time to oversee my work. But a fresh high school graduate needs *assistant* in his title to avoid upsetting those with more seniority. So that’s me! How about you? You’ve decided to come back to the good ol’ L.D.S. for junior college?” asks Rulon.

“Yes sir,” says Hamp, his eyes wandering. Rulon turns around to follow Hamp’s gaze; Dot emerges from the streaming crowd.

“There you are, my dear,” she says, stopping to take Hamp by the arm.

“Well now I see why what brought you back to the campus!” remarks Rulon.

“That’s for sure,” says Hamp, giving Dot a peck on the cheek. Both adults now, they have managed to wrangle Mrs. Saville’s reluctant acceptance of their status

as a couple and are not shy about showing it off. The trio have now formed a bit of a barrier on the sidewalk, forcing the passing crowd to split around them.

“Hey, what’s the big idea?” says Homer, stopping to greet them.

“Well, if it isn’t *Bull Durham!*” says Rulon, giving Homer a handshake, “Where’s Gordon?”

“Despite my best efforts, he left us for the *U*,” interjects Hamp, “but you might catch him working in the gym in the evenings.”

In their correspondence over the summer, Hamp had managed to talk Homer into enrolling in the junior college at L.D.S. as well, but Gordon couldn’t be swayed. Not satisfied with the caliber of the English department at L.D.S., Gordon had decided to enroll as a freshman at the University of Utah to embark on his career path in journalism.

“Oh come on,” Rulon says, “what have they got at the U that we don’t have?”

Homer lowers his voice. “Don’t tell Miss Stewart he said this – I mean, she’s a great teacher and all – but he’s intent on becoming a journalist, and he thinks she’s far too young to carry much clout when it comes to career placement.”

“Who does he want to be, Mark Twain?” says Hamp with a laugh, “you know, if I remember right from Miss Stewart’s literature class, Mr. Clements started his career in journalism, too.”

“Well, nobody yet ever read anything that a kid from East Millcreek wrote,” says Rulon, “but if he ever does get famous, maybe Gordon can set the record

straight on Salt Lake. If you go by Twain’s so-called journalism work, you’d think we’re all still a bunch of polygamists.”

An awkward silence arises, despite the ambient noise. “Well, missing out on another year at L.D.S. will have to be his loss then,” Hamp nervously adds.

“Sorry fellows,” says Rulon, “I have to run; after all, I don’t want to be late on my first day!” With a wave of his briefcase, he marches off dutifully toward the administration building. Homer scurries along to the orientation; Hamp and Dot wander in behind, arm in arm. Though the venue hasn’t changed since the previous year’s orientation, this time they feel all grown up. They look around at the entering sophomore class members who are heading to their own orientation; as yet another school year kicks off, they are stunned at how young and naïve the newcomers seem to be.

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The rest of the 1928-1929 school year proceeds in familiar fashion; it is like high school all over again for the junior college students, who are actually allowed to participate in most of the high school functions, including sports, thanks to a new ruling by the Utah state senate.

Homer remains involved in the glee club and the opera; he also adds a new-found interest to his slate of activities by serving as a cub reporter for the school newspaper – an interest developed largely thanks to Gordon’s influence. Hamp plays basketball, runs track, and joins the golf team. On the side, he tries his best to help restore the reputation of the Dilettante Club.

Like a water boy who would rather be on the scrimmage line, Rulon finds it difficult to watch Jerry walk away with top honors at the Grant Oration. Full-time employment certainly has its financial benefits, but standing on the sidelines of the speech and debate contests makes him sorely miss his days as a student.

Gordon does get a chance to mingle with the students of the L.D.S. in social activities – thanks to his job at the gym and to Bryant’s continued involvement with the school. Gordon thoroughly enjoys catching up with his former classmates anytime he has the chance, and quite a few familiar faces roam the campus, including Betty and Jerry. Though he is now part of the junior college, Jerry has taken over Rex’s former role as student body president, while Betty serves as the junior college vice president. The social calendar is packed full, thanks largely to Betty and Jerry’s zealous knack for planning ambitious activities.

The “Get-Acquainted” dance is followed all too soon by the Spring Formal, which, in turn, is followed even sooner again by the commencement ceremony marking the end of the school year. The commencement program includes the familiar fanfare and awards, with a few added surprises: Due to her active participation in so many school activities, her high scholarship marks, and her unequalled popularity, the school administrators comes up with a brand new, customized Grant award for Betty as the *Representative L.D.S. Girl*.

Betty has yet one more accolade to top off her highly decorated year: When Logan native John Gilbert – Valentino’s successor as Hollywood’s leading man – is

sent the whole stack of the school’s class photographs, sure enough, he is mesmerized by Betty’s wide eyes and picks her photo as the beauty contest winner. Gilbert certainly knew his leading ladies, having been paired with Greta Garbo – the most beautiful woman who ever lived, according to Guinness – and others in the Hollywood elite. He is, in fact, in the midst of having his career sabotaged by Louis Mayer – the latter “M” of MGM Studios – after having slugged him for making an inappropriate remark about Garbo. Though Gilbert’s own star is noticeably waning, thanks to his keen eye, hundreds of students open their freshly printed yearbooks to find their very own, glamorous, full-page montage of Betty.

The 1929 yearbook has a scriptural theme, thanks in large part to Rulon; in his spare time, he had served on the yearbook committee and had managed to exert quite an influence on its contents. A staunch fan and student of the Book of Mormon, he had been a key advocate of selecting a Book of Mormon motif for the yearbook, leaving his personal touch in print for future generations. Within the lithographed, Mayan-inspired page borders, familiar couples grace the pages of class photographs, Jerry and Betty topping the Junior College list as the school’s favorite couple.

Though they had avoided pairing up in previous yearbooks in deference to Mrs. Saville’s fears, Hamp and Dot had finally decided to be pictured next to each other as well – comfortable with their newfound status as a couple.

The yearbook itself is dedicated to Mrs. Harold Farnes Silver, formerly known as Miss Madelyn Stewart. When Miss Stewart retires in anticipation of starting a family – crushing more than a few schoolboy crushes – her influence is sorely missed by many, but by none so much as Master Printer Bentine. Without her accolades for Paragon’s previous work, the newly appointed rookie faculty sponsor had relied strictly on the bottom line bids, and – with a large, new printing press in their arsenal – the Deseret News Press had dramatically underbid Paragon to win the contract to print the yearbooks.

Jim Owens – still stuck in his menial job a few blocks from campus – manages to secure a copy of the 1929 yearbook from one of the graduates. He brings it back to Bentine so they can assess the competition.

“Well, sir, what do you think?” he asks.

Bentine throws back his arms in dismay when he opens the cover to find Deseret’s full-page advertisement right at the front of the book, accompanied by a wide-angle photograph of the Deseret News Building. He sees it as an attempt to rub in their ties to the Church. “*This is the Place,*” reads the advertisement, “where the ‘S’ Book was printed.”

Deseret is certainly on its way to becoming a premiere printing facility in the West, and the days of competitively bidding Church jobs are numbered for Bentine, whose hopes continue to sink with his business as time goes on. If Deseret’s eventual hiring of a young staffer named Tommy Monson is of any indication, Bentine’s chances of getting his foot back in the door are surely evaporating.

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After graduation from junior college, Hamp’s path diverges a bit further from the others; he is the only one of the foursome to leave Salt Lake, taking a mechanic’s position that Chick had lined up for him with the National Park Service’s coach lines in Zion’s Canyon. Being away from Dot makes the surroundings seem especially solitary, but Hamp fills the void by working on his outdoorsmanship skills, earning himself just enough merit badges to fulfill the requirements for the Eagle Scout rank – and please President Grant in the process.

The scenery is certainly beautiful and enveloping, but it is not quite enough to quell his homesickness. The seven-page sermon Dot had written in his yearbook keeps him company in the silence of his cabin until her letters begin to arrive. One letter in particular tugs him back to Salt Lake: Dot lets him know that she has decided to enroll at the University of Utah. Hamp immediately follows suit; he writes Dot back an enthusiastic letter, sends in his admission materials, and begins counting the days until Labor Day.

Homer likewise transfers to the U and joins Gordon in the journalism program. The thought of attending a school without his father on the faculty feels especially intimidating to Homer, but this time Gordon gets to return the favor as the incumbent and show him the ropes.

As the 1929-1930 school year gets off to a fleet start, the big fish from the small pond find it a bit overwhelming to adjust to the larger lake. The new junior college graduates adapt remarkably quickly to university

life, however, and they busily dive into a wide range of extracurricular activities, thoroughly enjoying their first few university days.

As their courses and activities fall into a steady routine, they feel increasingly secure and confident in the future; life certainly looks positive and upbeat. Along with their other fellow students at the U, they are quite pleased to find their optimism matched by the Ute football team's weekly march to victory. School spirit reaches a climax during the week preceding the *Holy War* – the annual, mid-season matchup against archrival BYU.

The week begins with a Monday morning pep rally that is covered along with every angle of the upcoming line-up in the Tuesday student paper. As they read the write-up, the students are so excited about the rivalry that they hardly notice the shocking descent of the Dow Jones being broadcast across the airwaves that very same day. With Ute banners and feather-emblem flags flying from dormitories, laboratories, and every other campus window, October 29, 1929 – forever to be known as *Black Tuesday* in the history books – is markedly red across the U campus.

Billions upon billions of dollars of global wealth have simply evaporated; it is unprecedented and far too large in scale for most people to comprehend. On the east coast, the Rockefellers buy up stock in a vain attempt to re-instill a shred of investor confidence; they and the other industrial moguls of the day use all of their press connections to maximize the publicity of these efforts, but at the end of the dreariest financial week on record, local editors decide that the Utes' ultimate decimation of

BYU bears more front-page relevance to their readership in the twin valleys of the Wasatch Front.

As homes are readied for the holidays over the following weeks, the dire financial news eventually does sink in and manages to penetrate even the remotest Utah outposts; hopes for a quick rebound in the stock market begin to fade, but student life at the U is still dominated by hope – the hope for a second straight undefeated football season for the Utes.

Only the Aggies, led by Dick Romney – whose brother Mitt has just finished an outstanding career as the Chicago Bears' quarterback – potentially stand in the way. The season-ending Thanksgiving Day bout deals a crushing defeat to Romney's squad, and spontaneous victory celebrations erupt across the U campus.

As the school year resumes in 1930 after the holiday break, tuition money has become tight for even the most well-to-do students. The delayed reaction to curbing the school's operating budget manages to dampen the impact on campus activities somewhat, and from all outside appearances, it continues to look like business as usual at the U. Even months after Wall Street's crash, the prevailing attitude conveyed by the students is a hope to just ride things out for the short term – with the assumption that better times are bound to return soon.

Rulon, the only one of the foursome to have forestalled his university education, had opted to stay for another year as "Assistant" Treasurer at the L.D.S.; having felt much older and more alone seeing the incoming classes diluting the ranks of his former friends,

he now devotes an increasing amount of his time to studying the financial news. With his finger on the pulse of the larger fiscal picture, he recognizes the signs that any purported recovery is only likely to follow a slow and painful struggle. History will prove him right as each of his former classmates is permanently and personally affected by the global catastrophe.

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Heber J. Grant's bank notice intended to quell fears surrounding the failure of Zion's Bank



## Chapter 11: Inter-mission



Mission Farewell Testimonial Programs

As spring break rolls around in 1930, the sun begins to thaw the icy sidewalks between Ute Stadium and Temple Square; automobile traffic along the slush-lined corridors of the downtown avenues forces pedestrians against the shop windows to avoid being sprayed. The four friends make their daily streetcar commute across the city along with fellow students, job-seekers of all ages, and those workers lucky enough to still be employed.

Having celebrated their 19<sup>th</sup> birthdays, thoughts of a mission race through each of their minds. In these tumultuous fiscal times, however, the question of whether to serve a mission is followed by an equally difficult question of when to serve a mission; it is certainly not automatic at any particular age.

On one end of the spectrum, some missionaries are waiting until their mid- or late twenties to serve. On the opposite end are much younger elders such as Hugh Nibley – a year their junior – who is already half-way through his mission to Germany. The exciting tales he had sent home as a 17-year-old “greenie” – including amazing conversion stories and even a claim to have run into Hitler himself in a Munich restroom – are well known to each of them and make them wonder what they might be missing by delaying the decision to serve.

Despite the recent official efforts to promote uniformity among the ranks of missionaries, a few even more non-traditional missionaries – reminiscent of the previous century – are still serving in remote corners of



the globe: one elder abroad is entering his tenth year as a full-time missionary; some even serve more than once; and, in fact – though it is no longer commonplace – there are still a handful of married missionaries serving overseas missions while their spouses and children remain at home.

Traditions and conventions that have been emerging for some time among Mormon missionaries, however, are now evolving into a bona fide missionary culture. Missionary farewells, with their formal programs and subsequent receptions – and aided by their now particularly relevant fundraising function – have become standard protocol throughout the Church; one by one, the four friends attend farewell services for those fellow classmates opting to serve, sending them on their way with an envelope of hard-earned cash.

The April 1930 General Conference is in itself historic: the Church is celebrating its centennial, and the conference is preceded by festivals, parades, pavilions, and other activities meant to announce Utah's late arrival on the same stage as the other states of the Union and – perhaps prematurely – its emergence from the stranglehold of the Great Depression. The atmosphere is not unlike a world fair; as they visit the exhibition and take in the speeches, the emphasis on the Church's history places a spark in the souls of the four friends. Each reference to missionary work in the accompanying sessions of the 100<sup>th</sup> annual General Conference further fans the flame.

One of the primary events associated with the centennial celebration is the release of B.H. Roberts'

*Comprehensive History of the Church*, published especially for the occasion. Homer orders all seven sold-out volumes from Deseret Book. As soon as a copy of each volume becomes available in print, he sprints to the print shop to pick up his own, fresh copy. Over the next few weeks, he reads each volume from cover to cover. He finds even the most detailed material to be quite fascinating; besides instilling in him a dream to work as a historian someday, it also plants in him the desire to spread the word by telling the Church's story as a missionary.

Turning that desire into practice, however, has become a daunting challenge. As in the past, those with the means are expected to serve; unfortunately, though, the means are now lacking among many prospective missionaries, and the financial uncertainty of the day complicates their long-term prospects. For many families, mission savings accounts have disintegrated – swept away with failing banks in the wake of the stock market crash – and missionary-age young men even among the most prominent families in the Church are deciding to postpone or give up their mission plans altogether.

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As he balances the ledger books in preparation for the end of the 1929-1930 school year, Rulon takes a break and looks out his office window at the students traversing the commons. An April shower has caught many students off-guard, but a few umbrellas cover those who had been prepared. Rulon tries to imagine a deeper allegory in which the rainfall represents a day of reckoning, but he can't help just wishing he still fit in

among the students; his reminiscent daydream is disturbed by a knock.

“Anybody home?”

Rulon spins around in response to the interruption; he quickly returns to his seat and faces the door. “Yes?” he says in his best, professional tone.

Hamp stomps his gumboots on the door mat and shakes off his long pant legs as he enters the room. “Sorry about the puddle,” he says, “It was a beautiful morning earlier, so I didn’t think to bring an umbrella.”

“Oh, that’s alright,” says Rulon, a bit surprised to see Hamp, “What brings you back to campus?”

“I need a copy of my records for my new job with the Grand Canyon’s park service,” Hamp replies, “Who’d have thought a *gear jammer* needs a diploma?”

“Well, the Grand Canyon sure sounds like a swell place to spend the summer,” says Rulon, “and these days, any job is a good job. Let’s see what we can dig up in Mrs. Bryan’s office.”

They walk across the hall together and Rulon digs through a stack of multi-colored papers. Mrs. Bryan’s organizational skills haven’t improved since Rulon started his job; in the meantime, though, he has become acquainted with her quirky filing system and can now generally find items in her files more quickly than she herself can.

“There you go,” says Rulon proudly, handing Hamp a canary copy, “it looks like there’s already an extra carbon in your files.”

“Thanks!” says Hamp. “By the way, what’s this I hear about England?”

“I was thrilled to get the call,” replies Rulon excitedly, “You know, that’s where my family has its roots. My father even told me the family of Christ set adrift in the sea and ended up in Avalon – which happens to be in my mission.”

“And when did you start listening to your father’s crazy ideas? Don’t tell me you’ve also taken on his views about – ”

Rulon quickly interrupts, “Not a chance, but it’s the most expensive mission in the Church – \$34 per month! I can’t possibly cough up that much dough on my own, so I have been talking to him more about supporting my mission.”

“Any luck?” asks Hamp.

Rulon looks dejectedly at his feet. “Not anymore. I asked him if he could help out at all financially, if not with his moral support; he finally agreed, but not until Leo finishes school so he won’t have that tuition payment anymore.”

“Well, she’s finishing up now, isn’t she?” asks Hamp.

“Yes, but after he talked the idea over with his fellow plygs, he doesn’t want to risk any possible perception that he is supporting a mainstream missionary.”

Hamp shakes his head. “That’s too bad,” he mumbles.

“Lately he’s been telling everyone he runs into that President Grant is a fallen prophet!” Rulon says, “I think he’s turning into Korihor himself.”

“So how did you manage to keep your plans from being squelched?”

“I’d tell you all about it, but I have to pick up a suit down at Hibbs before they close.”

“I’m having a terrible time approaching my own father about a mission right now,” answers Hamp, “I’ll walk with you if you don’t mind telling me more.”

“Sure,” Rulon consents, “at least I can tell you what doesn’t work. Your father hasn’t likely strayed as far into the abyss as mine, so maybe you’ll have better luck.”

Rulon begins to lock up the office but heads back inside for a moment when he remembers an envelope he had found on his desk that morning.

“By the way, this letter arrived for ‘Zola from Beaver,’” Rulon tells Hamp, “Mrs. Bryan put it on my desk thinking I’d know who to route it to. Any idea who that is?”

“Doesn’t ring a bell,” replies Hamp, “Let’s just post it on the board in the hall. Someone’s bound to recognize the name.”

Rulon pushes a thumbtack through the corner of the envelope and they make their way across the campus and toward the commercial district. Along the way, with a clever look on his face, Rulon recites his course of action.

“I played it smart with my money,” he begins, “in fact, I moved it around just in time to avoid the drop in the market. I was anxious to serve a mission, but without Father’s financial support, I knew I’d need to work at least another year to save up enough to go.”

Hamp listens intently.

“So I struck a deal with Leo,” Rulon continues, “She’s been looking for a job to start after graduation, but so far she hasn’t been able to find anything.”

“So you managed to find her a job?” asks Hamp.

“Yes siree! I set her up with a full-time position in the attendance office under one condition.”

“And what was that?” Hamp asks, already having guessed the answer.

“That she’d wire part of her paycheck to me in England, of course,” Rulon says with a smirk, “so everybody wins!”

“Well, after paying for school this year,” Hamp says, “I haven’t a cent to my name, and it would take me years to save up enough without my father’s support. Since I’m *going south* soon, as he likes to tell me, I’m going to need to ask him straight away. Any advice?”

“Well, if I know your father, a few drinks might loosen him up first.”

Hamp laughs. “Wouldn’t that be ironic if he agreed under the influence?”

They arrive at Hibbs, and the clerk hands Rulon a suit in a large paper bag. Rulon pulls it out and holds it up to himself to check the size.

“Say, I thought you were picking up a new suit,” remarks Hamp, “That looks like last year’s suit! Haven’t you grown a few inches since I last saw you?”

“Well, money’s tight, so I just had it altered and reinforced for missionary wear. And since I bought it here, of course they’ve pressed it for free.”

“Always the penny pincher,” mutters Hamp.

“You had better be, too, if you end up getting called to England. It’s the most – ”

“I know, you told me,” interrupts Hamp, “\$34 per month. Well actually I do hope I get to go to England, too. You know, the Hamptons and the Prices both trace their roots there.”

“Well, then, I’ll see you there soon,” says Rulon. “Promise me you’ll keep an eye on the school in the meantime.”

“They’ll fall apart without you,” says Hamp. He is only joking, but Rulon takes him seriously.

“You may be right. I did manage to put out a few fires,” says Rulon proudly, “but I wish I had been able to leave a more secure plan for the future. Every time we balance the books, someone else comes in and tells us they’re transferring to public schools since they can’t afford to pay tuition anymore. If the trend of decreasing enrolment continues, the school board will have to react quickly to reduce spending; otherwise they’ll sink themselves.”

“I think you’ve left things in adequate hands,” says Hamp, “what with the Board headed by the prophet himself.”

Rulon sighs. “I’m not so sure,” he says under his breath.

“Besides, you’ve got Commissioner Merrill on the Board and Bryant Hinckley as a Trustee,” Hamp adds, a bit defensively, “There hasn’t ever been a more frugal bunch assembled at the helm of any organization.”

“Let’s hope you’re right,” says Rulon, “but for now, every time we rework the books, the hole grows

deeper...while at the same time, East High has almost doubled their enrollment.”

“We sure took a beating from their basketball team this year,” Hamp remarks with a smile, “maybe that gives us an excuse.”

“Well legally they have to take every student in their jurisdiction forced out of private school by the tuition costs,” says Rulon, “If only we could get hold of some of that tax money they get for each new student.”

“Oh, don’t you fret,” Hamp says in consolation, a bit bored by all the talk about money and trying to find a way to bring the conversation to an end, “They always seem to find a way. Don’t you remember when they taught us about the financial crisis the L.D.S. went through thirty years ago? The school was on the verge of closing, and at the last minute, Karl Maeser saved it with nothing more than a motivational speech that got the donor dollars flowing.”

“Yes, I do remember that,” consents Rulon. As the last word, he adds, “but this time, I’m afraid, the donors themselves are bankrupt.”

“Well, I guess you’ll just have to watch things unfold from the other side of the big pond,” says Hamp, bidding farewell, “Wish me luck as I approach my father tomorrow. If things go as planned, I’ll see you in England before too long.”

Hamp fully expects to join Rulon in the old country soon, but as they shake hands and part ways, their paths are beginning a diverging course they cannot begin to fathom.

The next day – Rulon’s last day on the job before devoting himself to a week of full-time mission preparation – a knock on the frame of the open door to his office grabs his attention, diverting him from the dismal financial papers on his desk.

“I’m not from Beaver, but I’m Zola,” says a cheerful young lady, poking her head through the doorway and waving an envelope.

“Well if you catch the next train out to Beaver,” Rulon says sarcastically, “you can open the letter yourself when you get there.”

“Don’t worry; I know who she is, so I’ll take it to her myself,” says the young lady, “Growing up, I thought I was the only Zola around. And now here at school I have found that there are three of us. We’ve got a Zola Anderson, Zola Kimball and Zola Brown, and we’re all friends!”

“So which one are you?” Rulon asks, cringing in anticipation of the answer.

“Zola Brown, of course, don’t you remember me?” Rulon’s heart sinks a bit as he recognizes the name. Zola has seen Rulon from a distance a number of times, but this is the first time they have actually spoken to one another. “Zina’s always talking about how she likes to annoy you just to see if she can get you off your mark. She says you’re much too stiff.”

“Well she’s much too…” Rulon uncharacteristically strains for words, trying to think of a good insult encapsulating the opposite of stiff. He finds himself floundering awkwardly.

Zola doesn’t allow the slightest moment of silence in their dialogue and blurts out, “You should come for dinner some time.” She looks downward, wondering if she has been too forward. “You know, just to show Zina that there’s much more to you than the suit.”

“Well, I’m heading to England on my mission in a few days,” Rulon counters, “so it might have to –”

“So we’ll have to have you over right away,” interrupts Zola again, “I’ll talk to mother about setting an extra plate tonight. She talks highly of you, you know.”

Rulon is flattered that Sister Brown even knows his name; he fears that Brother Brown will have a scrutinizing eye on him, but he reluctantly consents to the dinner invitation.

Around the dinner table that night – to Rulon’s relief – Brother Hugh B. Brown excuses himself early on account of a heavy workload, failing to disclose that he is suffering from a rare and excruciatingly painful nerve disorder. His wife Zina Young Card – granddaughter of Brigham Young – remains at the table and watches Rulon closely, observing every subtle nuance.

“There is something special about that boy,” she says to her daughter and namesake when they retire to the kitchen to clean up.

“He’s not for me, mother,” Zina the Younger replies with a typical teenager’s tone and an accompanying roll of the eyes, “but maybe Zola’s interested in his type.”

Zola pinches her sister on the shoulder. “Well I do think he’s a fine fellow, thank you very much.”

After peering through the doorway and observing Rulon awkwardly trying to hold a conversation with the six youngest children, Sister Brown decides to intervene.

“Care to join me in the sitting room?” she asks Rulon, who gladly consents. Once the two of them are seated on the sofa, she asks Rulon if they can pray together. He nods again, and she stands to pronounce a special *mother’s blessing* on him to keep him safe during his travels – and return him to their home so that he “might join our family again.” Rulon wonders how literally she means *join*.

As each member of the Brown family shakes his hand in turn to send him on his way that night, Sister Brown has a conniving look in her eye. Like a traditional matchmaker who approaches her role with utmost sincerity, she is already plotting her next move.

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Just a few blocks away in the Avenues, Hamp sits across from his father at the dinner table and nervously breaches the subject of a mission – beginning with his financial limitations. Chick proceeds to lay out the family finances, and Hamp is relieved to hear that Chick’s job and the family income seem to be secure for the time being, perhaps opening up the opportunity logistically. But Chick fiercely opposes the idea of a mission and after Mimi leaves them alone, he lets his opinion be clearly known without the slightest room for question. He tries to reason with Hamp about the present economic uncertainty.

“If you volunteer to serve now, you’ll spend three years abroad, return to Salt Lake that much older, and

have no academic degree to show for it,” Chick argues, “while at the same time during your extended absence your peers will further their education and already have their foot in the door with any potential employers by the time you return.”

Hamp tries to counter the argument with justification for “life experience,” but his words fall on deaf ears. The endless stream of door-to-door peddlers constantly interrupting their conversation only serves to solidify Chick’s position. Hamp knows all too well that the tell-tale signs of the times are particularly abundant in Salt Lake City: homeless families camped out on vacant lots, long lines outside the new “Hoover Cafe” soup kitchens, and Shoeshine “boys” of every imaginable age. Chick hands Hamp the newspaper just to make sure his point is understood. The statistics in the headlines confirm the shocking impact of the Depression on Utah’s economy, including 50-percent drop in household income, a 35% unemployment rate, and the failure of one third of Utah’s banks.

At the end of the evening, Hamp and Chick both retire from the extended conversation worn out and without resolution. Religious inclinations aside, Chick is obviously not comfortable committing to such a drastic drain on the family’s savings. As Hamp prays that night – lacking the financial backing he knows he will need if he wishes to serve – he feels utter defeat and dejection

The following morning, however, as Chick drives Hamp to the train station to see him off for the summer, he turns to him and says, “Son, I want you to know that the decision is yours. And if you decide to serve a

mission – though I can't tell you I like the idea – you'll have my full financial support.”

Hamp is flabbergasted and can barely speak as he gives his father a parting bear hug at the Union Pacific station. He settles into the train cabin and waves out the open window as the train struggles for traction. Once out of sight of the station, he pulls out a loose-leaf binder with graph paper and begins to outline some grid patterns with his ruler. The cool morning air is refreshing, but with the train at full speed, Hamp has to close the window to still the fluttering pages. He dives back into his project, mechanically readjusting his future plans by laying out a timeline for himself within the grids. He tries to fit work, schooling, missionary service, and family life into neat little blocks.

Hamp has no idea what Mimi said to Chick that previous night, but he does suspect that her pleas at least played a part in the overwhelming change of heart. Having finally put the dreaded conversation behind him, and, above all, having reached an agreement, Hamp feels a huge load lifted from his shoulders. His plans seem to be neatly falling into place. As the train steams south, though, he realizes he now has an added burden: the decision that might otherwise have been made for him is now his alone to bear.

As Dot's letters begin to arrive after Hamp's first week on the job, he weighs thoughts of a mission against their plans for marriage. Will she wait for him, or will a mission mark the end of their relationship? Over the next several weeks, he walks to the rim of the Grand Canyon in solitude each night and pours out his soul to the Lord,

trying to discover His will. There is no vision, no sudden stream of inspiration, but slowly, steadily, and precociously, Hamp solidifies his decision to serve a mission.

Once resolved, he writes Dot a heartfelt letter and can sense her simultaneous support and heartbreak when he receives her response a week later. They both feel destined to spend the rest of their lives together, but recognize that he cannot pass up this opportunity. The more he thinks about it, the sooner he wants to go – not just to avoid the risk of Chick rescinding the offer, but so that he and Dot might start a family as soon as possible after he returns. The very next day he drafts a letter to President Grant's office to request the application materials. When the forms finally arrive with the weekly mail, he rushes through each page and gets the packet back to the postman the very same day.

Weeks pass with Hamp eagerly but nervously awaiting the response; finally a letter arrives from the Office of the First Presidency. Hamp takes it back to his cabin and sets the envelope on his bed. He stares at it for quite some time – then finally says a quick prayer and rips it open.

“Brother Price,” it reads, “you have been called to serve in the German-Austrian Mission. You are to report to the Mission Home November 19, 1930.”

Hamp drops the letter without even reading the rest. “Germany?” he dramatically questions aloud, despite the lack of an audience. He is absolutely shocked! He has never studied a single word of any foreign language, let alone the garbled rhetoric he loves to

ridicule when visiting Waldemar's house. In fact, the only thing he knows about Germany at all is that they make cuckoo clocks and eat funny sandwiches.

He had felt certain that a mission call would return him to his family's roots in Great Britain, so the call to Germany seems quite an upheaval to him. He wonders for a minute whether President Grant might be playing tricks on him, but then he notices a handwritten note in the envelope. "Your father tells me you're going to convert the world one country at a time," the note reads, "Well, once you're finished with Germany, you can take on Austria without even leaving your mission. Regards - HJG."

Hamp's brief grin is quickly washed away by the overwhelming thought of embarking on a strange passage to a foreign land. A vivid picture of the framed photograph on Gordon's mantel enters his mind. "One country at a time," he mumbles to himself, "starting with the country that started the World War." How can he ever serve among the German people, he wonders, without collectively holding their belligerence against them?

"Oh boy, what a life," he records in his journal that evening, "three years is plenty long to be gone and I surely hope we don't regret it." The word "we," of course, draws his thoughts back to Dot in Salt Lake and drives in the solitude of his surroundings.

Despite the knots in his stomach, each little square on his graph paper gets crossed out less and less sluggishly as the summer winds to a close. The time apart from Dot actually passes rather quickly, and he soon finds himself back in the city making his final mission

preparations and spending his hard-earned summer wages.

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"Howdy Hamp! Back from the open range, I see," exclaims Homer as they pass each other on the U's commons, "How was your train ride?"

"Longest trip I ever took!" Hamp answers, "of course that was just because I wanted to get back to Salt Lake as quickly as possible, not having seen Dot all summer."

"Well, if you can't last three months, how are you going to last three years?" asks Homer.

"I don't know for certain, but this may help me cope." Hamp points to the sturdy black case he is carrying. "It's my new acquisition from the school's publications office."

"Let's have a look," Homer says.

Hamp sets the case down on its side and proudly opens it for display.

"Now that's a fancy typewriter if I ever saw one," Homer remarks, "but do you plan on lugging it all over Germany?"

"You bet!" replies Hamp emphatically, "It's a Royal Portable, after all – made especially for traveling journalists. I'd carry it around the world if it would help me keep up with Dot."

"Well then you should have bought her one as well," jokes Homer, "so she can at least type out her *Dear John* letter to you."

“Joke about it all you want,” retorts Hamp, “but mark my words, we’ll be married before you even get back from your mission.”

“I’ll take that as a wager,” Homer says, “and if I’m right, you’ll buy me dinner at the fanciest restaurant in town upon my return.”

“And if you’re wrong?” inquires Hamp.

“Then you’ll invite me to a home-cooked, welcome-home meal courtesy of your new bride, of course!” replies Homer.

“So you win either way?” Hamp laughs. “Well that doesn’t sound like much of a deal, but I guess we’ll shake on it anyway,” Hamp consents. “Say, speaking of home-cooked meals, I was hoping you and Gordon would come to my farewell testimonial on Sunday evening. We’ll be having an open house at our home afterwards complete with refreshments.”

“Well...” Homer hesitates.

“Besides,” Hamp continues, “the Toronto boys could use a tenor to turn their trio into a quartet.”

“As much as I’d enjoy singing, unfortunately I’ve already committed to helping Gordon take care of his siblings while his parents are out of town,” says Homer.

“Of course,” says Hamp, a bit disappointed, but understanding of the situation. “Let me know if there’s anything I can do to help.”

Homer shakes his head. “I don’t know what you could do. Except maybe to pray especially hard for them.”

“That I can do,” answers Hamp, feeling a bit helpless. “Well I’m supposed to meet Dot downtown in a few minutes, so I need to get going.”

“Until we meet again, my friend,” says Homer as they part ways with a handshake.

“That’s *Auf Wiedersehen, mein Freund*,” replies Hamp with the only German phrase he knows, “courtesy of Frau Roth.” He walks off briskly to catch the approaching street car back to the Avenues. Realizing it might be quite a while before he sees Homer again, he turns around and shouts to him, “If you end up getting called to Germany, too, I’ll show you the ropes when you arrive.”

“OK,” Homer yells back, “but wherever I happen to end up, just don’t forget the dinner you’ll owe me when I return.”

Hamp makes a fist in jest and shakes it at Homer as he hops onto the street car.

That Sunday evening, Hamp’s farewell testimonial packs the house in the Ensign Ward chapel. Chick watches from the foyer, feeling too uncomfortable to enter the chapel. The Toronto boys deliver a stirring musical number and the talks touch Hamp deeply. He nervously acknowledges the contributions collected after the service, and well-wishers shake his hand in congratulation.

Mimi hosts an open house for Hamp following the testimonial. Many of his good friends are able to attend, but Homer and Gordon are notably absent. As Hamp munches on the home-baked desserts, he thinks briefly of Rulon and what he might be having for dinner in a sparse

missionary apartment in Canterbury. Counting the cash after the last of them has left, Hamp is happy to see that the funds will cover several months of his mission and provide some buffer in the event of further economic woes. He goes to bed satisfied that he has made the right decision and happy to have the support of his family and friends.

The next day, as has been the case with all of Mimi's prior social gatherings, the local newspaper carries the story of his reception party along with the minutest details of the event.

Two weeks later, Hamp enters the mission home next door to the Lion House for a long day of orientation. This *special course of training*, as it is referred to in his mission call, is intended to answer questions about what to expect from the next 33 months. There are no discussions to memorize, and there is no language training to be had – those lessons will come in the trenches.

Hamp's head is spinning by the time he emerges from the mission home late that afternoon; though he feels woefully unprepared, he looks forward to telling his parents of the day's events. But when Chick enters the house after his own long day, he has a somber look on his face.

Around the dinner table, he breaks some awful news to his family: "Sister Ada passed away last night, and the whole Hinckley family is an absolute wreck over it."

Ada had been undergoing cancer treatment in California for some time, but it had become a losing

battle and she finally succumbed to the persistent growth of her tumors.

"What a tragedy for them!" blurts Hamp. He is shocked at the news, but he knows that it has been imminent.

"I reckon we all knew it was coming," continues Chick, "but when you think of those motherless children, it still seems so much worse than anyone could have imagined."

Hamp looks at his two little sisters – who are about the same age as Gordon's siblings – and imagines them without their mother.

"Hamp," Chick adds, interrupting his emotional journey, "I'll be assisting with the arrangements at the depot tomorrow if you can help me."

"Sure Dad," agrees Hamp with tears beginning to form in his eyes. He finishes his dinner as quickly as he can manage, then hurries to the Hinckley home to offer his condolences. Seeing the long line of well-wishers that has formed around the house, however, he changes course and returns home.

Early the next morning, Hamp accompanies his father to the railroad depot. Chick, dressed in a dark suit, unlocks the door to a room Hamp had never noticed before. A lump forms in Hamp's throat as he enters the room and looks around at the black drapery, caskets stood on end, and other items reserved for such somber occasions. The Union Pacific does not want a casket to appear as an ordinary piece of baggage, so when a rail car serves as a hearse, one of Chick's duties is to ensure that the proper tone is set when the train rolls into the station.

As Hamp watches Chick scurry around to fulfill his duties, he begins to ponder his own parents' mortality. What would he do if he lost one of them? Hamp's gaze focuses on the cigarette between Chick's fingers. He wants to tell his father so many things, the first of which would be to boldly call him to repentance; he is about to embark on a mission, after all. As he weighs the heartfelt boldness against the potential perception of overbearance, his thoughts are interrupted by a train whistle. Chick puts out his cigarette and moves quickly among the crowd, coaching the pallbearers and making sure the path to the hearse is cleared.

Chick checks his pocket watch. A trail of steam punctually appears on the southern horizon and begins to grow. The steam engine stops just shy of the station. Chick walks along the tracks and climbs aboard to make sure the appropriate arrangements are in place. Once he is assured that all due solemnity has been achieved, the train inches forward into the depot. Hamp watches from the platform as the engine sighs its final breath for the day.

Gordon is in a trance as he, his brothers, and half-brothers march in step and solemnly slide the casket into the hearse. Hamp gives Gordon a nod as he passes but can't think of anything to say to him. Thoughts are flying around in Gordon's head, but – fearing the pain and confusion that would accompany any real contemplation – he refuses to let them land. Until this week, he had been considering interrupting his schooling to serve a mission. Running away to a foreign land seems almost tempting at the moment, and he envies Hamp in a way for having the opportunity to escape the reality of their immediate

surroundings. But with a motherless lot of children at home, the urgency of a mission seems to wane. Any previously made plans are now up in the air.

The next two days are a hazy daze as preparations for the funeral are made. Hamp and Homer do what they can to help the Hinckleys. The outpouring of support from the rest of the community is almost overwhelming and certainly makes their efforts seem futile in comparison.

Ada is laid to rest on a dreary Thursday afternoon, with ominous November skies signaling the onset of a harsh winter. Hamp looks around at the crowd but recognizes few faces; the sight of the children at the graveside is too much for most to bear, and the mourners' faces are obscured by their hats as they stare at the ground. Like others in the crowd, Hamp's thoughts are in the next world.

Still caught up in that spirit, Hamp enters the Salt Lake Temple for the first time in his young life early the following morning. He is used to going to Church without his father, but Chick's absence has never been felt more strongly than in this sacred setting. As he sits in the Celestial Room, pondering the eternities with Mimi at his side, the void pierces him to the very soul. He contemplates the symbolism around him and focuses on the circles and swastikas – which are taking on a new, sinister meaning in his destination half a world away – inscribed into the meticulous etching. Knowing the sealing ordinance to be a vital component of an eternal round, any way he thinks about it, the ring appears broken without his father's presence.

He leaves the temple full of resolve to somehow alter the situation, but also with the knowledge that his departure date looms just a week away, and that any change of heart is likely to be a long-term prospect. Nonetheless, as he makes his final preparations and checks the remaining days off his calendar, he begins to notice a change in his father's countenance. The initial opposition had given way to tacit support that has now transformed even further into an almost palatable excitement about Hamp's mission. Chick even takes a few days off work to accompany Hamp to the commercial district and shop for supplies.

On the final day before Hamp's scheduled departure, Chick gets involved even more closely in the preparations and can't seem to stop talking about what Hamp might expect to accomplish in Germany. He recounts stories his own friends have told him about their adventures as pioneering missionaries in the Polynesian Islands and other far corners of the world and wonders aloud what he might have missed by not serving himself. Hamp even gets the feeling that Chick is actually jealous and may end up trying to fill the void by living Hamp's mission in proxy with him.

One by one, Hamp checks the last items off his shopping list: suits and suitcases, neckties and knickers, golashes and slickers; all are stacked neatly on his bedroom floor. As he finishes packing on his final night in Salt Lake, he lines up his luggage and imagines himself carting the whole set around Europe for three years. He tries picking up all of the pieces together to see how he might fare, but to no avail. With a knapsack on

his back, a suitcase in one hand and a briefcase under his arm, he can carry the trunk or the typewriter with his remaining free hand, but not both. If he intends to keep his correspondence typewritten, it appears that his mobilization will be a two-man job. Margaret pokes her head in the door and laughs at the sight.

"What's so funny?" asks Hamp.

"Well, maybe you'll need me to come along as your porter," she says, trying in vain to help him lift the heavy trunk.

"Well, you already know Europe better than I do," replies Hamp in jest, "so I may need you as a navigator as well."

Assuming the family income can be sustained, Mimi and Margaret are planning to take a mother-daughter trip to meet Hamp in Berlin at the conclusion of his mission – after which they all will tour the continent together. Margaret has already mapped out their itinerary on a large map that hangs on her bedroom wall, and she has memorized every detail.

"I'm really going to miss you," Margaret blurts out with a bit of embarrassment. She turns away and runs back to the kitchen to help Mimi with the dishes. Hamp places his luggage back on the floor. Though he hadn't had a chance to respond to Margaret, he wipes a tear from his eye and realizes the feeling is mutual.

The next morning, Chick heaves the large trunk into the baggage car at the depot. Dot had arrived early, hoping to share a few moments with Hamp, but the chaotic scene, with friends and family all trying to get his gear to the right car, leaves no room for any privacy.

Hamp waves adieu from his cabin window. Long after the shout of “all aboard,” Dot is still aboard herself and almost has to be carried off the train by the conductor to avoid being taken along. Full of tears, she finally tears herself away from Hamp and waves back at him from the platform.

The whistles echo through the station and off the surrounding mountain peaks. Dot watches the train steam north toward Ogden until the smoke trail joins the clouds swirling around the mountains overhead. Hamp watches the same clouds disappear along the horizon behind him, lost in his thoughts and intimidated by the adventure ahead.

The train nears the historical transcontinental railroad route through Ogden. To the west lies the new cutoff across the Great Salt Lake that rendered the Promontory Point route obsolete. A switchman pulls the lever, and Hamp’s train steams off in the opposite direction, winding its way east and up the challenging grade, climbing through Weber Canyon and Echo Canyon to reach the top of the Wasatch Mountains. Passing the lonely UP station at *Wahsatch*, the locomotive gets a brief, downhill respite on its route toward the Continental Divide. Though night has fallen by the time they reach this milestone, Hamp still has Dot on his mind, a lump in his throat, and a hole in his heart. The train begins its long descent into the Missouri River Basin with a howling wind blowing along the North Platte. As the Rocky Mountains melt into the Great Plains, Hamp stares at his rail ticket, personally punched by his father: “Destination: New York City.”

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The Mission Home in Salt Lake City



Missionaries in Training, November 13, 1930  
[Hamp pictured on top row, far left]

## Chapter 12: Missionary Men

“Is that the *Titanic*?” asked Jaedin, tapping me incessantly on the shoulder to make sure I had actually regained consciousness.

I picked my head up off the desk; the computer screen was chock-full of the letter “s” – which had apparently been my last keystroke before giving up a fight with drowsiness the previous night. It took me a minute to recall where I had left off.

“The *Titanic*?” I asked.

He pointed to a black and white photograph of Hamp holding a life ring on the deck of a ship.

“Oh, that,” I answered him, “No, that’s actually another ship.”

He looked disappointed.

“But I did find a connection,” I said, trying to regain his interest, “Check this out!”

I showed him the online encyclopedia article about the *SS America*, formerly known as the *SS Amerika* under a German flag. Jaedin was appreciably interested to discover that Grandpa’s ship was the very vessel that had first sighted and sounded the ignored warning of the iceberg that sank the *Titanic*. As I recounted further details about the ship, though, I lost his attention yet again. He ran out the door and I dove back into Hamp’s mission journal on my own, immersing myself into the streets of New York during Thanksgiving week in 1930.

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Hamp and his traveling companions – a handful of missionaries about to be dispersed all across Europe –



Missionaries aboard the *SS America*, 1930
[Hamp at center in the L.D.S. letterman’s sweater and holding the life preserver in the inset]

have arrived in the newly coined *Big Apple* with three days to spare before they set sail. Their arrival in New York City is accompanied by excitement but also by an overwhelming measure of trepidation; the bustle of the big city stands in stark contrast to the largely agrarian economy of the Salt Lake Valley.

As soon as they check their bags into their hotel, they hit the streets to take in as much of the city as they can. When they stop at a nearby hot dog stand, the vendor can't stop talking about the disappointing baseball season; they get an earful about the fact that Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth— who had made back-to-back World Series appearances just a few years before — have now been shut out of the World Series for the second time in a row. The vendor is furious as he slaps the condiments onto their hot dogs. Though Yankee Stadium has just been locked up for the winter, they can see it in the distance and are in awe of its sheer scale. Hamp points out the nearby Chrysler Building in an attempt to change the subject, but he can't seem to get a word in, so the missionaries walk away while the vendor keeps right on fuming.

The newly completed Chrysler Building has just finished basking in its short-lived glory as the world's tallest building. "Boy, what a building!" Hamp notes later in his journal. Gleaming in the sunlight, the Art Deco ornamentation of its crown is certainly awe-inspiring to the Utah sightseers; just a few blocks away, however, an army of 3,000 laborers scrambles around 86 floors overhead, having robbed the Chrysler Building of its title with still twenty floors to go. The Empire State Building

will forever transform New York City's famous skyline on its completion; already, the Mohawk iron workers waltzing effortlessly across the girders draw crowds of spectators along the streets below, the missionaries among them.

While the construction process makes for a spectacular sight in itself, this spectacle is just the beginning: The overly optimistic architects have incorporated mooring masts and walkways into the planned superstructure to serve as a transatlantic terminal for dirigible parking. Perhaps the missionaries' return trip will be by Zeppelin! Though their vision is a bit premature, they imagine a triumphant return three years down the road, being welcomed back onto U.S. soil after walking across the gangplank on the 102nd floor's landing platform. What an entrance that will make!

Meanwhile, the missionaries get themselves lost a time or two while wandering around town, nearly tripping on the curbs and narrowly missing cabs and buses as they cross the streets with their eyes fixated on the surrounding sights. Street names they have only read about in the newspapers suddenly appear on the street signs all around them.

Wall Street is spewing out ticker tape again, yet a financial recovery is still nowhere in sight. The stock exchange has just rung in the one-year anniversary of Black Tuesday, and many investors are still reeling from the shock of the crash. The voices that initially predicted a quick turnaround have now been silenced. Wall Street had been resilient in the past — after all, stock prices had rebounded quickly after the still-unsolved Wall Street

bombing several years before. It had been the worst terrorist attack on U.S. soil, but the traders had mopped up and managed to reopen the stock exchange the very next day. This descent, however, is no mere bump on the graph paper; it is becoming painfully apparent that the nation's financial machine will be bogged in for the long haul.

Despite the dismal financial scene on paper, the iconic signs of the Great Depression – soup kitchen queues and hobos hovering around burning barrels – are hidden away from the entertainment district and its bustling façade of wealth. In contrast, bright electric lights beckon along the prominent promenades; with a few days to kill, the elders follow the crowds and take in as big a taste of the excitement as they can swallow. The missionaries find that the longest lines are not for government handouts but for the cinemas.

Mission rules allow for a large measure of personal interpretation, and missionary life in general is only loosely regimented. Movies, bathhouses, amusement parks, and other activities are among the choices being debated; Hamp pushes for Coney Island, driven by Lindbergh's statement that its new *Cyclone* ride was more thrilling than crossing the Atlantic. After some discussion, however, they decide instead to warm up at a movie house. Inside, they peruse a set of options much more abundant than was offered at the old movie house back home in Utah. First they have to decide between the new *talkies* or the more classic, silent films. Blockbuster talkies are gradually knocking off the silent films at the box office, but not without debate from the stars. The

Marx Brothers, for example, have latched onto the talkies to expand their comedic routines, but Charlie Chaplin, for one, is still resisting the trend. He is, in fact, on the opposite coast at that very moment, refining his silent *Tramp* character on a set that is being built to resemble the very streets of New York.

Finally, the missionaries decide on a double feature. Having just glimpsed an image of New York's future skyline, they take in *Just Imagine*, a film purporting to depict New York City in the far distant future: Year 1980. Following the film, they excitedly debate the feasibility of each imaginative stretch. But Hamp is more enthralled with the second film, *Hell's Angels*, a Howard Hughes epic that glamorizes the British pilots who fought in the Great War. In particular, he is captivated with the characters who have friends on the opposite sides of the trenches. As he witnesses scenes depicting the moral dilemma of dropping bombs on former friends in a foreign land, little can he know that he will encounter eerily familiar scenarios in less than a decade. The most stirring scenes show the German counterparts obediently jumping to their deaths *for Kaiser and fatherland* in order to lighten the load on their Zeppelin.

“And we're supposed to convert these people?” he asks his companions after the show.

These deeper thoughts are soon forgotten as they walk past the exhilarating lights on their way back to the hotel. Big bands and string quartets – hired by Governor Franklin Roosevelt himself to get musicians off the streets – play venues in the parks and surrounding plazas.

George Gerschwin and Irving Berlin's new tunes ring from pianos on all floors of the buildings overhead. On Broadway, Diane Belmont – who will later drop the stage name in favor of her real name, Lucille Ball – headlines the shows.

Rodgers and Hammerstein, having met only once before, are pursuing separate paths at the moment – trying their best to make a lasting mark on showbiz. One result of those efforts, *Showboat*, is defining a new genre: the musical production. Florenz Ziegfeld's famous Follies are still in full steam in his new theatre on Sixth Avenue, but after producing *Showboat*, he recognizes that the embodiment of America's cultural future lies not in operettas, but in the musical. It is all amazingly opulent in electric light, and the elders are hooked. They scour the Playbill, marking their selections from its diverse menu.

As they take a short-cut to the hotel after a long evening, they cross some of the seedier sides of New York as well. Stragglers newsies on the street corners try to sell off their last remaining papers, shouting out any headline that might capture the attention of the passersby. Prominent in the headlines but unknown to the missionaries is Mayor Beau James. Lax on prohibition and harboring a weakness for showgirls, he has proved to be quite popular with the people of New York; the results of his inaction, though, are readily apparent to the missionaries as they traverse the alleyways. Governor Roosevelt, while hiding his bout with polio from public view, has begun a battle to end the mayor's political career and clean up the streets. Though FDR and his cousin Teddy historically represented opposing political

parties, they had both ultimately found themselves waging a vehement, gubernatorial fight against the corruption of Tamany Hall. A guerilla army – viciously opposed to these reforms – still operates actively in hiding from back-alley pillboxes, taunting the missionaries with solicitations along their way. Just as they begin to feel nervous and out of place, the elders spot Lady Liberty and regain their bearings.

Hamp's journal entry that first night sums it all up: "Quite a town, big buildings, cars, elevated trains, taxi cabs, noises of all kinds, pawn shops, etc. Just like a mechanical toy."

The next day is Thanksgiving, and – though they don't admit it to each other – the rookie missionaries all miss their families dearly. Hamp pictures his parents and little sisters sitting down together to a fancy dinner with their best china on the table. His chair would be empty – his photograph staring down at them from the wall. He knows that the blessing on the food and the prayer of thanksgiving would be directed toward him and would be dedicated to his efforts. Would Chick's heart stay softened? Perhaps he even uttered the prayer himself, finally countering Mimi's story about the embarrassing rail car blessing in the process. Hamp smiles at the thought but doesn't dwell on the scene for long as he still has a large piece of New York to navigate.

The missionaries gather for breakfast at their hotel and mutually decide to celebrate Thanksgiving at the Bronx Zoo. They are surrounded by noisy distractions along the way. Upon arrival, they eat chili dogs and

Cracker Jack instead of a turkey for their Thanksgiving dinner.

As they marvel at the size of the snakes, crocodiles, and other ferocious beasts that look smugly tame in their cells, they think of their counterparts from the mission home who are at that moment on their way to brand new mission fields in the Amazon Basin.

“Well, despite the Kaiser, I’m glad we’re heading to Europe rather than the jungle!” Hamp remarks.

Many of the zoo’s signature animals are missing, though, having been borrowed for a six-mile jaunt across town in the Macy’s Day Parade. Only a few years since the inaugural parade, its famous balloon characters dominate a procession that has already become a New York tradition. The missionaries only catch a few glimpses of the crowds from a distance; they feel much more comfortable walking along the sparsely populated streets that on this day seem more like the familiar streets of Salt Lake rather than those of a world capital.

Though they only cover a few miles on the streetcars and subways during their stay, they take a big enough bite of the Big Apple to set their heads spinning. It is a taste they will not soon forget. There is so much more to see, but they know they will be back in a few short years to perhaps have a chance to take in some of the sights they missed. They retire to the hotel early and spend their final day studying, shopping, and preparing for the voyage.

Bright the next morning the horns in the harbor begin blaring as they have each day since their arrival; but this time – on their departure day – the signals rouse

them from their sleep like a call to arms. They head briskly to the harbor and, after organizing their luggage, walk straight across the gangway through a gate bearing the SS *America*’s insignia. An excitement fills the air as they board the ship, fueled by the collective hopes and dreams of hundreds of departing passengers making their way to Europe for whatever adventures might lie ahead.

Gambling on who might first emerge from the fiscal abyss, some of their fellow travelers are reversing the dreams of their ancestors by leaving America for the more promising futures offered by Soviets, Nazis and other governing powers that appear to offer redemption from recession.

The missionaries stow their belongings in their cabins and climb the stairs to the upper deck in time to watch the deckhands pull in the ropes. The ship’s horn blares emphatically as they maneuver out of the harbor. The sheer size of the city strikes them all from this vantage point. Seven million souls surround them – more than ten times as many in this single city than in the entire state of Utah.

Hamp is exhausted from his urban safari, but he continues to shoot photos of the skyline until it amalgamates with the waves. As it has for generations, New York City seems to mark the world’s crossroads in this era. If Hamp could have panned around and zoomed further in and out of the various windows of New York City that day, he would have found within this epicenter a treasure of budding, yet untapped talent. Comic strip characters and superheroes are at that moment forming in the minds of a few creative souls confined to the concrete

jungle. Emerging actors, artists, politicians, producers, musicians, and other stars in the hundreds are still anonymous but destined to be household names in the years ahead.

As the sea expands and the waves roll ever higher, the landlubbers from the Utah desert begin to lose their equilibrium. They remember all too well the story of the SS *Vestris*, which had left New York with missionaries aboard just two years before. The ship had begun taking on water in heavy seas; the missionaries jumped into a lifeboat as the ship began its death roll, but the lifeboat had not been detached and was dragged down with the sinking ship. With the fatal headlines of that day still fresh in their minds, the brigade of traveling companions tries to quell their queasy stomachs and uneasy nerves by hamming it up as best they can.

Hamp is proud to give his letterman's sweater – embossed with its large, golden “S” – some international exposure. While everyone else dresses in suit coats for a group photograph of the missionary entourage, he proudly represents L.D.S. High with his sweater. Not happy with a boring, posed photograph, he then grabs one of the ship's life rings and holds up his newfound prop so that his companions can look through it like a porthole.

After four days at sea, they make a stop in England to drop off the British contingent, another in France for the French *mishes* to disembark, and finally into the port city of Hamburg, where the last three missionaries in the group round out their final day of travel by boarding a train to the industrial hub of Leipzig. As they pull into *Hauptbahnhof Leipzig*, one the largest

train stations in the world, the smoky scene seems especially surreal to Hamp. The Salt Lake Union Pacific depot and ten others like it would fit within these walls and still have room to spare. He exchanges money to purchase a postcard, resorting to gestures to make himself understood, and then snaps a few photos for his father, who would surely be impressed by the station's grand scale.

The fledgling missionaries then catch their connecting train to Dresden, a picturesque city on the Elbe River, where they meet their new Mission President, Oliver Budge. President Budge's father had been converted by the renowned Mormon scholar, Karl Maeser, and he is noticeably excited to be serving in Dr. Maeser's hometown.

After their personal interviews with President Budge, the new missionaries stay the night in the mission home. As he retires to bed, Hamp writes his first impressions of Germany in his journal:

Had my first real look at German life today. Everything is so different and strange to me. The language seems awfully funny. Narrow streets, tons of people, plenty of stores, cars, and buses, screwy trains and street cars, large factories and mills.

Then, perhaps anticipating that Dot might read his journal someday, he adds, “and no good looking girls.”

The next morning, Hamp is shipped off to the small town of Zwickau, where a little old lady named

Sister Ewig – who, incidentally, would later convert the Uchtdorf family – feeds the missionaries until they are good and full, then hounds them to eat even more. Despite the hospitality of the local branch members, Hamp feels lost and homesick.

After two weeks, letters begin to arrive from home; rather than providing any solace to his spirits, they leave him feeling even more isolated. As the weeks wind on, however, the homesickness brought on by the stream of letters from Dot, Chick, Mimi, and others back home is gradually replaced with nostalgia. Finally – once he manages to accept his fate – the references to life back home stir only distant memories.

Periodically he receives a telegram from Dresden, packs his bags, and heads to the train station to tackle a new area. In his travels and his daily ministry among the people, Hamp comes to know the minutest details of German life and soon finds himself so caught up in his work among the Germans that he rarely thinks about life back home.

His first public talk in a sacrament meeting is a disaster, but he sets his mind toward bettering his language and speaking skills. He practices hours at a time for his next talk and is eventually able to preach with ease. He finds the German language perfectly aligned with his personality; with its unarbitrary, phoenetic pronunciation, logical rules, and lack of grammatical exceptions, Hamp eventually finds German capturing his thoughts more succinctly than English ever could. In combination with his tall stature, his newly adopted,

highly verbose speaking style at the pulpit earns him the nickname *The Parson* among his fellow missionaries.

Having forgotten himself in his labors, Hamp doesn't even notice when Dot's weekly letters become biweekly, then wane to monthly. He continues to write her on a weekly basis, but finally realizes one day that he has not had a response in almost two months. Alarmed, he writes a letter to Mimi asking what is going on. He waits another month to hear back, by this time knowing the inevitable contents of her reply letter before he even opens it.

Sure enough, Mimi admits, Dot had been seen around town lately with Vaughn Winkless. Hamp has never heard of Vaughn nor anyone else in the Winkless clan, but he despises the sound of his name and pictures the creepiest breed of cretin as its bearer. He paces around the apartment the rest of the morning, carrying himself through a repeating cycle of emotions that begins with disappointment, despair, and dismay – then evolves into pain, anger, jealousy, and rage.

He might have been able to deal with a *Dear John* letter, but the silence seems an even worse betrayal. Each time he goes through the cycle of emotions, however, he finds it a bit easier to bear, realizing that he had actually been preparing himself for this moment for months now, having known deep inside that their relationship had changed in his absence.

Nonetheless, over the next few weeks he feels a lack of direction without his primary letter-writing outlet; he decides to turn his efforts toward his father. Though they have corresponded quite frequently since his

departure, the contents of their letters have generally been superficial. Hamp now focuses on writing him a real, soul-wrenching letter, calling Chick to repentance and challenging him to return to the fold. As he sits at the typewriter, he directs every bit of bottled up emotion toward his father. When he pulls the last page of his lengthy letter out of the typewriter, he decides not to even proof read it; instead, he says a simple prayer, licks the envelope, and runs outside to hand the letter to the passing postman, hoping to make the next day's transatlantic mail run on the SS *Bremen*.

Over the next few weeks, Hamp anxiously awaits the reply, not knowing whether Chick will be offended, humbled, or annoyed.

Finally one frigid winter morning, the postman knocks on the door of his Breslau apartment. Hamp answers the door in his robe, and the courier hands him an envelope marked *Eilbote von Berlin* – an “urgent message” from Berlin. Disappointed that it is not a letter from Chick, he sets the telegram aside, thinking it is just another transfer letter, and gets dressed for the day. Finally he sits down for breakfast and opens the telegram, curious to find out where he might be heading next. It reads:

Advise Hampton Price fathers condition very serious Mother wishes him complete mission she is confident this would be desire of Father.
Heber J. Grant.

Hamp stands up so quickly in response to the shock that it knocks his chair to the floor. He begins to pace anxiously back and forth across the kitchen with his thoughts racing, trying to imagine what might be going on at that very moment half a world away. He feels horribly inadequate, helpless, and alone. With his mind still spinning, he has not even had a chance to fully let the news sink in when another knock comes at the door. It is another *Eilbote*. The telegram reads:

Hamp dearest words cannot express how sincerely sorry I am. My heart is with you in hours of sorrow. Be brave. Love Dorothy.

He immediately loses control of himself and collapses on the floor. Her words can only mean one thing, and it crushes Hamp's soul. He can hardly fathom the notion that the first word from Dot in six months turns out to be in the form of a cryptic obituary notice!

He finds himself caught between conflicting emotions; all of a sudden, the petty squabbles of romance seem insignificant. In a single instant he has become the man of the house – albeit a far-distant house – and the mantle descending onto his shoulders weighs him down against the cold floor. After a period of near-unconsciousness in a prolonged, prostrate position, he forces himself to sit up and huddles against the hearth, suddenly feeling an overwhelming sense of responsibility for his mother and his two little sisters still at home.

It already seems too much to bear by the time a third knock rattles the door; this time Hamp cannot stand

to answer. His companion, Elder Ross, greets the postman at the door to sign for the final Eilbote. Though Hamp tries to refuse accepting the reality of it all, the finality of the news comes crashing down on him as he reads President Grant's words confirming the worst:

Hampton Price's father died last night. Express sympathy – Grant.

The rest of the morning Hamp alternates between episodes of lying in bed shaking and pacing back and forth across the apartment like an invalid. Finally Elder Ross convinces him to go outside and walk it off. Hamp complies and goes about the remainder of the day in a daze. At last, when evening comes, he returns to the apartment to pour out his soul in his journal:

As I look back over the day's happenings and try to believe everything, it all seems like a dream or rather a nightmare. I just can't believe it and yet it is true. Just another of life's practical but awful jokes for which there is no explanation. When I read the wire, I felt like I had been hit with a sledgehammer. I left for town to walk my troubles away and unloaded my heart a bit. I found myself swept by a wave of momentary emotional sorrow and just had to let go. The day's happenings seem more and more like a dream. When I stop to think about it, I have to shake my head to see if it is still working. What a world of meaning in the few

words, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." I wonder what the future holds for me now?

He debates returning home himself to take care of matters but then comes back to his senses, knowing that he couldn't possibly arrive in time for the funeral.

For two long weeks he waits to hear the circumstances of Chick's death and any word of the funeral proceedings. Finally one evening, after returning from a priesthood meeting in which he had forced his way through the delivery of a talk, Hamp finds a letter from Mimi in the mailbox. He tears it open in the dim stairwell, nearly tripping as he tries to read it on his way up the creaking stairs.

In the letter, Mimi tells of how Chick went in for what should have been a routine surgery. Before the anesthesia took effect, Chick had reportedly turned to Mimi and said, "You know, I believe Hamp is right. I'm going to quit smoking and give Heber a heart attack by showing up in Church on Sunday."

Hamp stops dead in his tracks and has to put the letter down when he reads about the effect his call to repentance had had on Chick. He enters the frigid apartment and stares out the window, trying to come to terms with what he is reading. He winds up the phonograph to let the big band music drown out the wind whistling through the corridor while Elder Ross fires up the hearth. Finally he sits down at the table to finish reading the letter, including Mimi's detailed description of the funeral service – leaving Hamp feeling more alone

and isolated than ever before. Once again, he turns to his journal afterwards:

Upon reading her letter I cried like a baby. I don't know just why, but it certainly got me. Oh how I would like to have been there to the services! So many nice things were said about Dad. Everyone speaks so well of him. It seems very queer to read about him and then know he is already in the 'other world.' Sometimes I can't bring myself around to believing it. Each morning when I wake up, these happenings seem like a dream and I just about bring myself around to believing it has all been a dream. It is all a thing of the past, so unreal and yet I have to bite my lip and grit my teeth whenever I think about it.

He wonders aloud to Elder Ross whether Chick would have actually followed through on his deathbed repentance and quit smoking. He had felt so sorry for Gordon over the loss of his mother just a few short years ago, but now in his depressed delirium, Hamp begins to feel that Gordon had it easy; after all, Gordon could rest assured of his mother's place in the heavens. But in Chick's case... Hamp's thoughts begin to spiral out of control as he recalls being in the temple without his father's presence. Perhaps God would forgive the smoking, but had Chick knowingly and willingly turned his back on his own eternal family while the prophet himself was calling him to repentance right before his

eyes? Surely that warrants a strike from the swift sword of justice. Would God in His mercy overlook his faults and usher him through, or did the grim reaper just harvest himself another victim? Hamp's heart jumps wildly back and forth between these scenarios, longing for answers from above.

If only he could have faced his father directly just one last time – perhaps armed with the new-found doctrinal commitment he had acquired as a missionary he could have swayed him before it was too late. Hamp knew that he had procrastinated thousands of opportunities to confront his father in person before his mission; each chance now flashes into his mind and weighs him down with an unbearable burden. Why hadn't he at sent his rebuking letter earlier? In the midst of this guilt-ridden, depressive episode, his zealotness gets the better of him, and he begins to feel that Chick's death might mark an eternal chasm that will forever tear their family apart.

He vows silently to himself never to pick up a cigarette so that his own children would not have to bear such a burden as this. Chick's own father had died just before Hamp was born, and Hamp had always felt cheated not to have known his grandfather; Hamp lets the long-term implications of his fresh loss run wild through his mind, realizing that his own children would likewise never know their grandfather.

Meanwhile, the phonograph has slowed to a stop. He winds it up again and puts on one of his favorite tunes, the recent Bennie Krueger hit, *I don't know why*. The song's lyrics only widen the gaping hole in his heart

by reminding him of Dot, who had left him much more slowly than his father. That gradual loss now descends on him all at once, right on top of his mourning; the compounded, double impact seems too much to bear. While Elder Ross stamps tracts in the other room to keep busy and stay out of the way, Hamp feels entirely alone and abandoned.

As evening turns to night, however, the music crackling from the phonograph eventually begins to provide a bit of solace and companionship. Hamp continues with his journal entry, trying to extract something positive out of the situation by making himself another promise:

It seems funny and queer too that Dad is gone and I have lost his companionship. And too, it was just two years ago today that I bid him goodbye in Ogden. Life is queer at times. I used Dad's death in a short talk tonight and it certainly came near to flooring me. It was certainly hard to finish but I made it. I believe Dad would have been pleased with my work tonight. And here comes the question again – Why? I have been tempted a number of times to leave and give it all up, but Dad shall be proud of me or I'll die trying to erect a suitable monument to him.

Armed with this commitment, Hamp emerges from his depression over the ensuing weeks with a more positive perspective for his *Weltanschauung*. Though he

has committed himself to completing his mission and is on his way to clearing away the emotional obstacles related to Chick's death, other factors affecting his ability to make good on that commitment spin out of his control. The worldwide depression has continued with no sign of a recovery; the situation affects every missionary, but the financial implications are especially overwhelming to Hamp. With the source of his mission funds threatened, nothing seems certain. Chick had luckily carried enough clout with the railroad to avoid the layoffs that had affected so many others, but Hamp now wonders incessantly whether Mimi can continue to support his mission with the Union Pacific's pension.

Mimi's next letters are more logistical and less emotional than her report of the funeral; to Hamp, though, the business-oriented letters contain a measure of relief in quelling his nagging uncertainty. Hamp discovers that during his absence, Chick had been hosting dignitaries from around the country – including famous explorers and aviators – through his role as a civic club leader. As it turned out, the circle of friends he had gained through these efforts repaid him handsomely after his death by donating to a trust fund in his behalf. Mimi and her lawyer had been sorting through the logistics for several weeks; the outcome, she was pleased to report in her letter to Hamp, was that they would be able to cough up just enough to see his mission through – but at the expense of the plan to meet him in Berlin.

Hamp is certainly relieved to hear that his mission is not in jeopardy, but at the same time he is quite disappointed to hear that Mimi and Margaret will have to

forego their dream of traveling to Europe. He had assumed that his own plans for post-mission travels would likewise have to be nixed – until he finds a second letter in the envelope. It is a note from Margaret letting him know that she will contribute what remains in her savings account toward his travels. She doesn't have enough to get herself a transatlantic passage, but she hopes it will at least allow Hamp to see the parts of Europe that lie outside his mission boundaries. "Just be sure to take some pictures for me," her letter reads.

Hamp is humbled; he knows how hard Margaret has been working to save extra money for her trip. He will have to shrink his planned circle around Europe to fit the reduced budget, but he starts making detailed plans that will stretch Margaret's funds to take him as far as he can possibly go.

Slowly and steadily over the next few months, Hamp again becomes overwhelmed with his work and loses himself in it. Though thoughts of his father often spring back into his mind unannounced, the emotions gradually subside, and life returns to the prescribed routines of missionary life. News from back home eventually begins to focus less on Chick's death and more on everyday life.

Hamp is excited one day in particular to get a letter from Homer. He rips open the letter and is happy to hear that Homer and Gordon have finished their schooling at the U. That in itself is a feat; the same depression-era economy that has made it arduous to finance a three-year mission is making a university education equally difficult to finance. Even rarer in these

days is the young man who manages to do both. While many university students have been dropping out of school to pursue a meager income through menial labor, Homer and Gordon had persevered with their fortitude and frugality, allowing them to turn in their mission applications as fresh university graduates. Hamp is further thrilled to read that they received their calls at the same time to the same mission: their destination is England, where Rulon is currently serving.

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In a dingy apartment overlooking the Liverpool docks, Rulon is also delighted to hear about their mission calls, but his mood is soon swayed by the arrival of a package from Leo. Her enclosed letter bears news of a death that absolutely devastates him; though it is a merely a figurative death, it has hit Rulon as hard as any real obituary.

"L.D.S. High is now a thing of the past," Leo's letter reads. "We were hoping against hope until the last minute that a donor would step forward but to no avail. It sure made for a gloomy mood on campus these last few weeks."

As her letter chronicles, the Church Board of Education had held an emergency meeting to decide the fate of the school. The Church had already withdrawn its financial support from most of its other schools in the wake of the depression, but many Church officials held the gem of the L.D.S. in special regard, resulting in particularly heated discussions about whether to prioritize the dwindling tithing funds in its favor.

According to the official meeting minutes, Brother David O. McKay and other allies had put up “a vigorous fight” for the preservation of the school, but by the end of the meeting, Commissioner Merrill, President Grant, and other board members had gained the necessary majority to end the discussion. The matter was closed, the paperwork was signed, and the L.D.S. ultimately fell victim to the budget’s guillotine. Trained in shorthand at the very school they were closing, Leo simply couldn’t believe what she was recording in her meticulous meeting minutes.

With the doors closing, she reported to Rulon in her letter, graduation had been a somber ceremony indeed; the school song was a requiem, the processional march a dirge.

Though he is generally stoical by nature, Rulon is visibly saddened at Leo’s account of the graduation ceremonies. His sadness, however, quickly turns to vexation; he wrinkles up her letter, then smooths and flattens it out to read it again, wishing beyond hope that it weren’t true.

The accompanying package also contains a copy of the 1931 L.D.S. High yearbook – the final edition capping nearly a half-century of annuals. As he thumbs through the pages of the “*S*” *Book*, the full burden of the institution’s financial failure lands on Rulon’s shoulders like a load of bricks. He had taken the school’s fiscal well-being as his own responsibility; likewise, he now considers its failure his own shortcoming.

The last page of the yearbook, like an epitaph for the institution, shows a full-page image of the Salt Lake

Temple – viewed from the L.D.S. campus commons – with the following, indelible caption:

As, at the close of the day, the deepening shadows hover over the Temple and settle into night, so do the past 45 years of glorious achievement come to an end.

He closes the back cover in frustration and pushes the book away from himself for added distance, but his chair keeps him captive, and he can’t help staring at it from across the table. He wishes he could walk the campus one last time the way he remembered it: alive with its student body; didn’t the campus belong to them, after all? Instead he now pictures a ghost town in the temple’s shadow, perhaps vulnerable to a wrecking ball even before his return. Will it take on another form? Will there be a return to its former glory with all of the familiar traditions? Or will it just fade into the past to be forgotten by future generations who wander around whatever institution might replace it without any inkling that there had once been a celebrated campus under their feet?

With that prescient thought in mind, he can’t imagine how he will ever face up to the failure by setting foot again in Utah. He had trusted in the Lord that all would be well in his absence. Now he doubts his original decision; perhaps he should have stayed home to help keep the school afloat. But it is too late; not even his financial wizardry can save the institution now. He places

the book on end and stares at it from across the table; it looks disturbingly like a tombstone for the school.

“Rest in peace,” he says to himself. Though he would rather fling the book out the window, he packs it away and decides instead to channel his energy into his study and his missionary efforts. He begins to attack each day with an increased fervor, but he finds that his attitude toward the work has changed fundamentally.

As the weeks disintegrate into the past, burning Leo’s hard-earned cash in the process, his approach to proselyting becomes argumentative, nearing on combative. He feels like a man with no fear; realizing he has nothing to lose, he brazenly goes about contacting priests, pastors, ministers, theologians, scholars, politicians, and anyone else who will grant him an audience.

This new application of his gifted mind and memory enables him to recite endless scriptural references verbatim without ever having to open his books. He keeps up the press until his opponents either concede defeat or merely cannot summon the effort to continue the fight. Encouraged by these perceived victories, he feels more empowered every day. He finds this encouragement liberating enough to motivate him to stand up – literally on his soap box – in the market place to try and rouse the masses with his street preaching. Like his mentor George Romney, he thrives on the opportunity to engage unsuspecting passersby in lively debates in the public forum.

Rulon keeps meticulous records of his achievements. His reports catch the eye of his mission

president in London, the Apostle John A. Widtsoe, who promptly calls him as an assistant. Rulon’s financial skills quickly earn him the role of mission treasurer, following in the footsteps of Elder George Romney and others who had received their training in L.D.S. High’s economics classes. Rulon still manages to break away from his office duties as often as possible, carting his soap box to Hyde Park to engage in rhetorical arguments about any doctrinal point that might precipitate an opponent from among the crowd.

As time goes on, though, he finds that the arguments are becoming easier to win – not necessarily because of his increasing prowess, but rather due to a paradigm shift among the people. Even among the clergy, attention is quickly shifting toward politics, and the finer points of religious doctrine become less relevant in the public eye. As Rulon goes about his debates, holding firmly to his views on the trinity, priesthood authority, infant baptism, resurrection, and other topics, he finds that the only resurrection people want to debate is that of the German war machine.

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Hamp continues his ministry in Germany, observing completely ordinary sights destined to be catalysts for the cataclysmic events of the near future. He serves in the major metropolitan cities in the expansive German state of Silesia as well as in the surrounding countryside, where he has the opportunity to visit counts in the castles, farmers in their fields, and pastors in their parishes.

In one Silesian village, he even meets members of the von Richthofen family – relatives of the Red Baron himself – who continue to honor their fallen, local hero despite his Jewish ancestry. Still under the illusion that their nobility will save them from the rising storm, they fail to recognize that their feudal titles are part of a dying caste system.

The missionaries are generally well received among the locals, many of whom take them for cowboys from the *Wild West*. Romantic as it seems to the missionaries to see peasants tilling the crops around fairytale castles, even the foreign visitors recognize that the new Nazi banners flying from the turrets represent a viral system that simply cannot coexist with the status quo.

One hot afternoon in the summer of 1932, Hamp and his companion visit the border town of Gleiwitz, where, according to the church records, a single church member supposedly resides. They wander through the market place and finally locate the address, then try in vain to convince the elderly lady who answers the door to make the two-hour rail journey each Sunday into the nearest branch in Breslau; she politely declines but quickly softens their hearts by inviting them in for a hearty Silesian lunch.

After the meal, they move to the *Stube* – her sitting room – and the discussion turns to lighter topics. Hamp points to an accordion in the corner.

“Can you play us something?” he asks.

“Oh, I don’t play much anymore,” she remarks, “at least not since I got my new radio.”

“That’s too bad,” Hamp says, “I’ve always wanted to learn an instrument myself.”

“Well if you want to start with the accordion,” she says, “you can take it with you for the trouble of wasting your whole day trying to rescue a hopeless old woman.”

“Are you sure?” asks Hamp, thinking about how proud Mimi would be if he were to surprise her by coming home as a trained musician.

“Quite sure,” she says, turning on the radio, “I get all the music I need by turning just one knob – why bother with all of those buttons on the accordion?”

Hamp picks up the accordion and starts pressing some of its buttons.

“Besides, they’re now building the radio tower even higher,” she remarks, “They’re calling it the *Silesian Eiffel Tower*. Just imagine that – the tallest wooden structure on the planet, right here in little old Gleiwitz!” She points out the window, and the missionaries spot the tower on the hillside.

The simple structure looks harmless enough with its countryside backdrop; the soothing Silesian music it emits – with its blend of Slavic and Prussian influences – is entrancing but equally benign. No one could have imagined at that point in history that the very same radio transmitter would in just a few short years broadcast the ludicrously false report that the Poles had attacked Germany’s borders, “justifying” the first shots of World War II – a conflict that would ultimately bury almost 100 million victims and, in the process, erase every trace of Silesia from the map of Europe.

“Well I do appreciate it very much,” Hamp says, squeezing the accordion and emitting some truly awful notes in the process.

The old woman laughs and turns up the radio’s dial. “We’ll need that stronger signal to drown out your playing!”

“Well I promise to practice until I’ve mastered the instrument,” Hamp says with his right arm raised.

The missionaries leave the humble home with a prayer and make their way back to their apartment, with Hamp schlepping along his new accordion. Along the way, they pass through the tiny Silesian village of Leobschütz, where a young Jewish girl named Stefanie Zweig plays with her Gentile friend Dietlinda Geissinger outside the synagogue. Hamp will one day cross paths with them again in an unrecognizable world turned entirely upside down.

For now, however, Silesia sleeps in an idyllic slumber, and the populace is yet unaware of the calamity about to descend on them. Border-region farmers bring their goods to market while the Gleiwitz radio tower broadcasts barely believable stories about the Germans’ peaceful intentions and camaraderie with the Poles. Just across the border in a rural village outside of Krakow, a pensive 13-year-old named Karol – destined to be the Venerable John Paul II – questions the propaganda spewing from Gleiwitz. He watches with disgust as the people are lulled into complacency while the intolerance rises all around them, fearing what the future might hold for his native Poland.

After learning to love the Silesian setting and finally feeling at home there, Hamp is transferred to Rathenow, just outside of Berlin. “Not such a hot city, but it will pass with a shove,” he disappointedly records in his journal that night. For the first time, he is paired with a native German companion, Herbert Schreiter. They are an odd match from the beginning – “Herbie” being the shortest and Hamp the tallest of all the Mormon missionaries in Germany at the time. Although they draw laughs walking down the street together, this ridiculously mismatched pair – despite their contrasting backgrounds – share between them a unique ideology. They quickly become not just assigned companions but pals as well.

Hamp’s proficiency in German certainly receives a boost from the pairing; it is one thing to meet with German people over lunch and recite talks from a sacrament meeting podium. But to spend every waking hour with a native German is an entirely different matter, and Hamp thrives on the experience. Through their relationship, Hamp also begins to appreciate and love the German people even more. When they speak of the past, the American high school experience – epitomized by Hamp’s involvement in social clubs, sports, dances, and other activities at L.D.S. High – is completely foreign to Herbie.

Herbie teaches Hamp a few tunes on the accordion, much to the dismay of their neighbors. Hamp, in kind, tries to show Herbie and the members of the Rathenow branch how to play football, basketball, baseball and other American sports. Despite his stature,

Hamp is a bit awkward at sports and doesn't manage to fool the Germans by posing as an expert.

They often discuss the changing political scene and wonder whether they might someday face each other on the battlefield. It is a terrible but real prospect – foreshadowed by the increasingly growing rift between the German and U.S. politicians.

They still hope for the best, but the words of their ecclesiastical leaders give an equally bleak outlook. In a 1932 General Conference address that reaches the elders in print a few weeks later, Hugh B. Brown sounds an alarm that leaves his wife Zola wondering whether the blessing Rulon received in her home will, in fact, come to fruition, or whether the raging cloud will swallow the missionaries whole. Citing letters from Elder Widtsoe, who is witnessing the building conflict first-hand as a mission president in England, he entitles his talk with an Old Testament quote: “Blow ye the trumpet...sound an alarm...let all the inhabitants of the land tremble.” In his address, he quotes further from Joel:

A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

It is certainly a hopeless message, but some of those listening to his admonition think he surely must be

exaggerating the European conditions. Continuing his address, he says:

The complicated problems and haunting uncertainties which loom ahead in 1932 cause stout hearts to quake and quail. Dr. Widtsoe, writing from Europe in April of this year, said: ‘The distress that covers these European lands has never been more serious in written history. There will have to be some tremendous readjustments before peace and prosperity will rule these lands again. No one in Europe, holding responsible office, is blind to the fact that the whole continent is sinking into an almost indescribable state of economic and financial prostration.’

Though alarm bells are sounding with these prophetic words, in general, the chaotic political scene is confined to newspapers and radio broadcasts. Meanwhile, missionaries in Germany continue to eat in Jewish restaurants and buy clothing from Jewish department stores.

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In the midst of this tumult in Germany, Homer and Gordon board the SS *Manhattan* and make their way to England. They devote themselves whole-heartedly to their ministry but do not initially see much success springing from their toils. In his proselyting, Gordon has no trouble expressing his convictions – he is as bold as ever – but he begins to question whether he is making any

difference at all. The fruits of his labor are nowhere to be seen; he wonders whether his time – and his university degree – might have been put to better use in earning money to supplement the family finances rather than drawing from the already near-empty coffers. Frustrated with the seemingly insignificant results of his efforts, Gordon writes to his father, Bryant, expressing some thoughts about the futility of the work.

Famously told by Bryant to “forget yourself and get to work,” he dives head-first back into his efforts, drawing a second wind from thoughts of his eldest brother, whose desire to serve his country had robbed him of the chance to serve a mission. Gordon considers his promise to visit Sanford’s graveside before returning home. How can he stand at that cross if he willingly gives up his own fight here? It is unthinkable; with that renowned resolution, he takes up his own cross and takes on a new attitude that is contagious to his companions as well.

While ministers wage war against them in the press, Gordon, Homer, and a handful of other young missionaries try to replicate the miraculous, mass conversions that had transpired on the same soil a few generations before. Borrowing Rulon’s soap box, they begin – at first a bit timidly and then rather boldly – to electrify and agitate the crowds with their street preaching in Hyde Park.

Homer and Gordon also serve in Liverpool, where they try to out-shout the fish vendors at the market. They begin knocking doors in the back alleys and, in the process, witness the seedier sides of Britannic life. The

fairs, the freak-shows, and the pubs add to a clamorous atmosphere that makes Salt Lake City seem exceptionally dormant. Homer finds the raw music that emanates from every street corner to be quite invigorating; it contrasts with his classical training but seems honestly expressive. Rulon had heard the same music and was sickened by the environment from which it sprang, spawning thoughts that – once encapsulated by Liverpool’s famous *Fab Four* – would someday prompt him to preach racist ideas about the origins of the evil back-beat.

As was the case with Rulon, both Homer’s and Gordon’s organizational skills are noted by the mission leadership. Owing much to the knowledge and skills they had acquired at the L.D.S., they are soon sent back to headquarters to help the maestro conduct his orchestra from the pit. It is a daunting task that includes consolidating and organizing remnants of previous mission headquarters in Preston, Liverpool, and Birmingham. With these efforts underway, they then embark on a public relations campaign intended to give the Church a voice in the press.

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Across the channel in the Kaiser’s dwindling realm, Hamp is wrapping up his mission in the capital city of Berlin. The purported *Thousand-Year-Empire* is yet in its infancy, and the streets of Berlin are full of people who are hysterically enthused to be participants in the historic events. Dozens of political parties vie violently for the upper hand, and political placards are posted on every imaginable surface. In the excitement of

the race, many contestants unwittingly trample each other underfoot.

The debauchery and decadence that had defined Berlin during the Roaring Twenties never really disappeared during the Great Depression but merely moved underground. Now that the new economy is booming, these forces have reappeared, competing with the nationalistic interests for their part in the cityscape.

Hamp and his companions take in one show in particular – a show that would have been innocent enough back home, but which has added elements that surprise the missionaries, prompting them to walk out and commit to avoiding the venue in the future. The real-life stories that would inspire *Cabaret* and other period pieces are being written all around them. Along its seedy streets, Berlin's night clubs are now blatantly promoting promiscuity, homosexuality, and prostitution.

Recognizing that right-wing religious zealots – even those not politically aligned with the Nazis – will welcome cleaner streets, the Nazis immediately take action, rounding up the sinners and closing the clubs. In doing so, they receive tacit support from the churches and manage to hijack the issues for their own, much more deeply disturbing, purposes. The bloodied and beaten club owners, patrons, and performers await an unknown fate in newfangled concentration camps whose ultimate purpose has not yet been revealed.

In the meantime, LDS Church members are caught in the confusion along with the rest of the Christian churches. Sure the Nazis might catch a few Jews in their dragnets during the roundups, they argue,

but at least they are ridding the streets of homosexuals and prostitutes in the process. Glad to see those elements routed from the streets, and in accordance with their articles of faith, Church members in Berlin justify remaining subject to their new rulers even after the Nazis rise to power. Armed with further propaganda proclaiming that the Nazi Party had single-handedly ended the Great Depression, LDS proponents of compliance make a formidable case against those who favor opposition.

A young LDS Boy Scout named Helmuth Hübener is caught in the middle of these conflicting loyalties. His eventual excommunication, execution, and exoneration would define the dichotomy of the day so consummately that authors, screenwriters, and Hollywood producers would take note for decades to come – casting Haley Joel Osment in his role almost 75 years later.

While native German Church members are forced to choose sides, the foreign missionaries go about their work, oblivious to the political maneuverings. In fact, the day of Hitler's *Machtergreifung* – his infamous power seizure – the official mission history relates only a “childish” squabble between branch members that requires the intervention of the mission president.

On occasion, missionary tracts are confiscated, and a few beatings are reported here and there. The mission office files one complaint to the authorities that two elders were beaten by a Nazi thug using his belt buckle. The perpetrator is reprimanded and the elders receive an apology.

As the notorious scenes associated with Hitler's consolidation of power – including the Jewish boycott, the Reichstag fire, and the book burnings – unfold around them, the missionaries focus their efforts on trying to keep the branches running. Hamp snaps a few photos out of mere curiosity but doesn't bother noting much about the political strife in his journal – that is, until one particular morning, he and a handful of other missionaries go to their favorite restaurant for breakfast and find the entrance blocked.

Peering over the gathering crowd, Hamp can make out the word *Juden* and a large Star of David that have been painted on the window. The residents seem genuinely infuriated; rather than combating the racism and injustice, however, the city's populace appeals to the city officials out of mere annoyance for having to change restaurant venues. It is not much of a backlash, but the Jewish stores eventually reopen in response to the public reaction, and the residents – including the missionaries – take this as a sign that their voices are being heard. Unwittingly, they then sit back while the dark forces behind the initial boycotts gather increasing strength behind the scenes.

Confident that the turmoil will pass, President Budge keeps his eye on the Church's future growth. He sends missionaries as scouts to Poland, to the Baltic States, and to the Balkan Peninsula. His scouts are dispatched to the outer grasp of the scattered Soviet republics to return and report on any prospects for the Church in each respective area. They use the East Prussian island enclaves of Danzig and Königsberg as

their operating bases on the eastern frontier and venture into areas yet to be dedicated by Church leadership for the preaching of the gospel.

Just a few hundred miles away from mission headquarters, millions of Ukrainians are starving in the *Holodomor*, prompting uprisings that are being brutally suppressed; those who survive have to resort to thievery and cannibalism. The accounts are denied in the state-run press, but the missionaries see the first-hand horror for themselves. After reading the reports of his scouts, detailing the truly appalling conditions just to their east, President Budge considers Stalin to be a greater threat to humanity than Hitler. He decides that the time is not right to begin harvesting the scattered tribes from beyond the mission borders and refocuses his efforts on strengthening the German stakes.

Meanwhile, as Hamp and his companions dine at the reopened restaurants and read the daily newspaper coverage of Soviet purges, pogroms, and manmade famines, they find the German government propaganda machine proclaiming that a similar fate will strike Germany if the communists get their way. The Nazis promise that they are the only alternative to this decline into barbarity. Those who wish to believe the message do what they feel they need to do and justify one small decision after each increasingly larger step – ultimately ending up as complicit partners, entwined in an ideology that would have rattled their collective conscience had they taken a few steps back along this course.

As he finishes his mission, Hamp is not worried in the least about the political scene. He is entirely confident

that the lessons learned in the Great War will manage to prevent its sequel. Ever since that horrible conflict, graffiti messages all over Germany proclaim *Krieg nie wieder* – “to war no more.” To Hamp it seems to be such an obvious, prevalent wish; the carnage of millions of war dead less than a generation before embodies mistakes that a civilized society couldn’t possibly repeat. While some are alarmed at the pace of the growing air force and other German military buildups, Hamp feels that this new arms race will at least keep the world powers in check; he can’t begin to fathom the hard reality that other, more skeptical sources are now beginning to recognize.

In this spirit, Hamp travels to Berlin for a mission conference. It is June 26, 1933; his time has expired, and he sits down with President Budge for an exit interview at the conclusion of the conference. Almost three years before he had sat across the desk from President Budge in a similar scene, but at that time he had been utterly overwhelmed – illiterate and as incontinent as a toddler. This time – with thousands of new relationships and a complete mastery of the language under his belt – he gives a contemplative, comprehensive review of his mission. President Budge asks pointed questions about Hamp’s individual accomplishments, prompting memories of the many souls he had touched and those who had likewise touched him.

While these memories are sweet, there is yet an air of disappointment. Hamp had grown up hearing stories about missionaries converting droves of Europeans – whole villages in fact. As President Budge cites a few statistics related to his service, it is hard for

Hamp to swallow the actual, dismal results as presented numerically. Granted, there have been a few individual conversions, but Hamp feels a bit disheartened when he thinks of branches like Naumburg – where he had devoted so many months of his life – that are now closed. Things certainly hadn’t gone the way he would have imagined.

Much as he hates to lower his expectations, though, with President Budge’s help he begins to focus on his personal growth and is actually quite pleased with the accomplishments in the end. He has become sharply organized and an effective leader and administrator. More importantly, he has gained many interpersonal skills that will help him form and keep countless more relationships in the future. To top it off, his dedication to the gospel is incomparably stronger than it had been just a few short years before. In the meantime, he has learned to love the people, the language, and the culture of Germany. Sensing a deeper purpose in his original mission call, he finally sheds any air of disappointment that he hadn’t been called to England with his other friends.

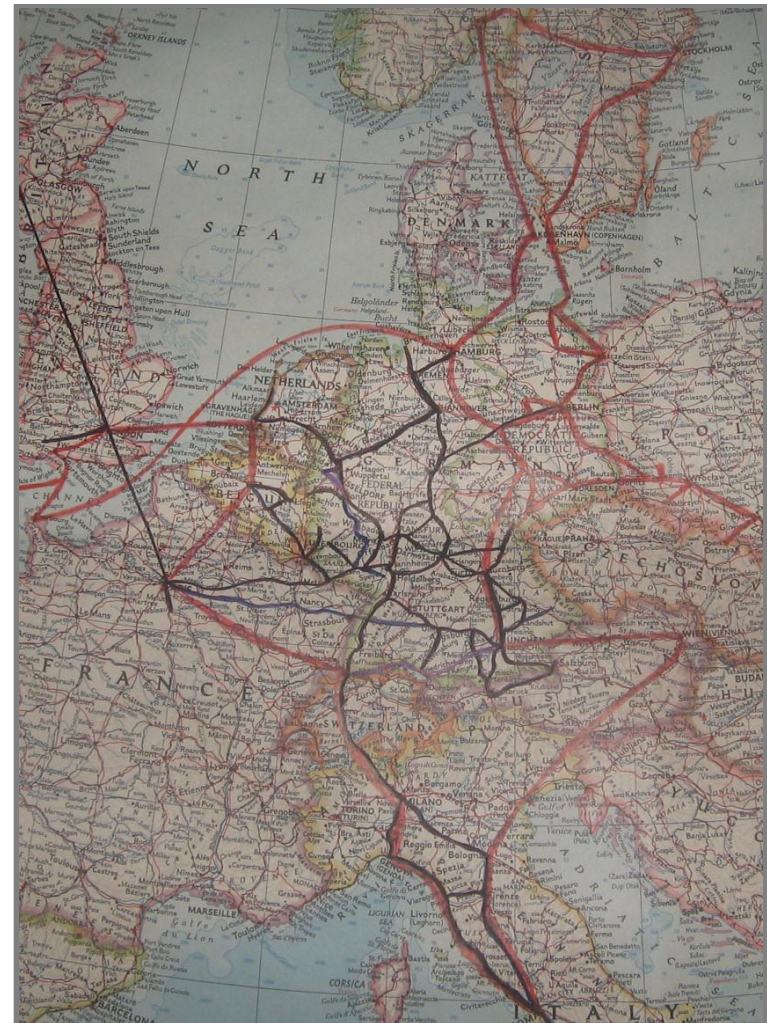
Just as he begins to feel better, though, his heart sinks again. “If only I could have taken this testimony back to my father,” he says glumly.

“Cast those thoughts far from you, dear Elder,” President Budge says with a consoling tone, “We all have to grow up one time or another. You just had to do it more quickly than most. Like Paul of old, you came here a boy, but you leave a man.”

After a handshake and a heartfelt hug, Hamp feels elated. He leaves the office and closes the door behind

him – a civilian once again. With two hundred dollars in the bank and sixty days before his ship sails, a world that stands full of promise but teetering on the brink of chaos is at his feet. Wherever it might lead humanity in the long run, he intends to see it all for himself in the meantime.

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Following in his footsteps:  
Hamp's Mission and Post-Mission Travels (in red)

## Chapter 13: Travelogue

It is practically obligatory for missionaries of the day to take a tour of the continent after completing a European mission. The Canadian missionary Heber J. Matkin – one of the last married missionaries to be called away from his family to serve a full-time mission – hadn't seen his wife in over two years; yet he still took a 30-day trip to visit Rome, Berlin, Prague, and other European capitals when he completed his service in 1927. Going straight home from a European mission is almost unheard of.

Rulon has been dreaming of his own European tour ever since he was robbed of the prize in the national high school speech competition, purportedly thanks to his father's polygamous ideas. Much to the annoyance of his missionary companions, he has lived a miser's life for almost three years, drawing out his and Leo's hard-earned funds in part to justify the post-mission trip. The former Church president, John Taylor, had famously embarked on his first mission with just a penny in his pocket; with that legacy in mind, Rulon feels that he should surely be able to save a few dollars along the way. As he eats meager meals and refuses to split grocery bills, he constantly reminds his companions of the early missionaries who served "without purse or script." Behind his back, they change his nickname from *the money man* to *no money, man*.

As his missionary service nears its completion, Rulon counts up his savings again and again. He feels the excitement of the pending voyage and constantly thinks



Missionary with pro- and anti-Nazi political posters and Nazi flags outside Hamp's missionary apartment



Four missionaries outside the London office [with the aid of two steps, Homer and Hamp are the same height]

of new ways to maximize his mileage by stretching the funds as far as humanly possible. His zealous ambitions to convert entire towns begin to fade in favor of dreams that transport him through ports and train stations across Europe and into the unique architecture of each city.

Just a few weeks before Rulon's release from service, he is called into the mission president's office for an interview. Elder Widtsoe has been presiding over the British Mission while serving double duty coordinating all of the European missions. The task is obviously overwhelming, and he is on the verge of overworking himself into a breakdown. Rulon himself had noticed the problem and had helped him draft a request to Salt Lake to reorganize the missions.

"Good news or bad news?" Elder Widtsoe asks Rulon, who stares back at him with a curious expression.

"Why don't you butter me up with the good news first," Rulon answers.

"Well, the good news is that our request to reorganize the missions has been granted. There will henceforth be separate British and European missions."

"And the bad news?"

"Well, the bad news is that the necessary manpower to coordinate the effort will lag behind. It seems that not many have the financial backing to..."

"So..." Rulon interrupts, wishing Elder Widtsoe would just spit it out.

"So we'll need to rely on our internal resources for the time being," Elder Widtsoe continues in a dance around the topic.

Rulon furls his brow. He still isn't clear what is being asked of him.

Elder Widtsoe sighs deeply and leans forward in his chair, carefully crafting the crux of the conversation. "How would you feel about extending your mission by a few months?" he asks.

Rulon shifts nervously in his seat. Postponing the travels he is so much looking forward to will require quite a sacrifice.

"I have a hundred and fifty dollars in a personal account in the bank," Elder Widtsoe offered, "That should be more than enough to cover your expenses for an additional three months."

Rulon thinks long and hard and finally consents. "Well, I guess if that's what the Lord expects of me, I can answer the call."

"I'm glad to see this attitude from you. I'm sure the Lord will bless you materially so that you can repay me as soon as possible on your return."

"Repay you?" Rulon blurts, trying not to shout, "You mean to say it's just a loan?"

"Like I said, I'm certain the Lord will..."

"You don't understand. I have no intention of going into debt. To anyone. Ever!" Rulon begins to absorb the little tidbit of information that is effectively crushing his dream as they speak. Financing the extension on his own would take every penny he has saved and more. He realizes in that moment that the question is not one of postponing his dream; the dream is being eliminated in its entirety.

Elder Widtsoe scoots back in his chair to add some distance to the tirade he sees coming.

“It’s easy for you to ask for this – you got to travel the world as a student and as a missionary at the same time,” Rulon counters, raising his voice, “but I spent my time stuck inside this office!”

Elder Widtsoe stands up and closes the door to dim the noise, trying to bring Rulon back to serenity with a calming compliment. “You are a brilliant, exceptional missionary,” Elder Widtsoe says, “Where much is given, much is required.”

Rulon takes a deep breath and is just beginning to calm down a bit when he received another jolt.

“Besides,” Elder Widtsoe adds, “Joseph Merrill will be arriving shortly to supervise this office; he is a distinguished educator and I’m sure you will be able to learn a great deal from him.”

He doesn’t realize the force of the impact with which this revelation hits Rulon. As Commissioner of Church Education, Elder Merrill had recommended and personally supervised over the closing of L.D.S. High. Rulon continues to resent him for giving up on his alma mater, and the idea of a close personal association with him is certainly not appealing.

“I’ve served my time; I’ve already paid my dues!” Rulon says flatly.

Disappointed that he hasn’t been able to console Rulon, Elder Widtsoe resorts to the last arrow in his quiver. “You have made a covenant that obligates you to this service,” he says sternly, “So remember, this is a decision you have already made. You have consecrated

*all* of your efforts and increase to the Lord. With this request, he intends to collect on just a small part of that promise...unless, of course, you plan to retract your word to the Lord.”

Rulon stirs uncomfortably in his seat. “Well that’s a low blow,” he says under his breath.

“Bear in mind that this is not the military,” Elder Widtsoe reminds him, “I have no earthly authority to compel you into conscription. You do still have a choice.”

“Some choice!” says Rulon.

“But if you do not heed this call,” Elder Widtsoe warns, “I am convinced that He will stop calling.” He closes his notebook like the deal is done.

Rulon is stunned by the blunt warning and finds himself unable to answer.

“Go to your flat and pray about it,” Elder Widtsoe advises, “and come back to me with your answer tomorrow.”

It is a sleepless night for Rulon. The next morning, he raises the issue with his companion, Elder Tolman; at first he approaches the topic cautiously, but then he begins to bluntly question whether Elder Widtsoe is even suited to run a mission. Elder Tolman quickly expresses concerns that Rulon might be *going astray*. Rulon argues back that those in supposed authority might themselves be going astray, taking true followers of the gospel even further from the historical message of the Restoration. The startled look on Elder Tolman’s face convinces Rulon to keep further thoughts to himself.

Can't the Church coffers fund another missionary to take his place, he wonders. He thinks about sending a telegram to President Grant to find out. But he knows full well that the Church is in dire financial straits; in fact, President Grant is busy at that very moment trying to convince doubtful Utahans that Zion's Bank will not fail. He also knows that Salt Lake is requiring individual church units abroad to be self-sufficient for the time being; those that aren't able to stand on their own are sacrificed to avoid pulling the others down. Hamp had written to Rulon about Naumburg and other areas that were closing; it is obvious that tough choices are being made everywhere. No central bailout from Salt Lake will be coming; that much is clear. Out of options, Rulon feels trapped.

The next morning, he walks into Elder Widtsoe's office and consents to the deal. He acts out of duty, but the damage is done; though he gives the gift, it is given begrudgingly. When he receives travel postcards from his fellow missionaries over the ensuing months, he feels the sting even deeper. The resentment simmers inside of him as he stares at images of other elders in front of the Eiffel Tower, the Brandenburg Gate, and the Vatican. Doesn't he deserve the same reward for his services?

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Meanwhile, fresh from his exit interview with President Budge, Hamp prepares for his own trip. With a few hours before his train departs, he takes his last chance to mingle with his missionary friends who had attended the mission conference in Berlin. Herbie, for one, simply can't imagine having the funds and freedom to travel, but

he excitedly pores over Hamp's maps with him. With German Reichsmarks outperforming the greenback, Hamp reworks his highly detailed travel budget, hoping the updated exchange rate will help stretch his converted funds even further. He traces countless paths around Europe on his worn-out map, each with an accompanying price tag that – despite the favorable exchange rate – is still too high; something will have to give.

For years, the crux of his planned trip has been the Boy Scout World Jamboree in Budapest. Thousands of his fellow scouts are flooding the continent to attend the festivities, and the stars have aligned to place the Jamboree right in the middle of Hamp's itinerary. It is a gathering of nations, intended to solidify friendships between Scouts from around the world.

Hitler himself has taken note of the occasion; he responds by sending German Scouts to Hungary as his eyes and ears. He intends to use their feedback to refine his own, carefully crafted youth program. Rudyard Kipling, who had inspired much of the Boy Scout symbolism, has recently been forced to stop using the swastika in his correspondence after finding the symbol abducted by the Nazis. He is about to find his other imagery hijacked in an incomprehensible manner as Hitler discovers the Boy Scouts' methods to be quite effective – despite the underlying ideological differences – in getting youth motivated, united, and excited about a cause.

Hamp is not overly concerned about the political overtones surrounding the occasion; surely the brotherhood encapsulated in this gathering will combat

and utterly defeat any animosity. Attending the Jamboree really represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for an Eagle Scout like Hamp. Having finally heeded President Grant's call after high school by joining the scouts, Hamp had even promised President Grant that he would bring him back a souvenir patch from the event when he returns to report on his mission.

He tries every possible scenario in his ledger book, but it just doesn't fit within the budget and schedule. It will add too much time and cost to his trip; he can take a tour of Europe, or he can attend the Jamboree, but he cannot do both. After wavering over the decision, he finally decides to strike the Jamboree from his itinerary. Missed opportunities have always been a hard swallow for him, and he second guesses his decision over and over, trying to work out a scenario that will allow him to fit everything back in. He even debates getting a job for a week or two to finance his adventure. His accordion skills are nowhere near good enough for busking, but that thought crosses his mind as well.

"Maybe they'll pay you to stop playing," Herbie jokes when he brings up the idea.

"Someday when I'm rich," Hamp mutters, "I'll kick myself for having scrapped this chance for lack of funds."

With the eastern leg eliminated, he still needs any money he can scrounge together to complete his circle around Western Europe. As his map receives its final draft, he decides to sell the accordion along with his typewriter in order to keep a leg in Italy's boot.

Hamp takes his suitcases and camera in hand while Herbie and the other missionaries carry his typewriter and accordion. They hit the pawn shop on the way to the train station, but Hamp only gets a few marks in exchange for his items; it is a painful parting since he had so much been looking forward to showing Mimi that he had learned to play an instrument.

The entourage heads to Anhalter Bahnhof to bid farewell to Hamp. He will see his American companions soon enough in the *Crossroads of the West*, but Hamp has mixed emotions at the farewell, not knowing when he might see Herbie and his other German friends again.

"Well, perhaps you can come right back for the Games," Herbie says as they wait for the slow-moving train to pull into the station, "I hear Hitler is looking among the Americans missionaries for someone to coach his Olympic basketball team."

"Maybe I'll apply for the job," Hamp jokes, "but three years is nowhere near long enough to train the German team. Your *Korbball* hoops don't even have backboards! You might as well try to train the chimps in the Tiergarten."

"Well, even though you can't play *Korbball* worth beans," Herbie says in jest, "maybe you'll fool him with your height when you come back to take the job."

The jokes are intended as distractions, and the conversation soon turns to more serious topics. They have felt the winds of war blowing their way and wonder if their next meeting might be on the battlefield.

"If our countries go to war," Hamp asks, "they might make you shoot at me."

“Not a chance, my friend,” Herbie says sincerely, “If they tried to force me to fight you, I’d rather take a bullet from my own side.”

The others in the small group nod, not realizing how serious a pact this will turn out to be.

“I feel the same way,” Hamp says as the train’s whistle blows. They shake hands and part ways with genuine embraces – little can they imagine this will mark the last time they ever meet in person.

“Bis aufs Wiedersehen, meine Freunde,” Hamp calls from the train’s window as it pulls away. Three years before, that had been the only German phrase he knew; a lifetime seems to have elapsed in the meantime. His companions wave from the platform until the train disappears from sight. As he opens the cover of his travel journal and begins his first entry, all of history seems poised in the blocks, awaiting a starting gun for an uncharted race. The fate of Western civilization itself is at stake, and Hamp readies his pen and camera to capture every scene along the way.

First on his itinerary is Scandinavia. The train arrives on the Baltic Sea Coast, and Hamp boards a ferry for Sweden. After docking in Stockholm, he takes in the sights of the city via a jarring street car ride and notes the “young street car conductors, left-handed traffic, blue-eyed people, and wonderful meals,” in his journal. He takes a boat trip to the National Museum and to the little island with the King’s summer residence. From Stockholm he takes a scenic train ride to Oslo and is stunned by Norway’s luscious, green terrain.

“Mountainous scenery, innumerable lakes, viking ships, and ski jumps,” Hamp notes after his first day in Oslo. Though the distant glaciers and meandering fjords beckon him to head north, he sticks to his planned itinerary and boards a ferry south to Denmark, where the signs of the worldwide economic depression are less obvious but still having an impact.

He is unaware of the unassuming toymaker in nearby Billund, for instance, who debates what new innovation might insulate him from future swings in the economy and from the fires that keep burning his wooden toy shop to the ground. *Lego* is at the moment one of the front-running alternatives in a naming contest designed to mark a new beginning for the rebuilt factory – doomed to burn down again before finally being retooled with injection molding machines.

In Denmark, Hamp spends a very long day taking in Copenhagen’s famous landmarks. He is uninspired by the almost inconspicuous *Little Mermaid* in the harbor, but the original Thorvaldsen Christ in the National Cathedral impresses him deeply; on viewing the statue, he understands immediately why textbooks declare it the “most perfect statue of Christ in the world,” and why Mormons would adopt it as their own.

Tivoli Gardens, in contrast, offers some scenes one wouldn’t encounter in Salt Lake. “Girls in abundance...smoking cigars!” he dutifully notes.

The revelous atmosphere in Tivoli is a non-stop party, but it hides the subtle terror that is beginning to brew along Denmark’s southern border. As Hamp boards the train to re-enter Germany – this time as a tourist – a

young, politically motivated German fellow named Willy Brandt, having been labeled a communist, passes the other way to escape persecution and an otherwise certain demise at the hands of the Nazis. In the coming decades, their destinies will bring them together again in a manner no one can foretell.

Hamp's train arrives in Hamburg and he spends several days in Germany's "Gateway to the World." Nazi propaganda seems refreshingly absent in Hamburg compared to the onslaught Hamp had grown accustomed to in Berlin. After taking a harbor cruise around the bustling port and up the Elbe River, he visits art museums, the Reeperbahn, and the Bismarck Memorial.

During his tour of the port, he finds himself in the company of numerous American expatriates who have turned out to welcome the arrival of the newly appointed U.S. Ambassador to Germany, William Dodd. As it turns out, Dodd's arrival explains why the Nazis have remained effectively behind the scenes during Hamp's stay in Hamburg; Ambassador Dodd had just accompanied Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Jr. across the Atlantic, and the Nazis are interested in carefully manipulating the scene around the ambassador to ensure that no unfavorable reports will jeopardize trade relations between the nations. Dodd will not remain blinded for long, however; after opening his eyes to the real picture of German ambitions, he soon begins to actively campaign against the Nazis.

From Hamburg, Hamp heads south to Nuremberg. He takes a brisk walk up to its famous castle overlooking the *Christkindl* market place and admires the clock

towers that serenade him at regular intervals. In contrast to the melodic chimes of the bells, bands play military marches at every corner, trying to get the practicing troops to maneuver with the same precision as their snare drummers. While many of Nuremberg's residents feel great pride in being the centerpiece of Hitler's display, some elements of society are struck with fear at the underlying message. Watching these same drills from his Nuremberg apartment window, for example, is a ten-year old, Jewish schoolboy named Heinz Kissinger, who will someday help to shape the balance of world politics with these foreboding scenes forever etched into his mind.

The Nazis are staging their first Reichsparteitag all across the city, and Leni Riefenstahl is busy setting the framework for her infamous footage that will spawn ever grander gatherings in Nuremberg. Taken aback by the sights from this vantage point, Hamp next enters the castle museum and photographs the famous Iron Maiden of Nuremberg; he is horrified and fascinated at the same time by the medieval torture tools. German visitors to the museum are likewise appalled, grateful that civilization has graduated beyond these primeval acts. Little do they know, in cellars and isolated work camps around Germany, the brownshirts are resurrecting the techniques of the inquisition, demonizing communism and other ideologies to the same degree as witchcraft had been a few centuries before.

Giving in to his interest in aeronautics, Hamp tours the Nuremberg *Luftschutzausstellung*. The *schutz* – or protection – in the air power exhibit's title implies a passive, defensive, and protective role, but behind the

scenes, clear plans denote that the purpose of these war machines is to rain Blitzkrieg down on Germany's neighbors as a *Luftwaffe* – a weapon of the air. It is touted as an industrial exhibit, meant to convince visitors that Germany has cast off the shackles of economic hardship, but Hamp finally recognizes the ultimate vector of this belligerent course.

While propaganda leaflets roll off the presses, the German daily newspapers portray a one-sided view of an America still struggling to find its way out of the Great Depression; *let the Americans wallow in their left-wing attempts at reconstruction*, mock the Nazis, to whom the pomp and fanfare of the recent rallies symbolize a far brighter future for Germany. Hamp thinks about the dismal conditions back home and wonders if some charismatic figure might try to latch onto an opportunity to steer the United States toward militarism in like manner.

As he boards another train to head deeper into the picturesque alpine backdrop of Bavaria, Hamp can imagine how this majestic scenery instills a sense of nationalistic pride and patriotism in its people. Just how far they will be willing to take that pride, however, no one can predict.

As the train makes its way up the steep grades of the highlands, he passes the village of Bamberg, where a young teenager named Hans Baumann has just finished composing the lyrics to a song that will be twisted into a rallying cry for the Nazi Youth. Though his words proclaim freedom from the bonds of war, through a subtle change in a single syllable by his sinister leaders, the

meaning is transformed from “tomorrow the world will hear us,” to “tomorrow the world is ours!”

These lyrics would eventually inspire the song *Tomorrow Belongs to Me*, sung in the idyllic setting of a Bavarian village in the musical *Cabaret*. In fact, Hamp passes the Gasthaus Walderuh itself, which served as the celluloid setting for the fictional, young Aryan to stand up and sing:

The sun on the meadow is summery warm,
The stag in the forest runs free.
But gather together to greet the storm,
Tomorrow belongs to me!

Oh fatherland, fatherland, show us the sign,
Your children have waited to see.
The morning will come when the world is mine,
Tomorrow belongs to me!

With the decimation of the Great War fresh on their minds, the old pipe-smoking farmers – drinking their beer after a hard day's work – wonder what ill this youthful arrogance might spawn. Just down the road, the answer to this question is disguised in the Dachau concentration camp, which by all maps and newsprint accounts is still being flaunted as a “re-education” facility. Its true purpose will remain hidden for years to come.

Hamp stops in Munich for a time and visits the Hofbräuhaus, Deutsches Museum, Frauenkirche, and finally Leuchtenberg Palace – the home of King

Rupprecht, the Crown Prince of Bavaria. The palace is abuzz with excitement; on the day of Hamp's arrival, newspaper headlines hail the birth of Duke Franz of Bavaria, considered by the Jacobites to be the heir to the throne of England. Despite the upbeat attitude among the royals, they are fighting a losing battle against the Nazis. Many wonder whether the new world has any place for a monarchy – another question Dachau will answer with a vengeance soon enough. With impostors continuing to fuel the media debate since her disappearance ten years before, Anastasia's well publicized demise now foreshadows the fate that will likewise befall many of Germany's royal heirs.

As he continues his jaunt southward toward Salzburg, Hamp describes this leg as "the most beautiful and picturesque ride so far on the journey...saw homes and towns just as one sees them pictured and described in books. The mountains are magnificent!"

Lavish castles constructed by the mad King Ludwig dot the mountainsides; in Salzburg, members of the very real Von Trapp family are taking up music lessons and unwittingly preparing themselves to battle a new breed of madness.

Hamp continues on to Vienna, where Sigmund Freud is busy writing to Albert Einstein in his Swiss exile. He visits the Austrian treasury and the botanical gardens, rides the giant Ferris wheel, and takes a swim in the *Dianabad* wave pool. That evening, after purchasing a ticket for the understandably anticlimactic flea circus, he attends a mid-week priesthood meeting with the

Vienna Ward Elders Quorum and is not surprised to find the discussions revolving entirely around politics.

From Vienna he continues his journey westward through the Alps. As they pass Graz, a new Nazi recruit named Gustav Schwarzenegger reads his requisite propaganda, not knowing that his actions will someday haunt his son's political career. In the nearby mountains, a teenager named Heinrich Harrer scales peaks that will inspire him to climb ever higher until he finally finds himself mentoring the Dalai Lama for seven years in exile at the top of the world in Tibet.

The train descends out of the Alps and turns south to Venice. Hamp is quite impressed with the city; he tours palaces, museums, markets, and a stained glass factory where he ends up with souvenirs he hadn't intended to purchase. In his travel journal, he records his thoughts: "Venice, the city of bridges, canals, gondolas, cats, pretty, dark-haired girls, and high-pressure salesmen."

The train passes through forty-five tunnels in one hour – according to Hamp's count – along the way to Florence. The stay in Florence is short-lived; Hamp briefly sees some of Michelangelo's works and buys some leather goods from artisans on the street but has to hurry on to Rome if he wishes to be in the audience as they are blessed by Pope Pious XI. The Holy See, incidentally, had just signed the controversial *Reichskonkordant* the previous week; as a result, hundreds of millions of Catholics now find themselves effectively bound to nonaggression against the Nazis – many will use it as a reason to stay passive until it is far too late.

Hamp finds Rome to be a fascinating city; after being in the packed audience of the Pope, he spends four days wandering through Rome's endless alleyways. His journal notes the "ruins, fountains, and churches at every turn." With its rampant tourism industry in full swing, Rome seems stable enough, but had he remained on the train for another few hours and reached the toe of Italy's boot, Hamp would have encountered a strikingly different scene. At that moment, an excommunicated minister named Vincenzo di Francesca is sitting in his Sicilian house lamenting the loss of his religious tracts – destroyed by the local police – while eagerly awaiting his baptism into the LDS fold. Having been prevented from entering the mainland by clashes between Mussolini's fascists and the opposing forces, his previous attempts to meet Church officials had failed. Little does he know, it will take many further thwarted attempts along with another twenty years of correspondence with Heber J. Grant, Hugh Brown, John Widtsoe, Joseph Merrill, and others before he would finally experience for himself what he had only read about in the cover-less book he had recovered from a smoldering trash heap in New York; he could only imagine *how rare a possession* that book would turn out to be.

After taking a few extra photos of the *Patria* for the Toronto boys, Hamp boards a train out of Rome and notes that the uncomfortable ride is the "hottest ride yet, just about baked clear through." His train takes him to Pisa, Genoa, and Milan, which he finds himself rushing through given the heat; to his relief, the temperature

drops quickly with the climb in elevation as he takes the Alpine train to Switzerland.

The scenery holds him captive, but the Swiss leg of the trek is over all too soon. As the train begins its steep descent out of the French Alps, he admires the setting of the quaint, local villages. These French country towns seem like something straight out of the fairy tale movies. In fact, Walt Disney had traversed this same route as an ambulance driver following the Great War; these scenes undoubtedly inspired his imagination with models for his future animated cities.

Hamp spends four days in Paris, where the Moulin Rouge is in full swing. While attempting to avoid these seedier sides, he takes in the obligatory sights of the *City of Light*. Picasso is busy churning out cubist artwork from his local studio, but the Parisian political rifts are less abstract. Left-wing elements in France are rising in stark contrast to their right-wing neighbors. France harbors communists and anarchists, for example, including the disenchanting American *Reds* Louise Bryant and Emma Goldman. Having just granted Leon Trotsky French asylum, in fact, the Radical Prime Minister leaves many Parisians fearing repercussions of the underground, international espionage network that is forming – a network that would ultimately put an ice pick in Trotsky's head. Unaware of the competing forces that are lurking about him, Hamp poses for pictures with the Eiffel Tower as a backdrop and captures many more landmarks on film for his sister Margaret.

From Paris, Hamp travels to Amsterdam, where he takes in a show and a canal cruise. He is fascinated by

the unique architecture, particularly the narrow rows of merchants' houses rising high above the canals. He finds the city to be much cleaner than his previous destinations: "Like Venice, but smells better."

As the moon rises in the summer sky, it reflects over the still water along with the electric light of the endless restaurants and beer gardens that line the canals. There is an atmosphere of revelry about, but the ominous waves of fear are not far behind. Just a few blocks from Hamp's hotel, a businessman named Otto Frank, having just arrived after fleeing from Germany, spends his evening making covert contacts to scout out potential apartments for his family. As Hamp wanders around freely as a tourist, Otto is carefully and secretively organizing the rest of his family's exodus from Germany, acting on his premonitions to prepare for a prolonged period of isolation.

As dawn breaks, the air is still warm, and Hamp makes his way to the port to prepare for his ferry voyage across the English Channel. His whirlwind tour of Europe comes to a close later that day in London. After visiting the Tate Gallery and the wax museum, he still has a few days before his ship is to set sail. He wonders if he should have taken in a few extra days elsewhere, but his funds are now depleted so the point is moot.

Hamp walks along London's busy streets and has a hard time getting used to hearing English at every turn. Newsies on the street corners peddle papers proclaiming the rising German threat to the island fortress. Hamp stops to read the headlines, but most passersby can't be bothered by the reports. He ducks in and out of the shops

on Oxford Street and catches Winston Churchill's voice warning of German belligerence over a shopkeeper's radio. Churchill – having been ousted from office and still serving his penance for the disaster of Gallipoli – tirelessly preaches his cautionary message *from the wilderness* over the radio waves.

Out of money for tourist activities, Hamp decides to drop in on the mission home, which, in fact – in fulfillment of Churchill's prophetic warnings – would ultimately be struck and destroyed by a lethal rocket during the London Blitz. Hamp's old friend and classmate, Homer, is busy conducting his secretarial duties and proving his prowess as an organizer in the newly relocated British and European Mission Offices.

"Well hello my friend!" Homer says with a smile after Hamp rings the bell outside his office.

"How have you been?" asks Hamp.

"Before we get into our mission adventures, I only have one question for you," Homer says smugly, "Did you get a *Dear John* letter?"

Hamp's expression can't conceal the truth, and Homer makes no effort to mask the smirk on his own face.

"Well I guess I owe you lunch, then," Hamp concedes.

"After all of that traveling, I presume you're broke for the time being," Homer offers, "so how about you pay me back when we're home in Utah?"

Hamp consents to the raincheck. Though they laugh about it, the painful circumstance of Dot's last

correspondence with him stirs up other, more somber memories.

Homer notices the change in Hamp's countenance and quickly changes the focus. "Have a seat," Homer says, "Remember this picture?" From his bible, he pulls out the photograph Betty had snapped of the four of them on commencement night during the Rooftop Garden dance.

"Boy that was a long time ago," Hamp says – then recites a phrase that he would often repeat in his journals: "Them were the good old days!"

"Who would have thought that night we'd all end up as globetrotters?" asks Homer. He then points to the book in Hamp's hand and says, "So, tell me about your adventures!"

In his travel journal – besides his impressions of the various places he visited – Hamp had been keeping track of restaurants, hotels, and anything else that might interest future travelers. Meal and lodging prices, rail and bus fares, travel distances, timetables and other details are recorded, including Hamp's own rating scale of the service. Homer is keenly interested in the detailed itinerary.

"Too bad Gordon's traveling with the mission president today," Homer says, "He'd be interested in this too. We're hoping to take our own tour of the continent when we finish, so we could definitely use any advice that might save us a few pennies."

They pore over the budget figures and itinerary together. Homer draws up his own map and jots down notes next to each stop.

"Now I know you're still a missionary," Hamp adds with a grin, "but if you need something to look forward to, let me tell you about the girls in Sweden...Wow!"

"I don't think I'll be interested in the girls there," Homer says, folding up his map.

Hamp gives him a curious look. "Oh?"

"I'll tell you a secret if you promise not to tell another soul," Homer says quietly. He continues – anxious to spit it out – before Hamp even has a chance to agree to the terms. "You know Elder Widtsoe's daughter, Eudora?"

Hamp nods.

"Well, we haven't spoken a word to each other – I wouldn't dare with Elder Widtsoe watching – but the way she looks at me, I think there's something there!"

"Keep those blinders on, Elder!" Hamp jokes.

"She really is something special," Homer confides.

"And you really seem smitten," Hamp adds.

"I'll give you an example, and then you can tell me whether you agree," says Homer, "You know George Bernard Shaw?"

"The playwright?" Hamp asks, "Miss Stewart would have flunked me if I didn't."

"Well, he's been writing about the Mormons," Homer complains, "and Elder Widtsoe had asked me and Gordon what we might do to combat the bad press."

"Make your own press?" Hamp suggests.

“That’s essentially what we wanted to do,” Homer says, “so we came up with a list of statements we might publish to set the record straight.”

“So where does Eudora fit in?”

“Well, her father told her about the problem, and she said, ‘why don’t we just invite him over?’”

“Fat chance!” Hamp interjects.

Homer nods in agreement. “That’s what I thought, too,” he said, “and Elder Widtsoe agreed with me. But you know what she did?”

Hamp shrugs his shoulders.

“All on her own she wrote him a letter and told him the truth about the Mormons. Then she told him he’s welcome to come over to discuss further.”

“So what did he say?”

“Well you know what? He actually came to dinner with the Widtsoes!” Homer says with astonishment, “and not only that, he invited the whole Widtsoe family back to his mansion for tea as well, complete with the high society of British aristocracy.”

Having expected Hamp to be more impressed, Homer adds, “Now ever since those meetings, Mr. Shaw has been making positive statements about the Mormons in his writings; do you know how huge a coup that actually is for us here?”

“Well I imagine we Mormon apologists could publish a dozen rebuttals and never have the same influence,” Hamp says.

“That’s right, he’s a household name here,” Homer brags, “In fact, I read that *Shavian* has been added

to the new Oxford dictionary just to describe his school of thought.”

“It sounds like Elder Widtsoe should fire you and Gordon and replace the both of you with Eudora,” jokes Hamp.

“Hey!” Homer counters.

“Well, in any case you’re certainly right about her being something special,” Hamp says, “but you’d better keep your eyes off her until you’re safely out of jail here. Care to make a wager concerning your chances with her?”

“While I’m ahead in our little game,” Homer answers, “I think I’ll stop wagering. But if things go my way, you’ll be taking the two of us to lunch together when you finally pay up in Utah.”

They share some more mission stories, and then Homer returns Hamp’s favor by giving him suggestions for sights to see on his cross-country trip home. Homer and Gordon had stopped at Church historical sites and at the World Fair in Chicago on their way east to the Port of New York. The fair will still be in full swing during Hamp’s journey home, so Homer makes him a list of his favorite, must-see exhibits. Though Hamp is excited about the World Fair, Homer had actually been more moved by the Church history tour and offers plenty of advice along those lines as well.

“You have got to see Nauvoo,” Homer tells him, “The sight of a temple in ruins is a bit shocking, but Gordon thinks we’ll rebuild it someday. Wouldn’t that be grand?”

Hamp agrees, but tries to be pragmatic. “It would take quite a miracle in this economy, that’s for sure,” he adds. “Why don’t you get Eudora to write a letter to FDR; perhaps she can get him to add the temple reconstruction to his New Deal.”

“Well I might do just that,” Homer says emphatically.

“In any case, I’ll be sure to see the grounds on my way home,” Hamp says.

“Well if I tell Eudora about it, don’t be surprised if the whole job corps has been mobilized by the time you get there,” Homer says with a laugh, “Don’t think she couldn’t do it!”

“I’m sure she could, no doubt,” Hamp agrees. “Well, speaking of work,” he adds, glancing at the piles of paper on Homer’s desk, “I had better let you put your shoulder back to the wheel.”

“Yes, duty calls,” says Homer, “Rulon did a good job splitting his files between the two presidents, but somehow we still can’t seem to catch up.”

“Well then,” says Hamp, “I guess I’ll see you back in the Promised Land!”

With that, they make their way out to the noisy steps outside the mission office, snap a photo together, and part ways. Hamp heads to the *U.S. Lines* dock to embark on a transatlantic voyage, and Homer heads back to work, trying his hardest – without much success – not to think about Eudora.

Homer and Gordon continue their missions, fulfilling administrative duties while assigned to the mission office but also teaching and preaching in their

“spare” time. In addition, they do their best to update and refine the teaching materials, tracts, and other literature that is distributed to investigators of Mormonism.

By the time their service nears an end, the newly ordained Apostle Joseph F. Merrill has replaced Elder Widtsoe at the helm of the European Mission. With a few weeks to go before their official release date, President Merrill calls Gordon into his office.

“Elder Hinckley,” President Merrill begins, “you have been an exceptional missionary – second to none.”

Gordon shifts uncomfortably in his seat; on top of his disdain for adulation, Rulon had warned him about a similar conversation that had begun with that sort of flattery.

“I’ve written to Salt Lake,” President Merrill says, “and told them about your efforts in putting together presentation materials for the mission.”

Gordon leans forward in his seat.

“The Brethren would like you to institute a similar program Church-wide,” President Merrill continues, beaming with all the pride that a championship coach feels for his star player, “I hope you don’t mind that I told them you could start immediately.”

Gordon feels a lump in his throat. Like Rulon, his dreams of traveling around Europe are being dashed before his eyes. Instead of a temporary extension, however, this assignment has no end date.

“I’ll be there,” he says after a brief hesitation, not knowing that he has just made a life-long career move.

Gordon tells Homer about the change in plans that night; Homer is obviously disappointed that he will be

without a travel companion for his European tour, but he is certain that Gordon is the Church's best man for the job.

The offer, however, turns out to be only an Abrahamic test of Gordon's willingness. President Merrill had unknowingly jumped the gun; it will actually take Salt Lake some time to prepare for Gordon's arrival, he is told. The next day Gordon receives a telegram from the Office of the First Presidency. He is to report to President Grant in six weeks' time. "Six weeks?" he says to himself again and again, the anticipation building inside of him each time he repeats the words. That will give him plenty of time to tour the continent! He excitedly contacts Homer to tell him the good news.

On completion of their missionary service the following week, Homer and Gordon cross the English Channel and embark on their own European tour. Armed with Hamp's notes, they follow his circle in reverse, with a few of the legs scaled back for their own lack of funds.

Most importantly to Gordon, he is finally able to fulfill the promise made to his late mother; after a quick tour around Paris, their train heads out through the French countryside, and they disembark in a village surrounded by a vast cemetery honoring innumerable war dead. They wander through the cemetery and finally find the cross marking Stanford's final resting place. Gordon is choked up as he dedicates the grave; he barely remembers his brother, but he clearly remembers the somber circle of immediate family members who had mourned together on a frigid winter night back in their humble home in East Mill Creek. No public memorial services had been

allowed due to the same Spanish Flu epidemic that had taken Stanford's life in a French military hospital, and Gordon had always felt a lack of closure without a service. He realizes in that moment, though, that his tears are not just for his brother, but for the vivid picture of his mother, who had stood on that very spot a few years earlier to lay a wreath. He feels Ada's spirit along with the presence of ministering angels who bear up his grief; if there has ever been a point in his life in which the veil seemed thin, this is it.

As they continue their journey, they are stunned by the spectacle in the streets of Nuremberg, where the fledgling *Reichsparteitag* rally that Hamp had witnessed has in the meanwhile burgeoned into a nationalistic showcase like no other. Adjacent to the vast parade grounds, the foundations are laid for a stadium design that will – with a capacity of almost half a million spectators – dwarf every other stadium on the planet. Homer and Gordon are in awe of the goose-stepping shock troops and the intense pride they instill in the spectators who line the streets; they both note premonitions in their journals that no good can come of this. While they now sense the direction of the course, however, its magnitude is absolutely incomprehensible. The spectators cheer, but little do they know that this intense, swelling pride will give way to the greatest shame the world has ever known. Those who seek to rule the world will be humbled like no fallen empire before.

Entire cities – including Nuremberg – will be leveled to the ground, the collapsing buildings taking with them entire families and their histories. Among

them, the Böing family archives, housed in a medieval fortress, will be destroyed by bombs raining down from their namesake Boeing bombers as they systematically raze every metropolitan area. Even the Iron Maiden of Nuremberg herself will be blown apart by a direct hit from an allied bomb.

Within a decade – in trials set among the cinders and ashes of this ruined city – many of those directing the steps of the rallied troops Homer and Gordon observe will find themselves condemned for unspeakable acts, with their war crimes broadcast around the world as the absolute epitome of evil. Truly, there is no more fitting fulfillment of the promise that “the first shall be last and the last shall be first.”

The duo continue on to Berlin, where the *Welthauptstadt Germania* is well on its way to earning its status as a world capital city. Architect Albert Speer had personally shut down the Bauhaus and every other creative source that might produce designs counter to his blueprint. Entire blocks of historical buildings have been razed to make way for the vision’s implementation. First on the agenda – and now well underway – is a showcase for the Olympic Games; future projects still in the planning phase are on a gargantuan scale, including the largest dome ever engineered. Meanwhile, German architects, artists, writers, and scientists are emigrating in unprecedented numbers. As they flee, yes-men are appointed to fill the voids in the talent pool, leaving the future of Berlin in the hands of Hitler’s sycophantic posse.

Homer and Gordon are dumbfounded at the sights but are pleased to be able to sit down in a familiar setting by attending a sacrament meeting in Berlin. Scattered among the native Germans are a few familiar, American missionaries who translate the services for them. The following day, they leave the tumultuous scene and – after spending a few hours on the train – board a transatlantic steamer bound for New York Harbor. They follow the same route Rulon and Hamp had taken some time before; with Europe at their backs, their thoughts turn inward and homeward. Like thousands of missionaries before them, they all face similar, retrospective emotions on the week-long voyage home.

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Hamp enjoys the sea passage initially; after their first day at sea he records that “a great time was had by all.” He is happy to be in the company of so many Americans once again as they exchange stories, opinions, and impressions of the signs of the times. He had missed much of the stateside news over the previous years and has a lot of catching up to do.

He overhears and joins in on many conversations that revolve around one of his favorite topics: aeroplanes. On the day of their departure from Great Britain, Charles Lindbergh – putting aside his personal tragedies in favor of advocating Germany’s military might – had flown overhead and wagged his wings to the cheering crowd. The atmosphere on board is contagiously optimistic as many of the passengers wonder aloud what record Lindy might break next.

Conditions soon change after a few days at sea, however; Hamp writes that “the sea was certainly in a bad mood today, and we were tossed around like a cork.” Nearly everyone on board is sick by the time they dock in New York, but Hamp is still in good spirits, knowing that his mother and sisters will be there to greet him in a joyous reunion.

The Port of New York is a flurry of activity, and the reunion is delayed by endless customs lines. Ships arrive from every corner of the globe in a chaotic frenzy, and the content and passengers all must be processed. Along with the returning missionaries, the lot includes tradesmen and socialites, immigrants and exiles, political refugees and asylum seekers. It is an almost comically absurd gathering; in a nearby Brooklyn apartment, a fat little 5-year-old, confined to his bedroom by scarlet fever, watches from his window as the immigrants arrive – among them the very scary Sendak relatives from Poland; little Maurice will eventually model the characters in his books after these real-life *wild things*. The sights of diverse vessels, the sounds of foreign tongues of every sort, and the smells of the imported goods contribute to overwhelm the senses.

After finally reuniting with his family, Hamp is excited to show them the sights of the city; they tour the Statue of Liberty and take in the National Broadcast. Despite the financial depression, showbiz has thrived in the meantime; Radio City Music Hall had opened the previous year, and together they take in a show there. The skyline has likewise transformed since Hamp’s visit almost three years before. Unpredictable winds had nixed

the construction of the Empire State Building’s dirigible gangway, but the Rockefeller Center’s GE Building is nearly complete and now proudly overlooks Central Park. Steelworkers sit on the girders, smoking their cigarettes and trading snacks, as memorialized in Ebbets’ high-altitude photograph *Lunchtime atop a Skyscraper*.

Hamp is likewise stunned by John Heisman’s newly completed Downtown Athletic Club building, a high-rise that serves as the site for the annual award of the most coveted football trophy in the nation. It is a revolutionary structure that has its pools, courts, and weight rooms scattered about the floors of the 35-story edifice. Hamp notes that the old Deseret Gym would fit into the building ten times over; he buys postcards of the building to send to Gordon and Homer. “Imagine having to clean this gym!” he writes.

New York is a vibrant scene, no doubt, but political strife is now adding to the racial tensions that have been a part the Big Apple’s history since its inception. For the time being, the major battles are confined in proxy to the boxing arena, and placards at every turn proclaim the upcoming match-ups at Madison Square Garden and other iconic venues. Just a few weeks before, the German prize fighter Max Schmeling had been bested by “the killer” Max Baer, who bore the Star of David on his shorts for the fight. The fans in Yankee Stadium forgave Baer’s manslaughter charges but – with growing animosity toward the Germans – threw rubbish at Schmeling when he entered the ring. Baer, in turn, would later be beaten by the Irish-American “Cinderella Man” James Braddock, and Schmeling would lose to Joe

Louis in the heavyweight championships, prompting Hitler to drop him from an Aryan hero to an outcast for his defeat at the hands of a colored man. Like Jesse Owens' future victory, these episodes force many of Hitler's followers to rethink the doctrine of racial superiority, and the gladiatorial bouts become symbolic of the real battles they foreshadow.

After two exhausting days of sight-seeing, they check out of their Brooklyn hotel and cram Hamp's luggage into the old family Plymouth; they watch the skyline disappear in their mirror, cross the Appalachians, and head to upstate New York to take in Palmyra and the other imperative Church history sites in the Finger Lakes region.

They retire that night to a quiet inn with hardly an electric light to be seen. With the noise of the big city still ringing in their ears, Hamp finally has time to show his mother and sisters his mission photos by the light of a gas lamp. They pass around the pictures late into the evening, and Hamp tries to convey just how special the people in his photographs have become to him; the detail with which he recalls the individual stories, however, eventually lulls everyone else at the table to sleep.

As he makes his way to the Sacred Grove the following day, he is humbled to realize that he has the privilege of standing in person where the most significant events of the Restoration transpired. Having spent almost three years trying to convince people half a world away of what had taken place here, he realizes that most of those to whom he had testified over the previous years would never be able to see these sights for themselves.

Putting the introspection and reflection behind him, he helps pack up the car, and they hit the road again in high spirits. They drive past Niagara and Detroit, and their excitement builds as they continue on to Chicago. Arriving in one of the massive World Fair parking lots, Hamp cannot believe the sea of cars that has swamped the Windy City. Before making their way to the entry gate, he reviews Gordon and Homer's notes and prioritizes his list of must-see pavilions and shows.

As he jots down his itinerary, a group of African-American men moves past the Plymouth, sweeping up litter around the vehicles. Hamp is a bit startled, having seen hardly a single colored man during his entire ministry in Germany. The World Fair welcomes visitors from all backgrounds; outside the fairgrounds, though, racial tensions in the Midwest run as high as they do in New York. The Harlem Globetrotters, for example – who are actually from Chicago and haven't yet played a single game in Harlem – are a serious, competitive, professional basketball team. They know they can beat any white team around but cannot manage to get any reputable team to play against them at this point in their evolution; they have begun to add their flair for entertainment in an attempt to show off their skills and get noticed.

Across the lake in Michigan, Henry Ford – whose anti-Semitic views are becoming increasingly hostile – tries to keep assembly lines running while multi-racial line workers mutiny. Just down the street from his factory, anger is brewing inside an eight-year-old boy named Malcolm Little, who lives in constant fear that the Klan might come back to burn his house down again after

his father's suspicious death under a streetcar. He will one day replace his "slave surname" with an "X" to denote the unknown African tribe from which he descended.

Facing similar challenges in the Appalachian Mountains that Hamp has just crossed, a skilled African-American carpenter named Vivien Thomas has just been laid off – his medical school savings having been wiped out by the stock market crash. Having taken up a position in a laboratory – while being paid as a janitor – he tinkers with the equipment after hours. Unable to eat at the same tables or even walk through the same doors as his mentors, his behind-the-scenes skills eventually revolutionize the field of pediatric cardiology. With the touch of a master's hand – while serving drinks to his own students – this grandson of a slave ends up guiding heart surgeries that will save the lives of thousands of "blue babies," while all the credit goes to his white colleagues.

While the United States comes to grips with its own past, the new breed of racism adopted by the Nazis gives a chilling image of where the discrimination might lead. U.S. politicians walk a fine line in promoting both free speech and protection of the oppressed. Racist views that are freely expressed and published in America are being exported overseas; when applied in systems that lack the same constitutional protections, the bigotry becomes tyrannical in nature. In its open forums, the United States is even unwittingly training its own enemies. Hitler's advisor, Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl and the future Japanese Naval Commander-in-Chief Isoroku

Yamamoto, for example, have both been armed with a Harvard education that will give them strategic insights for the upcoming conflict.

With the eyes of the world now on Chicago, though, the event organizers have a singular chance to dismiss any questions about American ideals and innovation. The World Fair – officially dubbed the "Century of Progress International Exposition" is grand enough in scale to put the troubling social and economic issues aside for the moment. As Hamp and his family approach the fairgrounds, all seems to be well with the world.

Hamp is particularly thrilled to climb aboard one of the massive rocket cars of the sprawling sky ride, which transports his entourage from the parking lot across the main lagoon to the exhibits. The view from hundreds of feet in the air is inspiring, but not quite enough for Hamp. Upon landing, they make a mutual decision to part ways to make the best use of their time, and Hamp takes the opportunity to climb straight up to the observation deck at the top of the sky ride's tower – higher than any building in Chicago. The view is certainly spectacular, but even from this vantage point it merely whets his appetite. With a clear view of the Chicago Airpark – just recently crowned the world's busiest – Hamp traces myriad flight paths across the sky; the planes flying overhead seem to defy gravity, and he vows to join the ranks of their pilots one day.

Coming back down to earth, Hamp makes his way to each of the pavilions on his list. He is fascinated by the sights and the technology on display; topping his list is

the air show that is being held in conjunction with the fair – Hamp arrives extra early to have a spot at the front of the crowd with an unobstructed view of center stage over Lake Michigan.

Trouble is brewing behind the scenes, however. The *Graf Zeppelin*, having arrived fresh from a flyover at the Nuremberg Rally by way of Brazil, approaches the grounds in one of the highlights of the fair. The airship is certainly quite a sight to behold, but the spectators are uneasy about the floating specter. Its massive tail fin has an enormous, red swastika painted on one side. Under specific instructions from Hitler himself to circle each city clockwise – rubbing the swastika in the residents' faces – Captain Eckener takes a bold risk and deliberately circles the World Fair grounds counter-clockwise, hiding the swastika from the onlookers. It is an act of treachery for which he will be summarily disciplined on his return.

After an overwhelming three-day stay in Chicago, Hamp finds himself anxious to get back on the road. The old Plymouth requires some mechanical intervention to get rolling, however, and a nearby service station lends Hamp some tools to give it a try. He is not well versed in engine repair but eventually coaxes the car into compliance, and they continue their cross-country tour. Hamp's fixes prove to be temporary, though, and more serious car trouble awaits them once they leave the outskirts of Chicago. They sputter from one country mechanic to the next for repairs; at each stop, they spend hours at a time as a captive audience with which the townsfolk try to debate the repeal of Prohibition and other hot topics of the day. After two grueling days on the road,

they reach the Upper Mississippi River and follow it south to Nauvoo.

With very little signage and few recognizable landmarks to be found, Hamp is grateful for Gordon and Homer's detailed notes to guide their itinerary. When they finally reach Nauvoo, Mimi insists that they begin their tour of Church historical sites with a visit to the grave of her grandfather, Jonathan Hampton. After pausing for a prayer in the overgrown but peaceful cemetery, Mimi effortlessly recites detailed events from her father's autobiography, including how he was chased from home after home as a young boy, was left a fatherless child when Jonathan died from exposure after guarding the Prophet Joseph Smith, and how he mourned with his cousins when their own father died in the Mexican desert as part of the Mormon Battalion. Hamp is struck by events that used to seem so distant, but hit him personally in this setting.

As they tour the remains of Nauvoo, Hamp is a bit disappointed to see the lack of restoration efforts at the crumbling historical sites – accelerated by the last few years of a depressed economy. But at the same time he is glad to have stood on the same ground as his ancestors – in places that have now grown that much more dear to his heart as a result of his newly completed ministry.

A somber stop at the Carthage jail is followed by a bumpy ride to Independence, Missouri – a place of historical and doctrinal significance but without much to actually see on the ground. From there, they set out toward the west, tracing the pioneer trail. Understandably nervous about the open stretch of road ahead given their

car troubles, they celebrate the passing of each mile marker. Deep in the heart of Missouri, they pass by little houses on the prairie that seem to be frozen in time. Among them is the Wilder home, where Laura Ingalls is frantically scribbling out handwritten manuscripts about her childhood in an attempt to raise funds that might help her struggling Rocky Ridge Farm survive the depression.

To help pass the time as they make their way across America's heartland, Margaret teaches Hamp some of the new Depression-era folk songs that had spread around the country in his absence; Hamp, in turn, tries in vain to teach his family some traditional German tunes. Wishing he had been able to hold onto his accordion, his thoughts take him back to the Silesian countryside. During the occasional lull in the singing and conversation, they turn up the car radio to hear the latest news.

If they were to tune in to the right stations, they would hear a rookie announcer named Paul Harvey reading the headlines and summing up cattle prices, while another novice, Ronald Reagan, covers the sports results. Big Ten football dominates the Midwest sports headlines, and Reagan reports on the success of a fellow future president, fresh Eagle Scout and Grand Rapids native Gerald Ford, who is on his way to leading the University of Michigan football team to its second consecutive national championship. It is quite a year for football, with the first-ever NFL championship scheduled for the following autumn. The rivalry between Chicago and New York would be further fueled in the playoff game as Mitt Romney's Bears topple the Giants in a last-minute

comeback. Hamp is relieved to hear the radio programs focusing on football and weather forecasts rather than the politics and crime reports they had grown accustomed to on the first leg of their road trip.

After six more service stops for repairs to the Plymouth, they finally crest the Rockies and enter Utah. This last leg of the campaign sparks mixed emotions in Hamp – feelings that would be echoed by Gordon, Homer, Rulon, and countless others who had returned home by the same route. As the returning missionaries pass Parley's Park City and entered Parley's Canyon – both of which are named after a missionary who never returned home himself – they feel relief, anxiety, and a measure of homesickness for their adopted home abroad.

"*Great Salt Lake City 20 miles*" reads the road sign near the summit.

"Ain't that the truth?" Hamp says, turning to Margaret.

"Sounds like you'll need some English lessons to undo the damage done by your Deutsch," Margaret replies, happy to correct her older brother, for once.

"Well pardon me," Hamp says with a laugh, "let me rephrase it in *Amerrrican*: Gee, it's *grrreat* to be back in *Grrreat* Salt Lake!"

"If you say so," answers Margaret, who is herself not altogether excited to be back in *Great Salt Lake City*. The extra adjective in the city's name would be dropped in the late thirties – perhaps for seeming a bit too presumptuous. Margaret admits that the Salt Lake is unmistakably *great*, as in large, but Salt Lake City itself? That is certainly up to interpretation, and, in fact,



Margaret is finding the place to be increasingly stifling. She has always sets her sights higher than her immediate surroundings. With high school out of the way, she is now hoping that her enrolment at the University of Utah will add a measure of excitement and satisfaction to her life; unknowingly on her way to becoming the U's first homecoming queen, she will ultimately find fulfillment in Utah; in the meantime, though, she envies the cosmopolitan sights Hamp had seen on her dime, and he picks up on her undertone.

"You'll get your chance to see the world someday, too," Hamp says, "I promise you that!"

As the *Promised Valley* comes into view and spreads out before them, Hamp breathes a sigh of relief while the inherent dichotomy sinks in. True, he had seen the world and all it had to offer; he had traversed the grand capitals of Europe and had met people from every walk of life, every rung of society, and every corner of the globe. It was an exciting and fascinating place, and to leave it all behind is bittersweet; but this is home, after all, and the city itself feels like an old friend welcoming him back.

They drive through the familiar avenues of his childhood but do not go straight home. Hamp first needs to make one stop to return and report on his mission; when Chick had punched his ticket to New York City almost three years before, never could Hamp have imagined that he would report back to his father in a cemetery. During the early days of his mission, in fact, Hamp had secretly been hoping to usher his father through the symbolic veil in the temple upon his

triumphant return. He had imagined celebrating the reunion in the temple's celestial room, knowing his father's conversion had been brought about by his testimonial mission letters; instead, he now finds himself stranded on the very real end of a potentially endless chasm, filled with regret for what he might have said in the living years. He stands before the tombstone with silent tears, wishing so very much that his father's proud arms could have welcomed him home.

His thoughts are turning toward his own empty canvas spread out before him. His life's blueprint – that in its previous draft had included Dot at the very center – is now in shambles. How can he ever choose his destined path without his father's guidance? How can he even think of finding a soul mate to replace Dot? He hangs his head and utters an encumbered prayer, then manages to clear his thoughts by recommitting himself to his heritage – come what may. He returns to the limping Plymouth; from the passenger seat he scribbles a few final lines in his travel journal that encapsulate his mixed emotions.

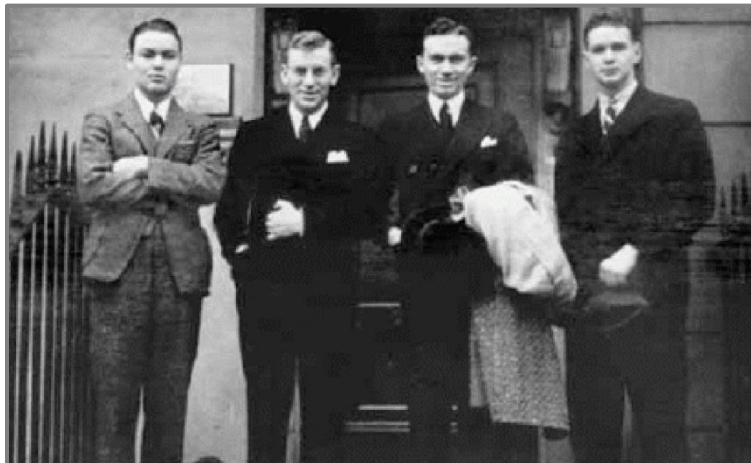
"I wonder what the future holds for me now?" he writes. After bereaving the loss of both Dot and Chick's presence from his life, he suppresses the thoughts and lets them go, adding, "You worry about it – I haven't the time." Then, spotting the old house off of C Street, he pens a final line:

"Home at last – what a feeling!"

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Hamp's photograph of the *Graf Zeppelin*



Gordon B. Hinckley as a missionary (second from right)



Street preaching in Hyde Park Post-mission Paris trip



"Home at last!" The old Plymouth at the pass in Parley's Canyon



The next mission call

Chapter 14: Matrimonia

The Great Depression continues as the four former classmates re-enter civilian life and hunt for jobs, but at least the economic outlook has stopped worsening. Still, those with jobs have to hang on to them tightly; employers can easily take advantage of their workers, knowing that ten candidates would line up for a chance to snatch away any opening. Job safety takes a back seat at the massive public works projects around the country, where the jobless wait at the gates for a worker plunging from a skyscraper's girders or a dam's scaffolds to create a vacancy. The imbalance in supply and demand, together with the resulting threat of unemployment for existing workers, makes keeping a job a stressful and high-pressure effort.

As one appalling example, the *father of television*, Utah's own native son Philo Farnsworth – who was literally born in a log cabin in Beaver – is being worked into depression by his employer in Pennsylvania. The situation is exacerbated when his young son Kenny passes away back home in Utah, and his employer refuses to grant him the personal leave to bury his son – leaving his wife to handle the funeral alone while he slaves away with his vacuum tubes.

Luckily, the job search goes rather smoothly for the four friends. Rulon, fittingly, becomes a tax accountant; Homer follows his father's footsteps into academia, though he sets his sights a bit higher by teaching at the tertiary level; and Gordon begins a well-documented career of church service, developing and

expanding media outlets while using his mission experiments as test runs.

Hamp, meanwhile, heads south to continue where he had left off with the Park Service. He moves from the supply run to the bus tours and then finally lands his dream job guiding air tours. Having followed Waldemar's vision into the air, he writes his old friend a letter. He includes a photograph of the new Grand Canyon Airlines plane he is piloting along with a few shots of the Graf Zeppelin that he had collected during his time in Germany.

"Thanks much for the photographs of airships," Waldemar writes in reply, "They are quite a marvel and I surely hope to travel 'round the world in a craft as grand as the Graf one day." His letter quickly turns to a subject that is beginning to occupy each of their minds of late: "By the way, are you going to Jack's wedding?"

Hamp had heard that their friend Jack Salmon had met a sweet girl from Carbon with a funny name, but this is the first he is told of wedding plans. Many of their former classmates are now tying the knot, and Hamp decides to take some leave and reconnect with his friends – most of whom he hasn't seen since before his mission – at Jack's wedding.

Following a ceremony in the Salt Lake Temple, performed by President Grant himself, the entourage makes its way across the street to the Hotel Utah for a reception. Closing the loop on a promise made years before, President Grant sings a solo for the gathering crowd; after the less-than-melodious musical number, Jack and his new bride mingle with their guests and

eventually make their way to the bachelors standing watch at the back of the room.

"Congratulations, my friend," Hamp says to Jack, "but I thought I was going to beat you to it."

"Yes, I heard things didn't quite go as planned for you," Jack says, trying to be careful not to reopen old wounds.

"Since Dot dropped him with a *Dear John*," Homer interjects, deliberately throwing salt on those wounds, "Hamp owes me a dinner...and he still hasn't paid up yet."

Jack doesn't want to be caught in the middle of the razzing, so he changes the subject. "Meet my wife Lulu," he proudly says to his friends, who act a bit aloof in trying to hide any trace of envy, "She's quite a singer." Then, turning to address Homer directly, he adds, "...or so I've been told. Maybe I should have listened to you and joined the choir after all so I could speak on the subject."

"Maybe President Grant should have listened to me and refrained from ever singing again," Homer quips back.

"Well, even my untrained ear could tell it was a train wreck," Jack replies, "but you've got to give him credit for the effort. Besides, he made good on his promise by trading his general conference solo to Lulu in exchange for singing a solo here at our wedding."

"Yes, Lulu's number in general conference was certainly magnificent," Homer says, "and you've certainly done a favor to the body of the Church by

keeping President Grant away from the Tabernacle's microphone!"

"Yes," Hamp adds in jest, "perhaps she has saved the world at large from doubting his role as a man of judgment."

Lulu nods but doesn't say a word as the young men have a good laugh at President Grant's expense.

"She never could say anything bad about anyone," Jack adds in her behalf, "but she did have her mother warn the wedding guests ahead of time that he couldn't carry a tune."

President Grant feels terrible at the reception, not because of his disastrous musical number – which he, in fact, proudly adds to his list of accomplishments – but for the fact that the beloved institution sitting vacant next door had dissolved before Lulu had a chance to attend. He had felt sure that between Mr. Lym and Mr. Durham, they could have turned her into a star. Having lost his job at the school, Mr. Lym is trying his hand making oboes in the Bay Area, and Mr. Durham is attempting to cobble together various public school music programs across the Salt Lake Valley. In any case, President Grant's dream of having Lulu represent the L.D.S. in vocal competitions has now been shattered.

Nonetheless, with the school out of the picture, he had put Lulu under the personal direction of Tony Lund, the Tabernacle Choir Director, who prepared her masterfully for her first solo from the Tabernacle pulpit; he still feels very hopeful about her prospective career in music, aided by the medium of radio broadcasting that is now under Gordon's direction. Once combined with the

Farnsworth *Image Dissector*, he feels that the explosive growth of Gordon's multimedia toolbox could well rival Gutenberg's press.

On the heels of these technological developments, innovative applications are opening doors around the nation in diverse sectors of the economy, shedding some light on the otherwise dismal residue of the Great Crash. To President Grant, Lulu's voice and Philo's imagination both embody a new generation's hope for a brighter future.

The remaining bachelors leave the wedding and continue seeking their fortunes by sifting through the economy's rubble, listening intently for any knock of opportunity. In the meantime, they go out knocking doors of their own on an entirely new mission: the search for a bride.

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Hamp is still reeling from the fact the Dot had dumped him, especially now that he keeps seeing daily reminders of all the places they had gone together. He decides that a girl like Dot is far too volatile and uncentered for his tastes; if he is going to settle down, he figures, he will need a much more logical girl.

One day during a winter break from the Park Service, he goes to a party at the U and meets just such a girl. She is self-confident and independent, centered and well grounded. Her name is Joan, and they immediately hit it off; she seems to be everything he is looking for.

It isn't until half-way through their first date that he realizes there is one minor setback: She is a staunch

Catholic. Upon hearing this admission, Hamp immediately professes his own beliefs to her.

Having grown up as a minority in her Salt Lake suburb, though, surrounded by an overly zealous bunch bent on proselytizing her into their latter-day form of Christianity, she has learned to defend herself quite eloquently.

Hamp is impressed with her rebuttals and takes her conversion upon himself as a challenge. He knows this to be a potentially deal-breaking hurdle that will have to be overcome if there is any chance of a future for them, so he launches a behind-the-scenes assault on her faith. He studies every Mormon treatise on Catholicism and arms himself with ammunition for a frontal attack.

Their “dates” begin to focus entirely on religious discussions. Each time they meet, he presents Joan with his findings. He asks her how she can possibly adhere to such contradictory tenets; she responds with her own attacks on Mormonism, aided by the anti-Mormon literature that is readily available from her priest. Joan has just as much in her arsenal with which to tear his faith down, but – perhaps hindered in some ways by the one-sided background of Mimi’s staunch teachings – Hamp has trouble seeing things from Joan’s perspective. To him, Mormon doctrine seems entirely logical, and despite his missionary service among non-believers, he lacks the capacity to truly imagine how outrageous and illogical the claims might sound to an outsider who has been armed with anti-Mormon messages almost since birth.

He has found himself a firmly logical girl who can certainly stay committed to a cause; she is exactly what

he is looking for, but she is so logical and committed that Hamp is faced with a losing proposition: she is too committed to leave her own faith, and too logical to accept some of the inherent contradictions in Mormon history that have to be taken on faith in order to be accepted.

Having gained some practice in the art of debating among the clergymen in the parishes of Silesia, Hamp decides it is time to step up the game. He bypasses Joan’s priest and marches straight to the Catholic bishop of Salt Lake City.

Monsignor Duane G. Hunt, himself a convert to the Catholic faith, is a formidable adversary.

“So where would you like to begin?” Msgr. Hunt confidently asks – being well versed against any possible volley Hamp might choose to launch his way.

Hamp proceeds to methodically itemize his claims. He begins by laying out the atrocities of the dark ages as evidence for a Great Apostasy, but his claims are only matched by Msgr. Hunt’s detailed knowledge of atrocities attributed to Mormons.

Hamp cites evidence for Catholic persecutions of the early Mormon Saints, not knowing that Msgr. Hunt had served his own Catholic mission to the Mormon enclave of Vernal, trying to win Catholic converts among a quite overwhelming Mormon majority. Msgr. Hunt recites specific cases in which the Catholics in Vernal felt as persecuted, shunned, and condemned as the downtrodden, Midwestern Latter-day Saints.

Having been appointed by Pope Pious XI himself, the same pope, incidentally, who had blessed Hamp in the

crowd at the Vatican a few years earlier, Msgr. Hunt is extremely well educated, well spoken, and – to Hamp – annoyingly objective. He fails to fall into a single one of the traps in which Hamp had managed to ensnare his Catholic counterparts in Europe. Not having ceded a single point after a lengthy discussion, Msgr. Hunt politely offers to continue the discussion once Hamp has done more homework.

Hamp realizes he is in over his head and takes the matter up with President Grant. He returns as a third party messenger and begins to hold regular meetings at both the Church Administration Building and the Catholic Diocese office, conveying the various claims back and forth. President Grant quickly tires of the subject and delegates the interviews to Apostle David O. McKay. Hamp keeps intricate discussion notes and assembles ammunition against every vulnerable piece of Catholic doctrine he can identify. His research begins to eat away at his scholastic study time, but the potentially eternal ramifications of these religious studies trump the school books.

Nonetheless, he forges ahead, trying to prove Catholicism false and Mormonism true. In the midst of these discussions, he and Joan dig in their trenches and face a stalemate.

Hamp complains about the quagmire to his best friend, Willard Smith. Willard's father, who has taken upon himself a bit of a patriarchal role since Chick's death, writes Hamp a long, heartfelt letter of advice and urges him to give up the fight. The very things Hamp admires in Joan, he writes, will prevent her from seeing

his side. Hamp eventually capitulates, draws a truce, and files his notes away. There is not much of a friendship left to salvage, and their future together soon disintegrates into nothing but a line on Hamp's annual Christmas card list.

It isn't long, though, until Hamp meets Marjorie Teudt, a fun-loving, spontaneous burst of energy who initially drives him crazy, but eventually draws him in. In short, she is precisely the opposite of Joan. She has an edge for flair and bursts of glamour; she flirts with art and dabbles in poetry, but her efforts in these arenas take a form that Hamp often has trouble appreciating. She is genuinely spirited and spunky, but can quickly turn to moody and irritable. At times she tries to manipulate Hamp to get her way using methods he hasn't yet learned to counter, and she has a tendency to nag him incessantly until she gets what she wants. In contrast to his relatively stable upbringing, Marjorie endured an often troubled childhood; the effects aren't immediately apparent to Hamp, but over time he begins to recognize the symptomatic idiosyncrasies. During occasional depressive episodes, for example, she becomes self-deprecating, fishing for compliments to shore up her self-esteem. Uncomfortable as it makes him, Hamp always obliges.

Somehow, though, these two polar opposites attract each other. When Marjorie dresses him in drag just for a laugh at a ward talent show, he rolls his eyes but eventually goes along with it; it is not the last time he will shake his head after a look in the mirror, wondering how on earth she had talked him into this. He isn't always sure

he appreciates it, but she brings out a new side of him, and he loves her dearly.

Soon they find themselves addressing wedding invitations. Hamp's courting efforts had involved a few false starts that had absorbed most of his attention for several years running. Although he had lost track of some of his former friends in the process, he had still managed to carefully maintain their whereabouts in his detailed address books; as he sorts through his files to collect mailing addresses for the wedding announcements, he is excited to reconnect with old friends.

Among his papers, he runs across the largest folder of all; as he pulls Joan's correspondence out of his file cabinet, he can't help staring at his unfinished treatise on Catholicism. Although the wedding is rapidly approaching, he decides to dive headlong back into the effort and devotes what little spare time is left in his schedule toward documenting his sources and laying out the pages in a book format.

Marjorie simply cannot understand his obsession and jealously challenges him to let it rest; it is water under the bridge, after all. She takes his insistence on finishing it as regret for having lost Joan; Hamp, on the other hand, sees it as a way to convince himself that he hadn't wasted all of that time over the years – he claims it is merely a means to turn his past efforts into a useful product.

Marjorie can't stop Hamp's stubborn march; he finally compiles a manuscript and approaches several publishers with the results of his efforts under the deliberately ambiguous title *Concerning God*. They

summarily reject it as lacking a marketable audience. Not to be defeated, Hamp pays for a limited run out of his own pocket. He sends a copy to Msgr. Hunt and anxiously awaits his feedback but receives no word back.

During endless, late-night episodes, he then sits at the typewriter and drafts letters of inquiry to everyone he can think of. He sends a letter with an accompanying copy of his book to each of the apostles and to various directors of Church departments and publications. In addition to President Grant, he hounds John Widtsoe, Sylvester Cannon, Rulon Wells, Ruben Clark, Richard Evans and every other general authority of note.

Wary of offending their Catholic friends, they send him back one rejection letter after another. Each response is filed neatly away for future reference. Some of the letters are cordial, while others more bluntly describe his book as "hardnosed," with too much of a "bite."

It becomes obvious to Hamp that the letter-writing campaign isn't working. Rather than giving up entirely, though, he decides that face-to-face meetings might be more productive. He has one last card in his pocket: his friend Gordon, who works behind the scenes at Church Headquarters. Although Gordon has less obvious influence on Church matters than the general authorities, Hamp feels that the effort might be worth one final shot. He decides to enlist Homer's help in setting up a meeting and promptly gives him a call.

"Do you still see Gordon much?" Hamp asks, "I have some questions I'd like to run by him."



“We have lunch in the Hotel Utah Cafeteria once a week,” Homer answers, to Hamp’s relief, “Why don’t you join us for lunch next week Thursday?”

“The tab will be on me,” Hamp answers, “since I do still owe you a meal from our old wager.”

“Don’t think I had forgotten,” Homer quips, “Though it won’t quite be home-cooked, I reckon I’ll settle to finally clear the debt off the balance books.”

Hamp sends Gordon a copy of his book in advance and eagerly awaits the meeting.

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On the appointed day, he makes his way across his old campus and toward the Hotel Utah. It gives him a lump in his throat to see the buildings of the L.D.S. that have been converted into storage and office space, but there is some new life in the renovated genealogical library and in the old classrooms that now house the successor of his alma mater, the L.D.S. Business College.

He runs briskly up the steps and finds Homer and Gordon waiting for him outside the cafeteria entrance. They find their seats and – after a brief greeting and some shared memories – Hamp readily notices a change in Gordon’s demeanor. In contrast to the old times at the L.D.S., Gordon has become much more professional and a bit standoffish. In recent years, he had often been called on to review various proposals for Church publication, and is now quite well versed in wording rejections. He is polite, but a bit aloof; he has grown quite used to having people contact him for his influence and for the company he keeps.

“Good luck with your book,” Gordon says bluntly, getting straight to the point, “I’m sure you’ll find an audience, but the Church has no interest at the present.” Gordon hands him back the book, which Hamp takes as a further blow.

Hamp feels devastated inside. Inwardly, he had held out hope that this might be his break-through. He quickly masks his emotions and turns to his meal.

“Still single?” asks Homer, coming to his rescue – knowing that Hamp’s wedding is just a few weeks away.

“Still a student?” Hamp replies with a jab of his own. Though Homer is nearing completion of his doctorate degree, he is the last of the foursome to still be enrolled in school.

They both turn to Gordon. “Still childless?” they ask jokingly, knowing that Marjorie is already eight months along.

“Not for long,” Gordon answers, “and if I can just manage to get my office work done a little quicker each day for the next few weeks, the nursery will be ready just in time.”

Gordon and Marjorie, the two high school sweethearts, had continued their romance as soon as he had returned from his mission. They got married, worked hard, and lived frugally, building additional rooms onto their house when needed. In his work for the Church, Gordon now combats bad press with a unilateral blitz of his own rather than ignoring or responding to criticism. It is a task he finds incredibly rewarding, but it draws long hours from his already stretched schedule.

Not one to brag about his accomplishments, Gordon quickly changes the subject away from himself.

“So you’ve found yourself a Marjorie as well, have you?” he says to Hamp, “Well, though I’ve never met her, I do think her name sounds rather perfect!”

“She’s quite a firecracker,” Hamp says, “and she’ll keep me in line. But let’s hear about the scandalous missionary who landed himself a bride on the Lord’s errand!” he says.

“Oh come on, Hamp,” Homer says a bit defensively, “You know we barely even spoke over there.” He reaches for his dessert and, regaining the upper hand, says, “Since it turned out in my favor, I should have made you that second bet a few years ago. You’d have owed me another dinner.”

“Yes, it sounds like your persistence wore her down,” Hamp jokes, “But the daughter of an apostle? I’m not sure I’d want that kind of pressure from my in-laws.”

Homer rolls his eyes.

“My bride’s father ran off on her,” Hamp continues, “so I don’t have quite as much to live up to. Guess the pressure’s off for me!”

“Well her parents certainly made me nervous for a while,” Homer says, “In fact, it took me years to stop calling my father-in-law *President*.”

“So how did you breach the subject of a proposal,” Hamp asks curiously.

With a wide grin, Homer proceeds to dive into their story: He had had his eye on Eudora from the instant he and the Widtsos found themselves back in Utah after completing their missionary service. Under the guise of

adding to the mission history, he occasionally brought mission-related documents or photographs to their home.

During his visits, he would always spend a few extra minutes reminiscing with Eudora. He was particularly impressed by her world experience and her education; his father, George, had unwittingly passed along a preference for the finest institutions, and Eudora’s training at a British boarding academy seemed to land her heads above the typical Salt Lake Valley girls.

It had felt a bit awkward to shed the formalities between them, but soon they fell in love and were married – not just with her father’s blessing but, in fact, by Elder Widtsos himself. Within a few years – despite Homer’s prolonged student status – they had added three children to the family.

“And they both lived happily ever after,” recites Hamp.

“Well, we’re still writing that part of the story, Homer says, grabbing for another dessert. “By the way, don’t tell Eudora I’m having seconds,” he says subtly, “or she won’t let me eat any other sweets for a week.”

“Keeping secrets from her already, are we?” Gordon chides.

“Well, she has become very health conscious lately,” Homer complains, “insisting that I get fit and eat right as an example to the children.”

Gordon makes a move to assist her lofty goal by grabbing for Homer’s dessert.

“In fact,” Homer continues, pulling the dessert back to his corner of the table, “she had our babysitter Muriel in tears the other day. The poor girl is very fond of

sweets herself, and when Eudora and I came home from a show, she proudly told us that she had made and served the children chocolate decadence as a special treat!”

“Bet that didn’t go over well,” says Hamp.

“She was met with Eudora’s scornful eye – even I don’t see that look very often. ‘We do not have confectionary in this house,’ she told her in a chilling tone.”

“Fired!” Hamp says with his finger pointed like a gun.

“But there’s more,” Homer continues, “When I drove her home, Muriel confessed that she had also made a big batch of divinity sugar, which she was smuggling out in her backpack to avoid another scolding.”

Hamp and Gordon laugh at the scene Homer describes.

“Do know what’s most ironic?” Homer asks, “Here’s the best part: The poor thing has now met herself a dental student who is sure to ban her from sweets for life if they marry.”

Sure enough, the future Dr. Krey – my very own maternal grandfather – would end up purging their future home of candy in all its forms.

The laughter subsides, and Gordon looks at his watch. “Well, despite the secrets you’re hiding from her,” he says, trying to bring the conversation to a close so he can get back to work, “it sounds like you have done very well for yourself.”

After sharing a few more high school and mission memories, they run out of small talk, and Hamp picks up the tab – as long promised. As they are about to part ways

outside the building, another character from their past storms across the sidewalk.

“R.J. !” Homer shouts, “What are you doing here?”

Rulon turns to them. He hasn’t been called *R.J* in a long time.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” he answers, but he stops in his tracks nonetheless. There is an awkward pause; it has been over five years since they had last seen each other, and they aren’t sure where to begin to catch up.

“I’ve been writing a book,” Hamp says, breaking the silence, “Want to see a copy?”

“Sure,” says Rulon.

Gordon feels the sales pitch coming on and looks at his watch again. With a tight schedule to keep, he politely excuses himself. Homer – knowing his in-laws have had their share of contentions with Rulon – decides to take a passive approach and likewise parts company with a series of handshakes.

Left alone with Hamp, Rulon takes the book and thumbs through it. “What’s the premise?” he asks a bit impatiently.

“Basically how the Catholics are wrong and we’re right,” Hamp says proudly.

“Well I hate to tell you this, but you’re both wrong,” Rulon says bluntly.

Hamp is curious. “Is that so?” he asks.

“Let me tell you something,” Rulon says, pointing toward the administration building from which he has just

emerged, “That was the last time I will ever set foot in that den of wolves.”

Hamp gives him an inquisitive look; this explanation will clearly take more than a few minutes. They both take a seat on the steps and Rulon proceeds to relate his story, beginning with his return from London a few years earlier:

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Three long years after Rulon had last seen the Browns, Sister Zina Brown invited the freshly returned missionary back to her home – purportedly to hear him report back on his mission experiences. Her true intentions as a matchmaker, however, are easily discerned, and she does her best to ensure that her earlier blessing on Rulon comes to fruition.

As they sit around the dining room table on that hot summer night in 1933, Rulon immediately notices a new maturity in Zola. While her sister Zina is still a bit of a troublemaker, not wanting to conform to their father’s pious image, Zola, on the other hand, has grown very independent and level-headed since Rulon had last dined with them. Both, however, are bored by the endless political questions Brother Brown poses to Rulon. Brother Brown had served as a missionary in England while Heber J. Grant presided over the mission before the Great War; he is fascinated by the unfolding political scene in Europe and wishes to hear every first-hand detail of the conditions that he can extract from Rulon.

“Well, I didn’t really get to see much of Europe,” Rulon answers coldly after fending off a few questions, “so I can’t very well speak on the subject.”

Rulon does want to hear more about Zola, though, and the family dinner table conversation begins to narrow into a dialogue between the two of them.

One dinner invitation follows another over the ensuing weeks; after each meal, Zina the Elder arranges for Rulon and Zola to spend time together in the sitting room getting to know each other better.

As the months pass by, Brother Brown is increasingly absent. As a newly called Stake President, he has a busy schedule to keep. Though the young couple’s romance flourishes into a courtship, Rulon actually has to schedule an appointment through Brother Brown’s personal secretary in order to ask for Zola’s hand in marriage. After ample admonitions and a long discourse on paternal responsibilities, permission is finally granted.

Within a year Rulon and Zola are married in the Salt Lake Temple. Though he fears it is a fruitless request, Rulon nonetheless asks his father, David, if he would come to the temple grounds to greet the wedding party and at least be present for the photographs. David flies into a tirade at the notion, scolding Rulon for following false prophets who have fallen from grace.

“I told old Joseph F. that I’d never set foot anywhere near Temple Square again,” he blurts out stubbornly, “until he comes forward and admits that the Manifesto was manipulated.”

Rulon knows that any tacit acknowledgment of his father’s arguments will only lead to further diatribes about the authenticity of various facsimiles; he decides at that point that it is best in the long run for his newly

formed family to cut off ties completely with his polygamous, ex-LDS family members.

Life settles into a routine for Rulon and Zola over the next several years, and it isn't long before two little boys liven up the home. Rulon's work as a tax accountant brings home a relatively comfortable paycheck for the late-depression era; yet he cannot find happiness in this new life. He comes home from work each day and sulks, often heading back out after dinner to spend long hours at the local library reviewing financial papers. His mood weighs heavily on Zola, and she wishes she might find a way to help him out of his depression.

"You seem so sad," Zola says one evening as they sit down to a family dinner.

Rulon does not respond but just stares at the floor. Zola suspects that his increasingly frequent depressive episodes might have something to do with the long-standing family conflicts.

"If I couldn't speak with my own family, I'd just die," Zola says.

Rulon still offers no response.

"Why don't we invite your father for Sunday dinner next week?" Zola asks hopefully, "It's been so long since the children have seen their grandpa."

"Fine, I'll ask him," Rulon glumly agrees. He thinks it is a terrible suggestion, but he forces himself to comply in order to put an end to the conversation. "But I don't want him bringing his wives along," he adds, "The kids are confused enough about their family without having to deal with a whole crew of grandmas."

Rulon has never forgiven David for marrying his step-mothers; because the marriages are legally unrecognized, he considers the other wives to be mistresses and counts his father as an adulterer. He shakes his head and taps his fingers nervously on the table. Finally he stands up from the table and reluctantly grabs the telephone to dial the switchboard.

Zola smiles, pleased with the progress.

"I don't think he'll agree to it," Rulon adds with his hand over the mouthpiece while the operator tries to reach David.

It is an awkward conversation once they finally make the connection, but to Rulon's surprise, the dinner invitation is accepted – under the imposed condition of silence on religious matters.

As Sunday rolls around, Zola prepares a savory meal with multiple courses aimed at prolonging conversations and mending former wounds. In a reserved, unemotional greeting at the door, they exchange formalities and David is invited into the home. He knows that he has been granted a singular chance to re-enter his son's life. All he has to do is to keep quiet; if he starts spouting off about polygamy, he has been told, he will never be invited back.

Nevertheless, it is a chance that David decides to take; he simply cannot keep his views to himself when his posterity's salvation is at stake. As soon as he and Rulon sit down at the dining room table, he starts into a discourse. Though disinterested in the details, Zola senses that something is terribly wrong the instant she brings in the meal from the kitchen and receives an apologetic look

from Rulon. Knowing that he may not have another chance to voice his views, David raises his voice and begins to testify more fervently. Plural marriage, he claims, is as necessary to salvation as any other saving ordinance.

As the head of the household, Rulon knows that he has the right to throw his father out; but in a watershed moment, he decides for once that rather than arguing, he will just listen. As David preaches with an eloquence that seems to rival the prophets of old, Rulon hears him out and is entirely captivated. He even discerns a glow about his father as he speaks; it is a fervor that he wants badly to emulate – a passion that is missing in his own life. He realizes that he has never actually given his father a chance. *Might there actually be something to this?* he wonders.

Long before this dinner with David, Rulon had already begun to question the authority of some of his Church leaders – Elder Widtsoe in particular; that seed of disenchantment had already been planted, but now it receives all the fodder it needs to sprout.

Still bitter over his excommunication over two decades before, David proceeds to attack each of the current LDS leaders. “They’re hiding the evidence,” he claims, “and I’ll bet Heber’s got the documents locked up in a vault right there in his own office.”

Among the documents he refers to is the much-disputed 1886 Revelation by John Taylor proclaiming the permanence of plural marriage.

“Heber even admitted it was in the prophet’s very own handwriting,” David says, his voice growing louder, “and he only dismissed it because it had been misfiled.”

Rulon has heard this argument before and nods his head.

“Misfiled!” David shouts, pounding the table for added emphasis, “If it’s not a house of order, what does that tell you?”

“Not a house of God,” Rulon says softly, his expression changing from skeptical to quizzical.

“We were forced into hiding,” David continues, lowering his voice to a more personal tone, “Do you remember what it was like to go by a false name?”

Rulon nods again.

“After years of shame, I finally had to stand up for my beliefs,” David continues, “and old Joseph F. excommunicated me for it!”

While David outlines details related to missing and manipulated manuscripts, the memories of life in hiding come flooding back to Rulon. The injustice of his childhood suddenly haunts him with a distinct suspicion that he has been wronged, robbed and duped by his Church leaders all along. He curls his brow and stares at the table; though David keeps talking, Rulon doesn’t need to hear any more.

At the next break in the conversation, he looks up, feeling reborn. “Thanks for coming dad, I’ll give it some thought,” he says. But inside he realizes that he has just been converted. If the finality of that moment could be captured along with its impact on future generations, this dialogue may rank among the all-time, most influential

dinner conversations ever held. As they shake hands and part with an awkward hug, he realizes that there is no going back.

As zealously and promptly as Saul dropped his allegiance to the Sanhedrin upon his conversion, Rulon has severed himself from the direction and influence of his former leaders in one fell swoop. In a complete paradigm shift that has only taken a few minutes to transpire, he tries to grasp the ramifications of the sudden transformation in his psyche.

“Can you believe that nonsense?” Zola asks Rulon hopefully as they clean up the dishes.

Rulon gives her a silent glance in response that chills her to the bone. Surely he hasn’t taken any of this seriously, she hopes, but she doesn’t dare to ask any questions.

Rulon stays at the kitchen table, his scriptures laid out before him. He doesn’t move a muscle – he just stares at the pages with his head spinning.

At first light the next morning, he finds himself still sitting at the table in a deep trance. As the children begin to stir, he knows that he needs to get away to clear his thoughts, so he uncharacteristically decides to skip work. He sneaks into the bedroom and gives Zola a peck on the cheek.

“I’ll be back later,” he says.

Her heart sinks, and she pretends to stay asleep; inside, she fears the worst.

As he walks out the front door, Rulon does not know where he is heading, but he instinctively turns toward the mountains and begins a long, thoughtful

journey. Like Joseph Smith himself, he feels in dire need of knowledge. As he begins to climb the nearby foothills of the Wasatch Front, he steadily increases his pace.

Somehow he feels that this journey is as important to the modern dispensation as Joseph Smith’s own trek to the Sacred Grove. As he breathes in the crisp air and stops for a moment to take in the majestic view, the sun peers over the mountains in the east and begins to shrink the massive shadow that retreats across the valley below.

The high ground helps him feel liberated and stalwartly determined. He is convinced that if Palmyra had mountains like this, Joseph Smith would have walked right past the grove and climbed ever higher to commune with God. He clammers upwards until he finds himself on top of a peak overlooking on one side the West Desert and the cities of the Saints, and on the other side the vast expanse of the Wasatch Range.

“This is the Place,” he says aloud to himself, trying to invoke a prophetic reverence on the moment.

With that, Rulon drops to his knees to pour out his soul to the Lord. His question is quite simple: Is his father an apostate, or has the rest of the Church gone astray? The implications of the answer, however, are tremendous; everything he knows – everything he loves – is at stake. Using the nearby rocks as an altar for his prayer, he remains on his knees as long as he can possibly stand to. He stares at the expansive city before him – a city that had sprouted from the desert, platted and ploughed by his own pioneer ancestors. Those who have gone before him now have the answers he seeks; he calls on them to guide his thoughts and to steer him toward the truth.

Never in all his life had he felt so confused; with a storm of emotions brewing inside of him, he bows his head and waits for the darkness that preceded Joseph Smith's heavenly vision, but it never comes. He looks up and feels nothing; is this the sort of *stupor of thought* Brother Joseph had classified as an answer in itself? Should he be conducting his research more systematically, perhaps by perusing the library shelves for historical documents to guide his decision, instead of isolating himself on a mountaintop? He stares at the old library building beyond the toe of the slope; he had visited the library just the week before while looking for the latest tax codes. Suddenly, a piercing thought enters his head and spreads through his body like an electric charge. He clearly sees the librarian who had assisted him. Is this his answer?

His thoughts run wild; he does not even know her name, but suddenly he feels impressed that she should become his wife...his second wife...a sister wife to Zola!

He runs down the mountain, sliding down the rocks and practically stumbling every step along the dusty path he blazes. Will Zola believe him? Surely she won't doubt his sincerity, but will she stand by his side and follow the path he has now chosen to take? His pioneer ancestors had found themselves in the same predicament when plural marriage was first introduced; would she – like they had – side with her husband, submitting to his patriarchal authority? Or will this drive her away forever? And what of their children?

His excitement begins to waver as he pictures her first response. Whatever her reaction, he realizes that this

will forever cast a wedge in the Brown family. Can he really expect her to sever ties with her own family by supporting this calamitous claim? Rulon had made a similar sacrifice for the mainstream Church as a teenager, but at the time the decision was solely his own, and he hadn't had the responsibilities of parenthood to bear at the time.

With the ultimate prize of eternal salvation at stake for himself as well as his posterity, he has to be sure of this new commitment. And like his prophet heroes, he has to be willing to give up everything – absolutely everything – if need be. His descent slows with these thoughts, but he continues his resolute march down the mountain, drawing on the same sorrowful certainty with which he imagines Abraham marching himself up a mountain, willing to sacrifice his family for the sake of his vision.

He is unswayed but absolutely terrified by the time he walks back through the door.

Zola hears him out, but she cannot believe what she is hearing. She locks herself in their bedroom and utters her own, fervent prayer. She feels empty and alone, but in the back of her mind, she knows that earthly laws will be on her side and that – regardless of her decision – nothing can separate her from her two little boys. With this assurance, she feels enough comfort to let Rulon decide his own fate. Though she feels no prompting to follow his lead, she does want to make absolutely sure that her decision is not being guided by her own pride and jealousy. Her family, too, has polygamous roots, as attested by the complex, interwoven family tree on her



wall. These were by no means always happy marriages, but somehow they worked out in the end. What would her forefathers expect of her? Alone in the bedroom, she drops to her knees again and again, begging the Lord for some form of confirmation. After a few hours, she finally emerges and confronts Rulon.

“This vision of yours has more to do with me than it does with you,” she says bluntly. “If it were from God,” she continues, “I have to believe that He would allow me to share in it. He would not expect me to accept something this substantial without granting me my own confirmation.”

Rulon looks into her eyes and already knows what her final answer will be.

“The Lord has offered me no indication of its truth,” she says, “and I simply cannot take your word alone for this.”

“And I cannot deny my vision,” says Rulon.

Zola nods her head; she knows him well and understands that, once committed, nothing can sway him. They are at an absolute impasse.

Rulon knows that it is a horrible choice to present to his young bride, forcing her to choose between her husband and her faith; though he knows what he must do, his very soul tears at him as he feels his family slipping away in the process.

He knows that living this principle will entail an all-or-nothing decision; with differing feelings on a doctrine this deep, they simply cannot stay married. He loves his children, but he also knows that if he has to answer to them someday, he would rather tell them that

their father stayed true to his convictions, suppressing that love, than that their father compromised his convictions because of his own, selfish love. He believes firmly in the Law of Consecration, but had never imagined it would involve this much sacrifice. The sword of Jesus bears heavily on his mind.

“Christ came *with a sword* to divide families,” he quotes from the New Testament.

“Rulon, no!” Zola cries, sure that he has ended up on the wrong side of the sword.

“He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me,” Rulon quotes further.

“Well what about your wife?” she mumbles, “the words of Christ never mentioned abandoning her, now do they?”

Their oldest son, Rodger, emerges from his bedroom. The sight of him tests Rulon’s resolve, and he cannot bear to face Zola any longer. He gives Rodger a hug and tells him to go back to bed. Then, filling his head with images of some of his forefathers who had left their own families to join the Mormon Church in the first place, he suppresses his emotions and tears himself away. Though he loves his wife and children more than life itself, he grabs the car keys off the mantel and walks out the door. He does not even know how the librarian will respond, but it does not matter; his home is already broken. Zola collapses on the floor in tears as the sound of the car engine faded away.

Surprisingly, the librarian remembers him and is not surprised in the least to see him; in fact, she mentions having felt a premonition that she would see him again.

With that confirmation, Rulon's introduction and marriage proposal are spoken within minutes of each other. Even though she knows that she is, in all likelihood, consenting to the prospect of being shared with additional sister wives, she summarily agrees to his proposal.

Rulon reappears in the doorway to find Zola crying on the telephone; she had been feeling a desperate need for a father's blessing and any guidance he might offer her. It is not long before Hugh B. Brown appears on the doorstep. It is an intimidating moment for Rulon, but he tries the same mind trick he had previously used, smirking at the thought of two new parents – both Browns – naming their son Hugh *Brown Brown*. His knees are knocking, just as they had done during that commencement evening a decade before, but the trick works again, calming his nerves.

"Please, have a seat," Rulon says, politely inviting Brother Brown to sit down at the kitchen table.

Brother Brown sits and tries to reason with him, but soon sees that it is a futile task; Rulon's fate is sealed. In addition to his concern for Rulon's salvation, however, he is also concerned about an additional quandary: the image of his family and the image of the Church or, more specifically, the image of his family within the Church. He knows now that Rulon will not waver from this decision; the only influence Brother Brown can still exert is on his daughter. In any case, he is going to be left with one of two scenarios, neither one of which is in the least bit palatable: the daughter of a stake president married to a polygamist, or the daughter of a stake president

divorced from a polygamist. Any way dear Brother Brown looks at it, it is a losing situation, so he turns to the logistical matters.

"I trust you will continue to support my daughter and grandchildren financially," he says sharply, "should it come to a separation."

"Ever since Elder Widtsoe robbed me of my mission savings," Rulon says with an air of pride, "I have worked hard and lived frugally so that I would have no debts."

Brother Brown looks at him cautiously. "So what, exactly, are you saying?" he asks.

"I intend to remain debt-free," Rulon says proudly, "including to you and your family – whatever sacrifice might be required on my part. Your daughter will have my support before it is ever owed to her."

Brother Brown looks reassured for a moment, but then squints his eyes. "Robbed by Elder Widtsoe, you say?" he asks curiously, "I don't believe that for a minute."

"He asked me to ignore my better instincts and borrow money from him," Rulon explains, "to cover his own mismanagement of the mission's staffing needs. Now there's a fellow I would never trust with my money!"

"Remember, there are two sides to every story," Brother Brown counters.

Rulon should have known better than to bad-mouth Elder Widtsoe – Brother Brown's mentor at Utah State Agricultural College – in front of him, but he continues just to see how far he can push him. "The crazy

Norwegian! His daughter Eudora once told me that his hand was attached to his head at birth; the doctors actually had to cut it free, she said. Well if you ask me, they must have severed part of his brain in the process.”

“Watch your evil-speaking,” Brother Brown warns, with anger stirring in his voice, “Elder Widtsoe is one of the most brilliant educators, scientists, and authors the Lord has ever had at his disposal.”

“Well if he’s so brilliant, perhaps he can earn me my money back,” Rulon taunts.

“I myself am heavily in debt,” admits Brother Brown, who knows something of financial sacrifice himself, having spent much of his adult life trying to earn money to repay his personal debts.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” says Rulon.

“I owe money to my leaders for debts incurred in Church service; though these debts may burden me until the day I die, I fully intend to repay them as the Lord sees fit.”

Rulon stares out the window. “Better to have avoided the debt in the first place.”

“The Brethren are now asking me to follow in Elder Widtsoe’s footsteps as the British Mission President,” Brother Brown discloses, “I am expected to pay my own way, but I do not have the means and will need to borrow money again.” Putting Rulon to the test, he asks, “What would you do?”

“The Church coffers are filling again; they can well afford to support you without your personal contribution. I’ve been watching their investments,”

Rulon adds, “Though they won’t divulge it, I know they’re hiding some of the profits.”

“Careful where you’re going with that,” Brother Brown admonishes, “As for me, I will not take the widow’s mite when I can deal with the costs myself.”

“Good luck with that,” Rulon says with a jab, “I hope it goes better for you than your Senate bid.”

Brother Brown refuses to enter into the political trap and tries to turn the topic back to the gospel. “When the Lord asks, you give,” reasons Elder Brown, “and you work out the balance sheet later.”

“You do it your way, and I’ll do it mine,” says Rulon, “The Lord has asked this thing of me; Zola is free to leave me, or to join me, but I plan to answer His call either way.”

Brother Brown sighs.

“The Lord will work out the balance sheet later,” Rulon adds crossly, “and no matter Zola’s decision, I will find myself free from guilt on the day of reckoning.”

Rulon has cleverly used Brother Brown’s own words against him, but he is sleep-deprived and exhausted from the lengthy dialogue. He stands up from the table, signaling an end to the discussion.

Knowing that he himself will not be able to provide for his daughter’s well-being, Brother Brown acknowledges that he has no other choice than to take Rulon at his word. “Please do take care of my daughter and our grandchildren while I’m overseas,” he blurts.

Rulon nods in affirmation. The two of them have nothing more to say to each other.

Behind closed doors, Brother Brown then proceeds to give Zola a father's blessing. He tells her a customized version of his famous *Parable of the Currant Bush*, tailored specifically to her needs. Sometimes limbs are severed for the good of the whole, he says, and the tears of sap are temporary. It is not much consolation to Zola at the time, but during the coming trials of a single mother's life, it will offer her a small dose of hope. Before leaving, he turns to her privately and pledges his personal and legal support in the event of a divorce.

Rulon feels shut out of these private conversations but realizes that he had better get used to this new world. Over the next few weeks, while Rulon begins to make wedding plans, Zola visits her father's legal practice to draw up the divorce papers.

Brother Brown feels ashamed to bring up the rift in his family to his peers, but seeking advice, he eventually brings the matter to President Grant's attention – upon which Rulon is promptly summoned by the Prophet himself. Rulon gladly obliges, anxious to argue his father's key points at the highest level.

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"Well, Brother Jeffs," President Grant says from his office overlooking Temple Square, "I understand you have some concerns about plural marriage. So where do we begin?"

"Let's start with the facts," Rulon answers, "and perhaps the key to your secret vault."

President Grant laughs, though he realizes Rulon isn't joking.

"Show me the so-called revelation," Rulon demands, "I want to see Wilford Woodruff's handwriting with my own eyes."

President Grant taps on the conspicuous set of scriptures on his desk. "The declaration was adopted by unanimous vote," he says with an air of authority, "That should be enough for you."

"Well perhaps someone should have told the voters that the text had already been manipulated by others – twisted for their purposes," Rulon says frankly, "I know you've got the original version hidden away in your archives somewhere. Or did that one get 'mis-filed' along with John Taylor's revelations?"

"John Taylor's words were never canonized," President Grant says, growing a bit defensive. "Stick to the Holy Scriptures; your duty is to follow the Word of God," he says sternly, "and not to speculate about what is meant by some dream you happen to run across on a second-hand scrap of paper."

"If it's just a measly scrap of paper, why do you keep it locked up with your treasures?" Rulon asks snidely. "I know you've got it in the archives. All you have to do is to go and find the drawer for 1886," he adds, "Give me the key and I'll go and open it up myself."

President Grant looks at the floor and shakes his head.

"Where are the original documents?" Rulon asks stubbornly, "Just show them to me, and we can put all of this to rest once and for all!"

“You know what happened to the sign-seekers in the Book of Mormon, don’t you?” asks President Grant, provoking Rulon with his insinuation.

“Are you threatening to have me trampled?” Rulon counters angrily, “Don’t go comparing me to Korihor. I’m just asking you to show me that the rescindment was God’s will – and not some cowardly capitulation.”

President Grant looks at Moroni’s gleaming trumpet through his window. “Whenever you see a man seeking after a sign,” he quotes quietly, “you may set it down that he is an adulterous man.”

Rulon laughs off the accusation.

“Well, isn’t that what you’re telling me?” President Grant asks. “You come seeking a sign and at the same time proudly tell me you’ll be breaking your marriage vows?” he adds, “I’ve never seen Brother Joseph’s words fulfilled more literally.”

Rulon sits back in his chair and draws a deep breath, plotting his next line of attack.

President Grant breaks the silence first, trying in vain to find some middle ground. “No matter where your research takes you,” he says, “in this matter you’ll have to exercise your own faith to decide.”

“Don’t start that with me; I have exercised my faith,” Rulon says, becoming increasingly agitated, “After all, that’s exactly why we find ourselves here!”

“Wilford Woodruff was the mouthpiece of the Lord,” President Grant says, “I am convinced of that.”

“And what about John Taylor?” Didn’t the Lord speak through him in declaring plural marriage to be eternal and absolutely essential?”

“That’s your own interpretation.”

“Well since that’s all I’ve got, that’s what I will take to the bank,” Rulon replies with his arms folded, “Not all of us can choose what to throw out and what to add to the next version of the scriptures.”

President Grant looks at the 1921 edition of the scriptures on his desk – the compilation of which he had personally overseen.

“If my father’s research is correct,” Rulon continues, “John Taylor’s revelation was read in on your first day as an apostle. I might be speculating regarding its original content, but you were there – maybe you should go look it up in your journal so you can remember what he said!”

President Grant knows full well that Rulon always does his homework. He decides not to pursue this particular avenue and tries to steer the conversation in another direction.

“When one law is fulfilled, we are expected to abide by a new law; the Law of Moses was God’s will when it was given,” he says, “and well after it was fulfilled in Christ, the Pharisees and Sadducees continued to follow it to the letter – right to perdition!”

“With that sort of a comparison, you’re certainly in no place to call me a hypocrite!” cries Rulon.

“So you’ll trust a dead prophet over a living one?” President Grant asks.

“I would trust a living prophet if I knew where to find one,” Rulon challenges him.

“You can argue all you wish about the past,” President Grant says, “but you are choosing your path now and for the future, not just for yourself, but for countless descendants. I give you this counsel: Leave it alone. Let it be. If you go down this path, the only way to return is on your family’s broken back.”

“My family is already broken,” Rulon replies, “Brother Brown made sure of that.”

President Grant puts his pen down and stops taking notes. He is done with the discussion.

Rulon, however, decides to raise the stakes. “As zealously as Paul fought his tormentors,” he challenges, “I will fight you and your followers for letting the government dictate your so-called doctrine.”

“Our doctrine includes following the laws of the land,” President Grant counters.

“Well thank the Lord the Nazis aren’t in charge here,” Rulon says. “Or you’d be changing your doctrine to fit their loathsome laws.”

President Grant shakes his head.

“So you say it’s all about the laws of the land?” Rulon asks cunningly. “And what if I find myself a country that allows the practice of polygamy?” he challenges, “Is there anything in your American Manifesto that tells me I am not free to practice the principle elsewhere?”

“You are an American citizen; let’s keep the discussion to the here and now.” President Grant looks at his pocket watch. He knows these arguments are just

meant to trap him in his own words and that he is unlikely to have any influence on the direction Rulon takes. “Why are the treasurers always the traitors?” he mumbles to himself.

The imputation is a low blow to Rulon. Incited by the comparison to Judas Iscariot, he becomes even more defensive. “Since you’re so keen on quoting Joseph Smith, I’ll do the same,” Rulon says.

“Be my guest,” President Grant says, throwing his hands up in surrender.

“I have seen a vision, I know it, and I know that God knows it,” Rulon recites, “I am as confident as Paul before Agrippa; all the persecution under heaven cannot make it otherwise.”

“Well, I see your predicament,” President Grant observes, trying to find some common ground.

“No you don’t see my predicament. You simply paid a \$100 fine for the practice, and that was the end of it.

“That was for cohabitation, not polygamy!”

“Don’t get pedantic with me; you will not win that argument,” Rulon taunts, “My commitment to the principle, you’ll have to admit, will require much more than a cheap, monetary sacrifice.”

Not wanting to debate his own past – and remembering that Rulon had won the very debate competition that bore his name, President Grant tries a reconciliatory approach once more. “Yes, I can see how complicated this might be for you.”

“And I disagree with you yet again – it may be difficult, but it is entirely uncomplicated; I actually find it

quite simple,” Rulon argues, “You claim that personal revelation is a God-given right? Well here you have it; this is my personal revelation. Will you refute it?”

President Grant shakes his head, “Nothing we can say here will prove it true or prove it false.”

“You say the same about the First Vision, don’t you?” Rulon asks. “You and I are not that different after all,” he adds, “but while you were polygamous, you are now monogamous; I am merely taking your original course in reverse.”

“It is a course that will take you away from the priesthood and straight to outer darkness if you aren’t careful.”

“You think so? So what of your other wives?” Rulon asks, “in the afterlife, when all is restored, won’t you be a polygamist just like me?”

“Perhaps you’re right,” President Grant admits, “but the Lord asks obedience of us here, in this life. I intend to obey my principles and the current doctrines of the kingdom; and you are obliged to follow your present priesthood leaders.”

“Thanks for the advice,” Rulon says scornfully.

President Grant then sits forward in his seat and stares Rulon directly in the eyes. “I warn you to listen to the word of the Lord,” he says, “If you choose to engage in this practice, you will break your marriage covenant to Zola and thereby commit adultery in the process. Do I need to remind you of the eternal implications of that breach? It was not without reason that the stone tablets read, *Thou shalt not!*”

“It’s easy for you to condemn me, Heber, since your other two wives died young and in order.” Rulon knows that this remark will effectively end their dialogue. “Well what if they had lived?” he asks, “You’d have been on my father’s side instead of getting him excommunicated!”

Not usually prone to anger, President Grant has to use every bit of available discretion to avoid becoming absolutely furious that Rulon keeps pulling his deceased wives into the debate. “Perhaps we should continue this discussion another time,” he says, hoping to return his blood pressure to a normal level.

“No, I won’t be back in this building,” Rulon says coldly, “and I won’t be changing my mind – rest assured of that.”

“If you do go down this path,” President Grant says sternly, “you would thereby renounce your faith, and it would put an end to our friendship.”

“Well I guess that’s a sacrifice I’m willing to make,” Rulon says sarcastically.

“I don’t need to remind you that the practice of polygamy is illegal,” President Grant adds, “and you should know that I will be obliged to give you up if it ever comes to that.”

“So are you going to call the cops now, or will you give me a running head start first?” Rulon jokes, trying to make light of the challenge.

“The authorities can decide for themselves if it’s worth their time,” President Grant says, “but if they do decide to track you down, I will have to side with the laws of the land and support your arrest. And if I am a

called as a witness, I would have to opt for your incarceration.”

“So be it,” says Rulon, turning his back, “then I’ll face you in court, both here and in the eternities – God is the only witness I’ll need to call on.”

With a huff, Rulon slams the door. It is a long walk down the corridor, but the farther he gets from President Grant’s office, the more he feels released from his conflicting emotions. Though initially dejected, he now feels empowered as he walks out of the Church Administration Building, picking up the pace along South Temple with his head held high. Hamp’s greeting from the steps takes him quite by surprise, but he had been very anxious to relate his story to someone who might understand his side.

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“So there you have it,” Rulon says, folding his arms and hoping to have won himself an adherent in Hamp, “Now what do you think of that?”

The tale has almost caused Hamp to forget why his own head had hung so low. After having spent most of the afternoon sitting on the steps, he finally stands up. Taking his book back from Rulon, he says, “Well, I guess you won’t be interested in the case against the Catholics.”

“No sir,” Rulon says in reply while stretching his legs, “at least not until after I finish with the so-called Latter-day Saints. But in the meantime, I do hope you’ll have the courage to join me in the fundamental practice of Mormonism.”

Hamp hides a smile as he thinks about the lashing he would receive from Marjorie if he ever dared to even mention a conversation with a polygamist.

“Not a chance, my friend,” he answers, “Even if I thought there were something to it, I’m not sure I’d be willing to endure the whipping I’d be subjected to. Besides, if there is plural marriage in heaven, my bride would kick any sister wife to --”

“You’ll see!” Rulon interrupts, not amused at the light Hamp is making of such a serious subject, “The day of reckoning will be upon us soon, and you’ll wish you had listened to me.”

“Well I do hope you’ll see the light before then,” Hamp counters, “and come back to the fold someday.”

“I’ve seen the light myself,” Rulon answers, “and I intend to follow it away from this place – come what may.”

Hamp looks over at the temple and lets out a deep breath.

“For the first time,” Rulon relates, “I can now say that I would put God’s work before anything else in my life. It is an exquisite feeling!” He then adds a resolute phrase that he will often repeat in his own journals and sermons: “I know where I am and where I am going.”

With those parting words and a relatively cold handshake, their lives diverge and follow entirely different paths into the future. True to his word, Rulon withdraws from his former friends and keeps his distance from Temple Square. Failing to recognize the authority of the Church court that excommunicates him, he doesn’t even attend his own hearing later that month.



Hamp and Marge are married in due time, and Hamp returns to the National Park Service as a pilot. In the process he becomes familiar with every major landmark in Southern Utah and Northern Arizona. As he views the desolate slot canyons from the air, he falls in love with the rustic beauty of the area. He tries to convey that enthusiasm to the tourists in his plane, but the renegades in Short Creek have begun to cause quite a stir in the press, gaining some momentum and publicity in the process; Hamp's tourists often want to hear just as much about the isolated polygamous communities that are springing up along the state border as they do about the scenery.

Meanwhile, Lorin Woolley and Leslie Broadbent, both returned missionaries who had left the mainstream LDS Church, lead an increasing number of polygamous congregations to settle in the isolated area, convincing their followers that they will be free to practice their religion, unhindered by government or mainstream LDS authorities. They are soon joined by one more returned missionary with just enough skill and clout to unite the factions and turn their discordant sects into a consolidated, streamlined, and profitable operation: *the money man* himself, Rulon Timpson Jeffs.

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Hugh and Zina Brown
with daughters Zina and Zola in 1911



Hugh and Zina Brown
at their golden wedding anniversary in 1958
[Zola second from left, Zina second from right]

Chapter 15: Battlefield



Hamp as an Army Air Corps cadet

Squabbles over polygamy are soon overshadowed by the political controversies enveloping the country. The enforcement of obscure, outdated, and conflicting marriage laws in rural towns takes a back seat as officials at all levels of government recognize that the very existence of the nation is at stake. Alarmed at the atrocities committed by Japanese nationalistic forces in their rape of Nanking, Heber J. Grant fears a similar fate for Germany's enemies. He leaves his comfortable headquarters in Salt Lake and embarks on a tour of Germany to ascertain the gravity of the gathering gale.

Although America's allies are not yet at war with Germany, Franco's fascist forces are testing Hitler's weaponry, and President Grant needs no prophetic vision to foresee the coming conflagration. Upon his return, he orchestrates an all-out evacuation, promptly sending Joseph Fielding Smith to Germany to summon the remaining missionaries home. After wandering through the train stations – and famously whistling *Do what is Right* in an attempt to inconspicuously spot fellow missionaries – the designated pipers lead the last of the elders, including the likes of Joseph B. Wirthlin and other notable figures, back to the Hamburg docks to board U.S.-bound ships.

Members of the Class of 1928 are just old enough to avoid being sent to the front lines as cannon fodder in the event of a draft, but Hamp volunteers for military service long before it comes to conscription. His time with Grand Canyon Airlines has certainly fueled his

obsession with flying, but the scheduled flight plans and set itineraries feel increasingly confining. His decision to enlist in the Army Air Corps is initially motivated not so much by a desire to defend his country but rather by his wish to take advantage of the opportunity to pilot much more novel flying machines than the Park Service could ever muster.

With the new-found freedom of a military pilot, Hamp craves every chance to get off the ground. He recognizes immediately that the dated aircraft now at his disposal in the Air Corps – though an improvement over the Park Service fleet – are by no means a match for the sleek machines he had seen rolling off the German assembly lines several years before. No viable air corps can exist in the United States until the pilots have been sufficiently trained, and pilots cannot be adequately trained without suitable training craft; that bottleneck is obvious to the top brass and the flyboys alike. Hamp is therefore asked to focus his efforts on putting the training craft to the test, improving their design at every turn.

During his solo flights, Hamp often wishes his father could occupy the empty copilot's seat; Chick had been enthralled with the pilots and explorers he had hosted during his civic club duties, and he certainly would have enjoyed joining Hamp on these flights. Even when he is on the ground, Hamp continually watches the skies for the optimal conditions: billowing clouds that look like mountains, icescapes, or massive buildings in an aerial city. On these days, he comes up with any excuse he can muster to take to the air and dart in and out of the cloud formations, imagining himself to be on another

planet. In fact, as he dodges the clouds, he feels that he is quite literally connecting with his father. In his opinion, the heavens couldn't be more beautiful if he could hie to Kolob itself. This addiction is in his blood; he had inherited it from his father, and it would – a generation later – extend to his yet unborn son: the future captain of the *Eagle Mountain Air Force*.

At times, the training craft fail to withstand the contortions they are put through. Several of them, in fact, give out with Hamp at the controls. His logbook records simply, *bailed out*, with no other explanation. After parachuting to safety, a quick description of the problem is handed to the engineers, who promptly fix the flaws in the other grounded aircraft until the identified problems are all remedied. Cleaning up the wreckage is left to someone else, and Hamp returns to the air as soon as his report is filed and the aircraft are deemed airworthy again. He finds a surreal feeling of peace and perspective high above the clouds, yet even in the adrenaline-filled moments when an aircraft begins another nosedive or tailspin, he realizes that he does not fear one bit for his life; in some ways, in fact, he realizes that he would almost welcome the chance to join his father and be granted a glimpse of the universe's mysteries.

A medical condition that he had contracted one winter in Silesia – which he blames on having walked barefoot on the cold, concrete floors – eventually catches up with him during a routine medical examination. His dreams of piloting bombers or other warbirds come to an end with a single, red stamp by the physician. As disappointed as he is at the time to be washing out of the

Air Corps, given the grim survival statistics for bomber pilots in the coming conflict, this stamp – quite possibly – saves his life.

He resorts to designing airplanes for McDonnell Aircraft Corporation. It is a company of just 15 employees at the outbreak of war in Europe, but Pearl Harbor's *Day of Infamy* and the ensuing declaration of war flood McDonnell with military contracts that swell their ranks to over 5,000 staff. While this buildup provides some promising career opportunities for Hamp, he realizes that his previous experience will now be even more valuable to the military.

While he doesn't necessarily stem from a military family, Mimi had often told him the stories of her own grandfather, Jonathan Hampton, whose brothers had donned a military uniform and marched off in the Mormon Battalion, leaving their families even after learning of Jonathan's death in Nauvoo as a result of the mob's persecution.

Hamp feels an inherited tug of patriotism and decides to answer the call of duty; when the Air Corps is reorganized as the U.S. Army Air Forces, he reenlists and ships out to the Territory of Hawaii to direct air traffic at Hickam Field. Marjorie, with a newborn son at home, feels abandoned and alone, but Hamp tries to reassure her that Hawaii is far enough from the frontlines to guarantee his safe return.

All around the world, American soldiers are engaged in iconic fights, from the Battle of Britain and the Battle of the Bulge, to Midway, Iwo Jima, and Guadalcanal; meanwhile, Hamp remains removed from

the conflict and his former classmates sit it out in a homeland support role: Rulon applies his accounting skills to farm management in Idaho, Gordon works in the planning center of a rail yard in Colorado, and Homer teaches university political science courses in Utah.

Though fate had certainly been on their side in sparing them all from the elements of front-line fighting, Hamp still finds himself at times envying his stateside friends. As Christmas approaches in 1942, he is the only one of the foursome without his wife at his side; his one-year old son is an ocean away, and the loneliness pierces him. Given the unfolding calamity on the line of scrimmage, however, he is just as lucky as his other classmates to have escaped the worst horrors of the war.

Just a few excess years in age had convinced the military planners to use them for their brains rather than for their brawn. Marginally past their physical prime, they each have to admit that their gradually growing waistlines and the onset of other physical limitations might actually hinder the infantry in the heat of battle; as they read the newspaper headlines of the mounting casualties, though, they feel like outsiders – humbled and helpless at the same time. As lucky as they feel to have avoided the draft age, survivor's guilt also affects them.

Adding to this guilt is the knowledge that neither fame, nor fortune, nor age can ultimately prevent someone with enough willpower from joining the fight first-hand; as the Allied troops put the white cliffs of Dover to their backs and launch their assault on the sandy slopes of Normandy, for example, Teddy Roosevelt, Jr. – approaching sixty years old – by his own insistence

storms Utah Beach at H-Hour with a cane and a pistol, trying to match the feats of his *rough-rider* father.

Ernest Hemingway tries to join in on the D-Day action as well, but his superiors lock their “precious cargo” inside his own landing craft until the machine gun fire subsides. At the same time his protégé, Jerome David “J. D.” Salinger, joins unprotected and undiscovered actors like Sir Alec “Obi-Wan” Guinness and James “Scotty” Doohan in storming the beach on that longest of days. Amidst a hailstorm of bullets and shells, they somehow manage to dodge the fire, living to see another day. As German machine guns indiscriminately mow down their brothers-in-arms, they surely can’t imagine what other talents and immeasurable influences are being quashed in the sands. As they march forward, fearful but undeterred, fatal bullets to their right and to their left stifle untold future dreams and aspirations that are ultimately whisked out to sea with the waning tide.

On the other side of the world, neither fame nor unmatched talent prevents Louis Zamperini, America’s best hope for a gold medal in the now-defunct Tokyo Olympics, from joining the offensive line. Having been personally congratulated by Adolf Hitler himself for a spectacular performance in Berlin’s Olympic Stadium, Louis now uses the endurance he gained as a distance runner to survive unimaginable trials in the South Pacific. After surviving a plane crash, shark attacks, strafing, and near-starvation, he is finally rescued...but unfortunately by the enemy. By this time, the war is almost won, but Louis now begins a new set of trials that includes

beatings, forced labor, and medical tests as a human guinea pig.

Had Uncle Sam not retracted his original call to arms, Hamp knows that he might have been on the same, doomed plane as Louis. Meanwhile, though, Hamp sits safely in a control tower of a tropical paradise, far from the conflict; his other classmates likewise have no immediate fear for their lives while they try their best to aid the operations through their indirect support roles.

Hamp’s wartime photos show the beaches of Hawaii; Gordon’s show the sights of Denver; Rulon’s are of rural Idaho; and Homer’s have a college campus as a backdrop. These four classmates didn’t storm the beach at Normandy or raise the flag on Iwo Jima; they served their country by pushing tin, pulling rail yard switches, balancing ledger books, and lecturing political science students. There are no accolades for this service, but the war effort still requires these seemingly trivial cogs in a less visible but equally valuable part of its machine.

When Louis is finally liberated from a deplorable POW camp near the war’s end, he opens his rations and can rest assured that the packs of dried potatoes that nourish his famished frame will continue to arrive, having been grown on an Idaho farm that owes its efficiency to Rulon’s financial wizardry; shipped to the seaport on stateside trains that keep rolling effectively through the switches thanks to Gordon’s careful logistical planning; sent airborne by Hamp’s voice over the pilots’ headsets; and delivered by military planners who appreciate the political implications of a conquest thanks to their completion of Homer’s courses.

No doubt Hamp and his former classmates each would have fought from front-line foxholes had they been called upon to do so; in the end, though, old Uncle Sam just wanted each to do his part behind the scenes.

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As victory appears more and more inevitable, local jurisdictional authorities across the United States begin to process a backlog of derelict duties that includes the enforcement of long-forgotten marriage laws. Caught in the ensuing roundup, Rulon is shocked to find himself facing charges that ultimately result in his imprisonment and separation from his family. From his prison cell, he reads the newspaper headlines as well as the daily list of local casualties that is included in each paper. Despite the tide of the war having turned in the Allies' favor, the battles rage on, and the individual toll remains shockingly personal.

Rulon reads in the paper one day that the plane of Hugh Brown, Jr., an airman stationed in England, has gone down over the English Channel. He had come to know Hugh Jr. – Zola's kid brother – quite well and had grown quite fond of him while they were courting; even without the prison walls, Rulon would have been uninvited to the funeral, though, so he can offer only his sincere prayers for the family. Back in Salt Lake, Brother Brown is utterly conflicted over the loss; himself the highest ranking Mormon in the British Army during World War I, he knows that his war stories had likely instilled the bravado in his namesake that had initially motivated him to volunteer in the first place – and ultimately ended his life. Despite this guilt, he remains

fiercely proud of his son's ultimate sacrifice and knows that he would have done the same himself.

The image of Sister Brown greeting a pair of military messengers at the doorstep – only to be left in a heap on the ground – had been repeated a thousand times a day across the U.S. at the height of the war; half a million U.S. families now find themselves inconsolably incomplete. The immediate families of the four former classmates pass relatively unscathed through the conflict, but everyone has close ties to those mourning a loss. Rulon lets each death notice stir him up to further resentment. Though being jailed for his beliefs makes him feel like the prophets Daniel, Paul, and Joseph Smith all wrapped into one, he is angered at this apparent waste of his nation's precious human resources.

Why, Rulon wonders, would the authorities let an able-bodied man with a brilliant mind rot away in prison while freedom is still under threat? *Serves them right*, he sneers upon learning of the financial glitches that hiccup through the farming cooperatives when his replacement tries to learn the ropes without any training at all. He questions what Utah's political leaders are doing with the Constitution and wonders who might have been behind the sheriff's warrant. He suspects that Heber J. Grant had tipped off the authorities, fulfilling his vow and executing orders from his deathbed just to get even with him for their previous altercations. Or might it have been his nemesis, Elder Widtsoe, or perhaps his estranged ex-father-in-law, Brother Brown?

Despite his building anger and resentment, in some ways Rulon actually welcomes this time to think his

plan for the future through to the end; fully aware that some of the greatest – and the most notorious – ideas in human history have been conceived from a prison cell, he immediately applies himself toward setting, documenting, and refining his long-term goals. With no compulsory agenda or daily itinerary to divert his attention, his incarceration finally gives Rulon time to get the detailed doctrinal discourses that had been circulating in his mind onto paper.

After lengthy speeches and debates at the Utah State Capitol concerning the fundamentalists' fate, Rulon is finally released from jail. In the meantime, he has accumulated an arsenal of motivational speeches of his own – speeches that will one day be canonized as scripture by his followers.

V-E Day is soon followed by V-J Day, and Rulon is surprised and even a bit disappointed to see the newsreels of Yamamoto signing away an unconditional surrender on behalf of his nation. As patriotic as he is, Rulon had been expecting the calamities at Hiroshima and Nagasaki to continue escalating into a firestorm that would mark the end of days. He had found direct references to the global conflict in his studies of John's Revelation, and he had fully been expecting the hostility to erupt into a rapture that would land him in a prominent, governing position in the prophesied, Millennial government. Instead, the new peacetime period actually throws him off his mark a bit, and he struggles to find alternative content for his the sermons.

With his newfangled freedom, Rulon spends his weekends traveling to isolated polygamous enclaves but

focuses his workday business dealings around the population center of the Salt Lake Valley. Hamp, Homer, and Gordon also return to Salt Lake City in turn to seek jobs in the post-war economy; with the ever-present enemy threat removed, however, it becomes surprisingly challenging for each of them and for the nation as a whole to return to a focus on the simple matters of day-to-day life.

The celebratory atmosphere in the U.S. begins to wane after the ticker-tape parades end, but the government and the press prolong the victory celebration with billboards, stamps, and magazine covers of the Iwo Jima flag raising and sailors stealing kisses in Times Square. The iconic images, however, cannot mask the reality of the war's cost; in the aftermath, American widows and fatherless children mourn just the same as their counterparts on the opposite sides of the Atlantic and the Pacific – albeit in strikingly different surroundings. While confetti is cleared from American avenues, the streets of Germany, Japan, and England are constractingly full of corpses. Over ten million *Johnnies* have come marching home again to a hearty welcome and shouts of hurrah in the U.S., but a much greater number of foreign soldiers have been left lying on the battlefield.

Every former European missionary knows many people overseas who have been directly and permanently affected by the war. In London alone, over a million houses lie in ruins; long after the fighting stops, many city streets are large swaths of rubble that still entomb thousands.

The flotsam carried by the wake of the sunken Nazi vessel sends repercussions around the world. Devastating holocaust images are broadcast as an aftershock, securing Nazi Germany's humiliating position as the quintessential embodiment of evil.

As the ghastly newsreels are presented publically, confirming the vast scale of the destruction and the depraved nature of the atrocities, Hamp pulls out his mission albums – now haunting reminders of what used to be – and wonders what has become of the people and places he once knew. He looks through his old photos of Gleiwitz, Leobschütz, and other Silesian towns. Silesia's identity has been consumed in the conflagration, and the personal toll – while yet unknown to Hamp – is staggeringly ubiquitous. What, for instance, has happened to sweet Sister Ewig, to his best German pal Herbie, and to the old Hausfrau who used to collect his rent? What has become of the local Breslau baker, the shop owner, the butcher, or the old lady who gave him the accordion? And what of the children who had played in front of the Leobschütz synagogue as he passed by?

While some stories would be buried in the debris, forever to be forgotten, he eventually learns of enough personal examples to paint a shockingly bleak picture of the cataclysmic chain of events. The two girls in Leobschütz, for example, Stefanie Zweig and Dietlinda Geissinger, truly had their world turned upside down. Both young girls had ultimately left their childhood home in a flight for their lives: Steffie from the German troops before the war broke out, and Dieta from the Russians during the war's final volleys.

Steffie and her family waited out the war in Africa; she eventually became a writer and journalist, turning her hair-raising flight to Kenya into an Oscar-winning production. In her post-war reporting, she conducts newspaper interviews with countless survivors of the war, among them Otto Frank – Anne's father – and others affected by the holocaust.

Dieta's fate took her in another direction. With the Russian troops on her heels, she had ridden her family's sturdy Bulldog tractor as far from town as it would take her – then ditched the tractor for her creaky bike, which she rode all the way across Czechoslovakia, finally settling on the Bavarian farm that later became our family home in the 1970's. The Leobschütz that my adopted Grandma Geissinger knew would only continue living in the memories she shared with us around the large hearth in her family *Stube*.

The heartwarming stories of her youth lie in stark contrast to the dismal, post-war scene that Hamp reads about, in which the burned-out buildings of the Leobschütz lie in the same pile of rubble as the synagogue that had been smashed by its own residents just a few years before. Even in these tiny villages, countless examples prove the biblical notion that violence begets violence.

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Silesia and the former East Prussian island are both severed from the now defunct German Reich, and Church membership in the previously thriving congregations of Danzig, Breslau, Königsberg, and Stettin is decimated. Even the Mormon fortress of

Selbongen in East Prussia – where Elder Widtsoe had dedicated the first meetinghouse of the Church in continental Europe – only briefly manages to sputter along. Where an active branch of several hundred – more than half of its villagers – had formerly flourished, only a few holdouts try in vain to keep the flame alive.

While the German Saints dig themselves out of the rubble and are joined by a flood of refugees arriving from the east, Herbert Schreiter wanders through the carnage of Leipzig’s train station. His own hometown lies in ruins along with the rest of the bewildered nation. He has been called as a traveling missionary to salvage what remains of the German branches of the Church; but what is left to salvage? The people do not want to hear about the gospel; they are more interested in food, shelter, and other bare necessities.

Herbie stares at the pockmarked bullet scars in the massive stonework of the great station’s walls and wonders how it could have come to this. Though his own wife and children are themselves very nearly starving, Herbie bids them farewell and – not unlike the earliest Latter-day Saints who left their sick and dying families in the malaria-ridden swamps of Nauvoo to embark on their missions – boards a train to the rural town of Bernburg to begin picking up the war-torn pieces of the Church.

As he arrives in Bernburg he is disheartened by the scene the instant he steps off the platform. He walks along the town’s main street and, seeing nothing but sorrow around him, sits down on a crippled wagon to eat a piece of bread. As he surveys the miserable conditions present in every angle of the sweeping panorama before

him, he is absolutely overwhelmed. Wondering where to start, he thinks back to his first mission over a decade before. Thanks to Hamp, if there is one thing that he had learned on that mission, it is *tracting* – not the sort that involves knocking on doors but rather the art of distributing tracts...printed tracts. He takes a crumpled sheet of butcher paper out of his pocket and begins to lay out the design for a poster.

With his draft flyer in hand, he begins to wander through the town, asking the passersby where he might find a print shop. Unfortunately, none are operable, but he finally manages to find a store with a working mimeograph machine that had not been cannibalized for spare parts. Paper is equally difficult to secure, since most wood products have long since been burned for heat or fuel. Though he has to dip into his dwindling coin purse, he acquires from the shopkeeper a stack of blank paper. Finally, gambling his investment on this treasure, he cranks out a hundred copies with the question in block letters, “*Will man live again?*” He feels sure that the message on his flyer will resonate with the shell-shocked people, some of whom have lost loved ones or, indeed, may be facing the prospect of slipping out of mortality at that very moment. He includes the address of the bombed-out chapel and hopes that his efforts might attract some visitors to help the tiny branch rebuild.

The people on the streets refuse to take his flyers, however. “Don’t give us paper,” they cry, “we need bread!”

Ultimately foiled in his efforts, Herbie finally pastes his remaining flyers to the remnant brick walls and

sign posts left standing around town. It has all seemed a fruitless effort, so he makes his way back to the train station to try his luck in another town.

Herbie continues his ministry among the meek members and “poor in spirit” who gather at the skeletal chapels scattered all across eastern Germany, helping them to rebuild their lives and their congregations as best he can. During the years that he spends in the capacity of a traveling missionary, he passes through the hub of Hauptbahnhof Leipzig again and again. The damaged tracks are gradually repaired, and the busy station eventually begins to bustle again. The very cattle cars that had brought so many to their doom in the infamous *KZ* camps now bring endless streams of troops back from the front – the western front, that is; the forgotten eastern front has swallowed their counterparts whole and is not about to spit them back into society. Stalin continues inflicting his revenge on the Germans by operating his POW camps long after the supposed peace is declared. In the eastern German states, there is no return to peace and prosperity; one monster has simply been devoured by another.

Only a few – including several of Hamp and Herbie’s former companions – ever return from Siberian captivity. As the years pass, one surviving spouse after another gradually gives up hope for the return of her beloved companion and takes on the dreaded status of becoming a *war widow*. A generation of Germans that had already included over a million war widows from the so-called *War to End all Wars* had somehow failed to convince the next generation to avoid the same fate;

rather than prompting a refusal to fight again, revenge for the purported injustice of the armistice has now packed several million additional war widows into a country not much larger in size than the U.S. state of Nevada.

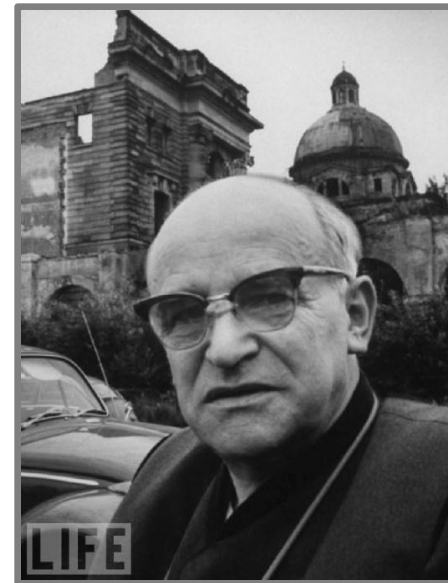
With the newly arrived apostle Ezra Taft Benson coordinating the efforts on the ground in Europe, aid packages from Utah and Idaho begin to arrive for the Saints to combat the post-war famine. These *Büchsen Mormonen* temporarily stave off the hunger of the Saints and attract a number of other needy souls – dubbed *Büchsen Mormonen* – to the Church. Some merely seek to quench a physical hunger; others are looking for more of a spiritual sustenance and join the local branches. All take part in the reconstruction, sifting through the ashes and rubble to pick up the pieces and put their lives, their communities, and their branches back together.

Although the onset of the U.S. baby boom is immediate, the innumerable voids left by loss cannot be filled so quickly anywhere on the planet. As Europe’s bomb craters are filled by surviving, shovel-wielding widows and orphans, the onset of the European baby boom is delayed. Eventually, though – thanks to the Marshall Plan and other visionary reconstruction policies – former tank factories begin to crank our Porsches and Toyotas, and eventually life manages to return to some semblance of normalcy the world over.

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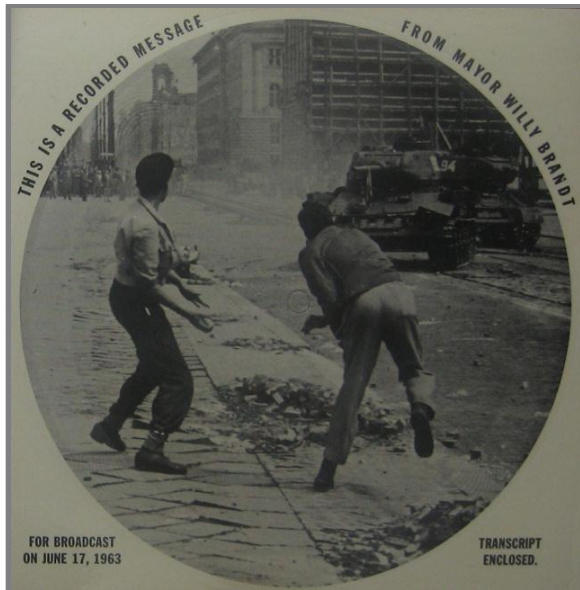
Dresden's Frauenkirche in 1945, 1910, 1981, and 2002  
(clockwise from lower left)



Hugo Jaeger, Adolf Hitler's personal photographer



Lt Col. Hampton Price with fellow serviceman and compiler of Jaeger's photographs, "Brownie" Brownfield



A commemorative record and the Berlin Freedom Bell presented to Hamp by Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt

## Chapter 16: Midlife Crises

At the end of the forties, the four former classmates are approaching their forties themselves. Their careers develop rather successfully, but mid-life family duties begin to trump their other pursuits.

They each live full lives, but not without controversy. It is a simpler time if one goes by the contemporary public image portrayed by *I Love Lucy* and *Leave it to Beaver*. But those television facades are merely a wishful illusion of the times; American lives in the post-war era are just as complex and conflicted as lives ever had been in the past or would be in the future. 1950s politics are as dirty as ever, and the specter of war takes only a few short years to once again rear its hateful head. For the four friends – trying to juggle their jobs with parenthood, marriage, and church service – life certainly delivers some challenges along the way.

By typical Mormon standards, Homer and Hamp – with three children a piece – have relatively small families, but their children keep them busy nonetheless. Gordon and Marjorie end up with five children, right on the heels of the baby boom. Rulon is in his own league: With the help of multiple wives, the Jeffs household generates its own, supersonic baby boom – resulting in anywhere from fifty to one hundred children, depending on the source of the report.

Rulon's ex-wife Zola eventually remarries and raises Rulon's two oldest sons, Rodger and Stephen, in the LDS Church under a different surname. The boys

come to stay with Rulon on the compound during school breaks but never adopt his views on polygamy.

With each passing school year, they have a harder time keeping track of their half-siblings from an increasingly complex web of step mothers. They feel a bit intimidated and bullied by their half-brother Warren, who views them as a legitimate threat to Rulon's attention and quite possibly his birthright. Warren had been born in San Francisco during one of Rulon's business forays there, but has spent much of his childhood confined to an isolated compound where he remains under the comprehensive influence of fellow Fundamentalists, with very limited exposure to the outside world. As he matures, Warren adheres to the Fundamentalist principles as zealously as his father and quickly rises through the ranks as a result.

During his father's lengthy absences for church assignments and business dealings, Warren is comforted and encouraged by his Aunt Leo; swayed by her brother's epiphany, Leona had followed Rulon into polygamy but ends up marrying into a sect that splits from the FLDS. She eventually gets caught up with the Allreds, who compete with other polygamous factions that run their religious orders like mafia organizations.

The Federal Government imprisons the most notorious members of the renegade sects, but even when locked up, rival leaders issue execution orders from prison that are carried out by zealous adherents. The murder plots run as deep as any Capone-style gangster film in which hits are ordered on non-conforming competitors for their turf; because the zealot's prize is

salvation rather than liquor or money, however, all earthly rules of engagement are thrown out the door, leaving in the wake a string of ghastly crime scenes that would make Gadianon himself proud. For decades to follow, some of the polygamists caught in the crossfire find themselves forced to hide not just from the government but from other fundamentalist groups as well.

As much as the various government authorities want to ignore the issue, the press does not allow polygamy to be simply swept off into the desert; another crackdown is ordered after some particularly notorious criminal cases hit the papers. In his role as a spokesman, Gordon releases official Church statements about Rulon's actions and those of his rival counterparts; he recalls that the publicity accompanying previous government-sponsored roundups had backfired in the past, and he does not wish for the Church to be tied up in that sort of mess again. There is no clear solution, however, so Gordon tries to take a passive approach and steer the Church as far from this underworld as possible, enlisting public relations firms to paint the LDS Church in its own color and cast a distinguishing distance from the elements responsible for the heinous crimes in the papers.

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Hamp, meanwhile, ends up traveling the world with the U.S. Air Force on the front lines of the Cold War. From Greenland to the Pacific Islands, he works on military installations designed to protect the United States and its allies from the Soviet threat; it is a tedious conflict that nearly erupts into violence during the Berlin Airlift

and other famous points of East-West contention. He eventually finds himself back in Germany, assigned the formidable task of mending relations between former enemies. In that capacity, Hamp takes up a friendship with Hugo Jaeger, a tortured soul who had served as Hitler's personal photographer.

Jaeger's photographs have gone missing, and he refuses to disclose their whereabouts. Though in his eyes he is not guilty of any war crimes, he had watched other countrymen hang, and he is afraid that his photographs might implicate him in the undeniable atrocities. He certainly has good reason to fear: He knows that the International Military Tribunal had wanted every major crime be paid for at Nuremberg; because they were *dead men walking* anyway, those who had been incarcerated and executed in some cases paid for acts they hadn't necessarily committed themselves, allowing those who had escaped – some with the consent or even the endorsement of the Allies – to join a new, underground battle against the Soviets.

Knowing that some perpetrators had fallen through the cracks of the IMT, the Israeli *Mossad* has taken justice into their own hands against those who have managed to evade the Allied courts. Accounts of assassinations and other acts of retribution circulate in the press, and Jaeger keeps silent largely out of fear for his own fate.

After many hours of interviews and an extended period of written correspondence, however, Hamp finally convinces Jaeger of the historical value of his photographs. He is promised clemency that will keep him

immune from third-party implications, but Herr Jaeger is still understandably nervous as he leads Hamp out along a set of railroad tracks, deep inside the woods adjacent to Munich.

Carrying shovels with them, they follow a map he had made years before. The treasure map includes specific instructions: Count five poles beyond the switch; turn right and walk perpendicular to the tracks 25 paces; look for a tree with a cross etched into the bark; *X marks the spot!*

They start to dig and soon strike glass. At the distinct sound of the impact, they revert to digging by hand; twelve large glass jars emerge from the hole. Each contains priceless color photographs – 2,000 in all – comprising a rare, full-color record of the rise and fall of the Third Reich, shot from the Führer's vantage point.

As he separates and flattens the photographs back in his apartment, Jaeger's mind is filled with the unbelievable scenes he had witnessed a decade before. He recalls his own suppressed, conflicted ambitions; having been an early proponent of Agfacolor – Germany's answer to Technicolor and Kodachrome – Jaeger was one of only a few visionary photographers who had insisted on shooting in color at the time. He had also been a pioneer of three-dimensional stereoscopy and had envisioned his 3D images as the best way to properly document and capture the grandeur of Germany's ascent to world domination. As the Reich expanded, he had dreamed of being admired and respected at the highest levels – working alongside Speer, Riefenstahl, and Goebbels to promote the new Germany – with his own

front-page photographs symbolizing the fatherland's unsurpassable progress.

He definitely couldn't have imagined that his photographs would instead document its downfall and depict humanity's wickedest warning signs. The contrast is too much for him to deal with, and he decides to distance himself from the rights to his work. Jaeger trusts Hamp to negotiate the publication of selected images, and eventually the entire collection is released to Life Magazine. Hamp continues the relationship until Jaeger's death; in the end, a part of history that might have disappeared forever is preserved and eventually becomes available to future generations through Getty Images.

Hamp's peacemaking efforts throughout the 1950s and 1960s – conducted ironically under the direction of the occupational U.S. Air Force – continue while the international espionage network steps up its game on both sides of the border. In a new, bloodless battlefield, Space Race propaganda flows in both directions as Radio Free Europe broadcasts its message of Western-style democracy while Khrushchev tells the imperialists, "We will bury you!"

Hamp holds out hope for a united Germany in the future, so he is particularly disturbed when the Berlin Wall drives a wedge through families, friends, and freedom itself. Though Berliners are offended at being called the "testicles of the West," Khrushchev makes good on his threat to make the West scream by squeezing Berlin. From the day the borders are sealed, the Wall is gradually fortified and becomes increasingly lethal to those making ever more creative crossing attempts.

Nonetheless, even when the Cuban Missile Crisis puts global militaries on high alert, Hamp never gives up on the notion that the Wall is just temporary. While JFK famously declares, "Ich bin ein Berliner!" Hamp continues to build his relations in both the military and civilian realms. After years of effort and extensive interviews with the top brass on both sides, Hamp's efforts are officially recognized: Berlin Mayor and future German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, rewards Hamp with a specially cast replica of Berlin's Freedom Bell – a token of West Germany's appreciation for his efforts.

Hamp proudly mails a copy of the newspaper clipping to Herbie – knowing full well that it might be intercepted by the East German censors. By the time it arrives in Herbie's mailbox behind the Iron Curtain, sure enough, the envelope had been opened and some of its contents removed; the newspaper article, however, arrives in its entirety. Herbie feels immense pride and hope for the future upon reading it, both for himself and for the rest of the walled-in members of the LDS congregations throughout East Germany.

Along with his other classmates, Hamp is disturbed by the news of JFK, MLK, RFK and other prominent assassinations that hit the headlines in quick succession. He passes up these articles for his collection, though, choosing instead to clip articles with more of a positive spin – particularly those related to mankind's giant leap to the moon. As the 1960s close out on this positive note for American patriots, the lines between civilian and military accomplishments are non-existent; with his test flights, aeronautical background, and Air

Force career experience, Hamp feels that he has actively played a part in landing man on the moon.

With his military career nearing an end, Hamp begins to apply his poster-making skills to lay out and print promotional posters for the tourism industry in the South Pacific and in Germany. He is eventually hired to make presentations to prospective American tourists on behalf of Lufthansa Airlines and Germany's National Tourism Office. This role takes him back to Germany many times, allowing him the chance to visit his son – my father – who had in the meantime found himself stationed in Germany on a work assignment. These visits, in turn, grant me some of my only personal memories of my grandfather. Even Hamp's sister Margaret is finally paid her dues when she gets the chance to see the world with her own eyes, tagging along on one of Hamp's European tours.

Hamp continues to keep a daily journal and a travel log of his many trips, just as he had done all those years before as a missionary. Between his travels, he spends his time organizing his papers again and again, including several large file boxes labeled *Concerning God*. Though he acknowledges that he is not, perhaps, destined for success as an author, he still dabbles in writing on occasion and even tries his hand at poetry.

One day he finds a book in the mail: *The Continuity of the Catholic Church*, by The Most Reverend Duane G. Hunt, Doctor of Divinity. He shakes his head as he flips through the extensively documented pages refuting Mormon claims against the Catholics. Here, finally, is Msgr. Hunt's response to his letters and

his book from so many years ago. Msgr. Hunt had initially begun his documentation by addressing Hamp's attacks, but finally felt compelled to publish his work after reading anti-Catholic statements in Bruce R. McConkie's regrettably titled first edition of *Mormon Doctrine*, an exhaustive and commendable compilation of information but by no means sanctioned by the LDS Church leadership. While acknowledging that the contradictory statements he uncovered were made by a "self-appointed spokesman for the Church," Msgr. Hunt felt the need to set the record straight. Many of the recommended corrections were, in fact, made in later editions of Elder McConkie's book, but Hamp initially feels the need to respond with his own explanations.

Years before, he would have immediately sat down at the typewriter to draft a rebuttal and refute each apparent doctrinal contradiction in detail. But at this point in his life, he decides to leave it alone. Life no longer appears to be divided neatly along doctrinal lines anyhow. Even if he were to somehow extract a reluctant acquiescence from Msgr. Hunt in this ping-pong process, the game had lost its meaning. The elusive truce or reconciliation he had initially sought with Msgr. Hunt has in the meantime sunk lower on his priority list. "Let it be," he sighs, echoing the chorus of a new song dominating the airwaves. He drops the book into the appropriate file box and keeps tracing his travels on the large maps that hang on the wall of his home office.

Taking a step back one day, he is quite pleased with the result of his charting: On his corkboards and in his archives lies the evidence of a rewarding, illustrious,

and well-documented career that has taken him around the world in one of the most restless and intriguing periods of the planet's history. It certainly gives him a sense of accomplishment.

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Hamp crosses paths with his former classmates one last time, in 1978, in a banquet room of the Hotel Utah to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion of the Class of 1928. By this time, their lives have diverged significantly; Homer and Gordon are still good friends, but Hamp has not kept up with them regularly.

Homer has enjoyed a successful career, having climbed ever higher in academic administration until he became president of Arizona State University. Upon retirement from this demanding position, he joked that he needed something to do to keep him out of trouble; Gordon promptly recommended Homer's appointment as a general authority. Now, with just a year under his belt as a Church official, Homer constantly draws on Gordon's 40-year tenure for advice.

At the reunion Hamp approaches Homer and Gordon, who are sitting together at a crowded dinner table. "Still have that picture?" Hamp asks, shaking their hands.

"From graduation night? Yes, sir!" Homer says, pointing toward the wall, "It's still underexposed but it's right up there on the memory board."

With the novelty of having two of their classmates pictured on the Ensign Magazine's semiannual General Authority chart, a crowd of other well-wishers has gathered around the table, so Hamp excuses himself and

peruses the large bulletin board where class members have posted pictures and other memorabilia. He stares at Homer's old photograph and thinks of all that has elapsed in the meantime. The four smiling classmates in the photo – staring past Betty's camera at the couples on the dance floor – seem awfully naïve to the 67-year old grandfather.

"A lot can change in fifty years," Rulon says to Hamp, who turns around with a startled expression.

"Why yes, it certainly can," Hamp agrees. Looking for some common ground, he says, "To think that you and Homer would both marry apostle's daughters!"

"And that you and Gordon would both marry Marjories," Rulon adds with a smile.

Rulon had vowed not to get this close to Temple Square again, but the opportunity to celebrate his beloved school had trumped his earlier promise to himself. After an uncomfortable silence with Hamp, he briefly walks around the outside of the room but decides not to stay for dinner. Only a few weeks have passed since Leo's husband, also named Rulon, was murdered by a rival, and there had been some confusion around mistaken identities in the press. He sees his other former friends from a distance and considers making a scene around Gordon in particular, but he feels vexatious glances shooting his way at every step. He decides to just let it rest, ducking out the back door before the program starts without saying goodbye to anyone.

Hamp keeps wandering through the crowd, struggling to recognize familiar faces and looking for a seat among friends. He finally sits down right at the front

of the room between the event's emcee, Bob Toronto, and the old class clown, Carlos Dodge.

Bob soon stands to announce the night's program, beginning with several L.D.S. High alumni who are honored. While many of the classmates have made names for themselves over the years, one classmate in particular has really made the headlines – quite literally: Wendell Ashton, Homer's former supervisor on the L.D.S. High *Gold and Blue* Newspaper Staff, had ultimately served as the publisher of Deseret News and is now honored with a distinguished alumnus award for his contribution to journalism.

"While many L.D.S. High alumni like Wendell have made significant contributions in their respective fields," Bob continues, "there are not many high schools that can boast a governor, CEO, presidential cabinet member, and presidential candidate among their graduates. We have all of these with us this evening, wrapped up in a single alumnus.

"Some of you may have known him as a star point guard or a thespian while he was your fellow student. Most of you were only sophomores when he left us for the British Isles, but I'm sure you all remember him as your L.D.S. High student body president that year. Please welcome our keynote speaker, *George Romney!*"

George takes the stand to a roaring applause. He certainly has a rags-to-riches success story to tell, and he gets right to it:

"How does someone from a polygamous colony in Mexico end up as the governor of a largely anti-

Mormon state?" George asks the audience, "Well, let me tell you a story!"

The audience sits right back to hear the tale.

"I was just a young boy when the Mexican Revolution erupted. Both the Mexican and United States governments had left us alone for many years, but after a quarter century of peace and relative prosperity, we suddenly found our Mexican neighbors turned against us.

"We fled Mexico along with the Church's current First Lady, Camilla Kimball, the Skousen scholars, and the notable scientists of the Eyring clan. Leaving behind most of our possessions and the home she had made, the exodus was especially hard on my mother; but during our search for a new home, she often drew on the legendary travels of her own grandfather, Parley P. Pratt, to lift our spirits.

"After finally settling in the Salt Lake Valley, we still had nothing – nothing but a willingness to work hard, that is. And every fruit of that labor, rather than being immediately consumed, was set aside for one purpose: *education*. I knew that the graduates of L.D.S. College were both successful and honorable, and I vowed to become one of them someday. I resolved to attend the L.D.S. and – while it took every penny we had – I enrolled at the first opportunity.

"*Every* opportunity that came my way later in life, I owe to that decision to attend our fine school." George points to his wife, Lenore, seated behind him, and the audience breaks out into applause at this cue. "Not only did I meet my mate among our fine coeds," George

continues, “but I also managed to learn a thing or two in class.”

Hamp and his friends all have a good laugh together with the rest of the audience.

“The business and finance courses at the L.D.S. were top-notch; in fact, the program’s reputation was so well known that upon my arrival in England, Dr. John Widtsoe and Dr. James Talmage – having heard of my qualifications – immediately requested that I keep the books for the mission finances. In this capacity, I must say, I learned some very valuable lessons for my future – thanks again to the L.D.S.

“Although I had already graduated, my mission experience provided me with a continuing education, adding to my L.D.S. coursework with lessons in additional subjects that have served me well, such as public speaking, debate, sales, and in my case even international finances.

“In fact, my good friend Howard Stoddard was at the same time a missionary in Germany, and we often exchanged observations of the ambient economic conditions. In his letters, he told me of the rampant German inflation rate – it was a time when people became millionaires overnight just to find out they had to be billionaires the next day if they wanted to buy a loaf of bread. Imagine the absurdity of having to leave work immediately on payday with your wheelbarrow full of money – sprinting to the stores because your pile of money would be worthless by nightfall! Some of his native German companions actually had to take leaves of

absence to get jobs when their mission savings evaporated into worthlessness.

“We faced similar threats in England, and these European examples have always stuck with me as a reminder of the market system’s vulnerability, particularly when it crashed completely at the end of my mission. As difficult as it was to persevere at the time, this experience greatly furthered my understanding of fiscal markets and economic risks.

Sensing that his audience might quickly tire of a financial discourse, he turns again to his wife. “But while I was somewhat worried about the financial state of the British Mission, at the time my greatest worry was back home, where Lenore was serving as Wallie Toronto’s Vice-President. You all know about his famous Italian charisma and machismo, don’t you?”

Laughter again breaks out among the audience members, each of whom is well familiar with Wallie’s antics. “Just like his brother!” Carlos shouts from the audience, receiving in return a jab in the shoulder from Bob.

“Well, after returning home, I was pleased to find that Wallie’s moves hadn’t worked on her,” George says, “but I took her away to the Mission Field of Michigan just to be sure.”

The laughter continues; George certainly knows well how to play to an audience. He changes his tone to touch upon the final fate of their school

“We all faced tough times during the Great Depression. I was as saddened as the rest of you when I heard that the L.D.S. would be closing its doors. As a

nation, we were facing a dismal scene at the time, and we were lucky to be saved by the New Deal, which, in turn, allowed us to help save the world from tyranny.”

This deliberate, patriotic punch strikes a chord with the audience.

“Keep in mind that while most people believe that Roosevelt himself crafted the New Deal, it was actually our very own Logan native Marriner Stoddard Eccles, Chairman of the Federal Reserve, who was its architect. Even though our high school came to an end during the Depression, the recovery brought about by the New Deal at least allowed the business school to continue and evolve into the notable institution that L.D.S. Business College has become today – all thanks to our native son!

“Marriner – who, incidentally, also received his financial training in the British Mission office – used to tell me something that has stuck with me over the years: *Don’t ever let anyone tell you that there are limits to where a Mormon can go in this world!* They told me a Mormon was unelectable east of the Mississippi. I didn’t believe a word of it!”

Again there is applause from the audience.

His time is running short, so he only briefly covers anecdotes about his appointment as the CEO of American Motors Company and how he met the Hoovers, the Roosevelts, the Eisenhowers, the Nixons, and many other Washington notables.

“I’d like to close with a warning to everybody, an eminent threat that will hinder our progress if we do not suppress it.”

Some audience members expect to hear him mention the hiss and byword of *communism*. But this is not another of the anti-communist tirades typical of the day, and many are surprised by his topic: “...Bigotry, racism and religious persecution.”

Knowing that George’s views on discrimination have contrasted and, at times, clashed with the governing body of the Church, Gordon and Homer shift a bit uncomfortably in their seats.

“After my dear friend Howard returned from his mission and likewise settled in Michigan,” George explains, “I worked closely with him as he set his knowledge to work – drawing on his lessons and observations in Europe to build a bank that became a financial empire.

“Howard did very well for himself, and he and his bank supported me financially in my gubernatorial and presidential campaigns. The contributions were increasingly scrutinized, however, and we soon found ourselves on the defensive against attacks from all directions.

“Michigan, you have to understand, is home to the world headquarters of several staunchly anti-Mormon protestant churches as well as Zondervan Publishing Company, publisher of much of the anti-Mormon literature being distributed today. We Mormons are a small and distinct bunch there, but even though there are hardly any Michigan Mormons, my constituents actually began to fear a Mormon takeover; after I won the governorship, the local priests and pastors set their congregations against us, warning them that the Mormons

now had the government, the banks, and the auto corporations in Michigan. Accusations of favoritism, nepotism, money laundering, insider trading, and all sorts of infractions persisted. The Church was drawn into the debate again and again, and Church members felt ostracized in the fallout.

“There were no tar-and-featherings, no boycotts, and certainly no cattle cars – but I saw in this frenzy some similarities akin to the anti-Semitic paranoia that pervaded even our country a half century ago when we left our high school to discover the world. We all know how that bigotry led to greater crimes against humanity overseas. These elements need to be stopped and routed at their source to prevent freedom from being undermined.”

A few audience members start to clap, but he quickly brings the topic home. “The best way to start that process is by looking inwards,” he says. “Just this month we have heard from the pulpit a historical reversal that allows us a chance at restitution for some bigotry of our own.”

A staunch supporter of the civil rights movement, George was thrilled at President Kimball’s recent lifting of racial restrictions for ordinations, which had finally brought his religion in line with his politics. He realizes it is a sensitive topic at the moment – not all Mormons welcomed the news – but he presses it a bit further.

“Let us use this opportunity to forgive the bigotry that has been directed against the LDS for so many years; rather than perpetuating it, let us mend relations with our fellow man, and promote the principles on which our

nation was founded – they are the same principles upon which our beloved high school was founded. This is our duty and our sacred obligation. If we fail in this task, the alternative is surely a bleak path.

“Ten years ago as governor of Michigan, I witnessed a scene I hope I never see again. Facing one of the most deadly and destructive riots our nation has ever experienced, we had to declare martial law and occupy Detroit with federal troops. The aftermath was absolutely devastating. Even in my time in Vietnam I never saw anything like it. At its source had been racial tensions that erupted into violence. It simply did not have to be, and we collectively have the power to prevent a repetition of those events.”

George pauses for a moment as he recounts the events. The government’s reaction to the *12<sup>th</sup> Street Riot* was allegedly slowed by the hesitation of George’s Irish Catholic political opponent to ask a Mormon for help. Ever since that day, George had reworked one scenario after another in his head – trying to find alternatives that could have prevented the dozens of fatalities. Whether or not religion had played a role in the delayed response, the enmity between the politicians had certainly not helped the situation, and George had pledged at that point to put an end to the animosity.

“Despite these troubling scenes, however,” George continues, “I do have a great deal of hope for the future. If a Mormon kid from a polygamous colony in Mexico can beat the odds and get elected to high office, then so can a Black, an Asian, a Jew, or an Arab – all are equal under God.”

Sensing the measure of discomfort that overcomes the crowd at these remarks, he moves on to urge his alma mater to stay true to their dreams, to their values, and to freedom itself.

He also makes a point to stress the importance of family, relating the near-loss of his son, Mitt, that had given them a second chance to galvanize their relationship. Having been pronounced dead at the scene of a fatal car accident in which he was the driver a few years before as a French missionary, Mitt has since undergone a soul-searching transformation that has deeply affected George as well. The struggle that Mitt and his family underwent during the recovery had solidified Mitt's will to follow in his father's footsteps – with an eye toward making his own mark on the world. George's thoughts begin to wander back to that difficult time.

“Family first!” he says curtly but enthusiastically, not allowing himself to get choked up. By this time he realizes that his audience has grown a bit restless. With the main course about to be served, George decides it is time to bring his remarks to a close. Despite the fact that there isn't likely a single opposing party member within earshot, he quickly appends – as he does in every other public speaking engagement – his obligatory plug for the *Republican Party*. Affirmative nods convince him that he is among friends.

“God bless America,” he says in closing, ever the politician.

This particularly patriotic audience is reinvigorated with these final words; he sits down to a

thunderous applause. His satisfied smile at the effect of his words reveals that this inclination is in his blood – it is a sound that his son will likewise learn to appreciate and crave.

With the program complete, the students gather their things and part ways, most of them never to see each other again in mortality. In the conversations outside the building that night, many bemoan the demolition of their old campus to make way for the new Church Office Building next door. As the tower rose during its ten years under construction, nearly every one of the classmates had passed the construction site while shaking their heads at the loss. As he listens to the grumbled murmurings around him, Gordon keeps quiet, having himself voted for the demolition – despite the opposition of Hugh Nibley and other preservationists – and now finding himself with an office thirty floors above the old commons. Hamp and Homer had mixed feelings about the upgrade, but Rulon had taken the vote as one more symbolic piece of evidence that Gordon and his cohorts at the helm of this modern media marvel had completely departed from their historical roots in the Restoration.

After a long night of reminiscing, Gordon leaves the venue and stops by his office to pick up some papers. He looks across at the magnificent temple beaming in the floodlights – the one point of constancy in the skyline of a changing world. From his office window, Gordon wonders what President Grant would have thought at the sight of an excavated construction pit – a hole in the ground where the beloved campus had once stood. Would he be proud of the towering edifice that has now taken its

place? Despite the loss of his former campus, when he considers that he is standing at the nerve center of a global Church of four million members, he rests assured that President Grant would have welcomed it as a sign of progress; it is certainly a far cry from the world he knew as a child.

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Feeling bound a bit closer to his past after the class reunion, and perhaps looking to immortalize the memories of his youth in some manner, Homer begins over the next few years to intersperse his official duties for the Church with historical research on Heber J. Grant and other notable LDS figures. Homer eventually turns his exhaustive notes into a comprehensive biography. Adding to the research and publications already compiled on the subject by Gordon's father, Bryant, Homer feels honored to document the life of one of his long-standing heroes.

He also digs through the archives of his late father-in-law and discovers several unfinished manuscripts that he edits and posthumously publishes on Elder Widtsoe's behalf. In addition to mentoring Hugh Brown, Elder Widtsoe had also mentored Hugh Nibley and other notable scholars of the LDS intellectual crowd; the related notes now at Homer's disposal are sorted and catalogued. He absolutely loves the research process, and Church officials take note of his passion, ultimately appointing him as the Church Historian.

It is quite an honor for Homer to receive an all-access pass to the Church's historical archives through his role as the official historian. As he turns the key and

opens one sealed door after another, he stands in awe of the documents and artifacts – like the hidden treasures of the Vatican – that define a movement embraced by millions.

Over the years, Homer and Gordon continue their close friendship and collaborate on several projects; their relationship is eventually canonized in the LDS Hymnbook as #135 *My Redeemer Lives*, with Homer contributing the music and Gordon the lyrics.

Gordon, however, is not so thankful to Homer for introducing him to a fellow named Mark Hoffman. During his tenure as Church Historian, Homer encounters a flood of documents being pawned by a wily collector. Mr. Hoffman claims that he had come across a collection of envelopes being preserved by stamp collectors for their stamps. He had apparently discovered their contents – which just so happened to be very relevant to early Church history – entirely by accident. Homer is intrigued, and soon approaches Gordon about any interest the Church might have in acquiring the collection.

By the time the documents are uncovered as forgeries, letter bombs and murder victims – among them the son of the missionary apparel mogul, Mr. Mac himself – are in the daily headlines. Homer is absolutely devastated; skeptics publish deeply hurtful articles about his part in the scandal. He relishes his role as a historian, but deep inside, he acknowledges some of the reported claims that he is an untrained amateur in that department. He had dabbled in writing and research, but he wonders whether his training in political science and academic administration can qualify him as a legitimate historian.

The matter shatters his confidence; surely a trained historian would have recognized the signs of fraud, he presumes. Having been initially inclined to open the Church archives further, Homer now feels exposed and vulnerable. Disappointed and embarrassed by the turn of events, he put the archives under a tighter lock-down.

The allegations around Gordon – who is recognized within his fold as a prophet, seer, and revelator – are much more serious. Having been cheated and deceived, he wants to move on from the matter. The press hounds him incessantly, however, and droves leave the Church over the fallout. Gordon by his own admission could have kicked himself for being duped, but he is more disappointed by the public perception and by the fact that some members of the Church expect omniscience from him.

“Adulation is poison,” he mutters to himself once again, knowing that he had been placed on an unwarranted pedestal that no mortal ought to be set upon.

Rulon capitalizes on the events as well and takes every opportunity to use them against the Church. “Surely the true prophet of the Lord would have recognized this lie,” Rulon gloats in a lengthy sermon to his flock the Sunday after Hoffman’s very public trial. “Do not be deceived, my brothers and sisters,” he continues, “They have gone astray; the truth is here with us.”

Rulon, of course, has troubles of his own that follow him at every turn. In addition to the obvious religious controversies in which he is embroiled, Rulon’s business dealings are confounded as well. Members of

the Salt Lake community frequently shun his enterprises once they find out a polygamist is at the helm; he is dismissed from several boards of directors as a result of his religious inclinations. One of his firms, HydraPak, receives much success through Air Force and NASA contracts that are blind to his marital status; unfortunately, though, that firm also ends up turning out the faulty O-Ring that is ultimately found to be at the root of the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion. He is dropped from the incorporation papers, but Rulon’s name nonetheless continues to surface in the victims’ lawsuits for the criminal case.

Despite these troubles, Zola’s family gradually accepts him back into their lives – eventually trusting him enough to do the accounting for some of Brother Brown’s businesses. Now an apostle, Brother Brown has finally freed himself from debt. After reportedly doing battle with the devil himself during a depressive episode, he had managed to secure a fortune in Canadian oil that finally erased his debt and allowed him to serve full-time as a general authority and apostle without drawing from the Church coffers.

After fighting an uphill battle against the Salt Lake business community, Rulon withdraws himself completely to Colorado City, where he directs the affairs of the FLDS Church. His followers are occasionally in the news, but they generally try to maintain a low profile to avoid attracting tax authorities and social workers seeking to uncover welfare fraud in the community.

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Hamp ends up settling in Colorado Springs, where he continues to keep an office at the Air Force Academy long after his retirement. Hamp's personal controversies are, perhaps, less public in nature than those of his classmates, but by no means any less intense. Having been sworn to secrecy about some of his classified assignments over the years, he had grown used to living a somewhat private life during his solitary, global travels; he finds it a challenge to rebuild a trusting and openly honest relationship with Marjorie now that they have more time together in their empty nest.

As he compiles his life history and his extensive records of overseas travels, he begins to regret the absence of hundreds of missing pictures and postcards that he had sent to Dot – whom he had for so many years considered his soul mate. In their first written correspondence since his *Dear John* letter and that dreaded telegram four decades before, he decides to ask for his German postcards back. Dot sadly obliges his request; she had, in fact, treasured those relics, but reluctantly returns the full lot for Hamp to archive.

Hamp reads the notes he had written on the back side of each postcard. He spreads glue over his own words, which are buried as he affixes the cards to his album pages. Though he feels no residual regret over their breakup so many years before, he can't help but wonder what might have been. These thoughts pass with a momentary sigh, and with the album now complete, Hamp is gradually absorbed back into his other pet projects.

As the months pass, an obituary notice catches him completely off guard. Sitting at the breakfast table with the newspaper one morning, he simply cannot believe he is reading of Dot's premature death.

"Anything new in the news?" Marjorie asks him.

Hamp wipes his eyes with his sleeve. His thoughts are convoluted and he is surprised how hard the news has struck him.

"What on earth are you reading?"

Stunned and petrified, he can't bear to put down the paper.

Marjorie, sensing that something is wrong, pushes the paper down from in front of his face. Seeing the tears in his eyes, she is curious what news might have affected her otherwise dispassionate husband so deeply. As she reads the notice for herself, she is equally shocked – not so much by the news itself, but by Hamp's unexpected reaction to it.

Hamp earns himself a scathing glare from his wife, followed by some terse, defensive words that lead to a lengthy stay in the proverbial doghouse.

Not only has the news affected him deeply, but as he recovers from the shock he also begins to feel his own mortality closing in on him. His persistent heart troubles and other physical ailments suddenly feel much more threatening.

Even though he had largely been out of touch with Dot over the years, it pains him to cross her name out in his extensive address book. Hamp had always prided himself on maintaining cordial relations with all of his associates, whatever their relationship; his legendary

book of contacts is always up to date and keeps him in touch with otherwise long-lost acquaintances. His periodic mail usually takes the form of impersonal Christmas cards and promotion notices, but in light of the Dot's passing he endeavors to step up his communications efforts, re-establishing personal contact with many of his former friends.

Some of these contacts, though, turn into further points of contention themselves, earning him even more canine time. As she intercepts and scrutinizes occasional letters from Hawaii, for example, Marjorie reads much more into Hamp's female "friends" there. The loneliness she felt as a new mother during Hamp's overseas stints resurface; coupled with the abandonment she felt from her own father as a little girl, her distrust is compounded, and Hamp finds himself trying to avoid being thrown into the same boat.

But while Hamp has trouble dealing with Marjorie's jealousies, he remains fiercely proud of her. As little understanding as he has for modern art, for instance, he proudly assembles her sometimes peculiar artwork against various backdrops and photographs her together with the individual pieces. Marjorie wears her best dress for each photo shoot, striking glamorous poses as if she were on the cover of *Vogue Magazine*.

Hamp is particularly fond of a sculpture that Marjorie enters into a local art show; inspired by the blessing of Kunta Kinte in Alex Haley's book, *Roots*, it is a bronze statue depicting the roots of a tree. The sculpted roots become hands, and the hands hold a baby, presenting it to the gods. She entitles her work – fittingly

– *Roots*. The television adaptation happens to be in production as a miniseries at the time, and Alex Haley is in the news on a regular basis. Hamp prompts Marjorie to write a letter to the author, letting him know that he has inspired her artwork.

Upon reading her letter, Mr. Haley is touched by her sincere tribute. Embroiled in some controversy over his writing, he sees Marjorie's letter as a diversion from his other troubles. When he sees the accompanying photograph of the statue, he is impressed by the symbolic imagery and buys all remaining casts to distribute to his friends. In gratitude, he sends her back a copy of his bestselling book, inscribed on the front cover:

For Hamp and Marjorie with the very warmest of wishes to your family from me and the whole Roots family of Kunta Kinte – whose infancy blessing you have so beautifully captured! –  
Alex Haley

It is a gift that both Hamp and Marjorie treasure for the rest of their lives. The book and its accompanying miniseries, with a circle of life and death at its center, sweep across the world, prompting an unprecedented number of people to trace their own roots, close their own circles, and discover their unique heritage.

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As Hamp and Marjorie continue their twilight years together, one day Hamp receives a letter from Gordon, requesting a meeting in Salt Lake with President Spencer W. Kimball. Hamp is stunned to read that he is

being asked to accept a calling as the Colorado Springs Stake Patriarch, which entails being set apart by the prophet himself. He paces around nervously and wonders if there might be some mistake. Although he doubts his ability to speak for the Lord and feels unworthy and unqualified in every way, he makes his way to Salt Lake City for the interview.

As he walks along the halls of the Church Office Building, mentally and spiritually preparing himself for the meeting, he happens to pass President Kimball's entourage coming the other direction.

"Why Hamp," Gordon says, surprised to see him so early for his meeting, "we'll be with you shortly."

"Is this Brother Price?" President Kimball asks. Gordon nods.

With that, President Kimball – a notably short fellow – reaches up high and grabs Hamp by the head. He pulls his head down until Hamp is almost bowing. President Kimball then proceeds to give him an almost Papal kiss on the forehead.

"We love you, Brother Price," he says softly.

In his journal, Hamp calls it "one of the sweetest experiences of my life."

Upon his return home – between the steady pulse of patriarchal blessings and transcriptions – he continues to spend much of his time outlining his life's travels, organizing his thousands of slides, and filing away his paperwork. He keeps a pair of scissors on hand as he reads the paper each morning, cutting out articles that relate to Germany or to any of his other interests.

Dot had been among the first of the Class of 1928 to pass away, but every once in a while another obituary runs in the papers, and Hamp and his remaining classmates find that their ranks have decreased by one. As he painstakingly pastes the relevant articles into his extensive collection of newspaper clippings one chilly, autumn morning in 1982, Hamp has no idea that he is next in line.

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L.D.S. Campus being razed for the construction of the Church Office Building

## Chapter 17: Fast Forward

The third volley of seven shots rounded out the 21-gun salute as Hamp was laid to rest with full military honors. I was nearly twelve when I stared at the scene on our bulky Zenith television; though it was a color set, it was so old and burned out that the images almost appeared black and white.

My father had traveled to the funeral in Colorado on his own; armed with the latest technological breakthrough – a massive, shoulder-mounted video camera and an accompanying backpack unit with a bulky video cassette recorder – he unashamedly maneuvered his way through the mourners to record the event for the rest of Hamp’s posterity who couldn’t attend.

As I watched the recorded event unfold on the television screen, I can’t say that it necessarily affected me all that deeply. Having spent much of my childhood overseas, I hadn’t really known Hamp well as my grandfather. For my otherwise pragmatic father, however, the unexpected loss really hit home. When the tape came to the closing hymn, he told me – while choking back the tears – that *O My Father* had been Grandpa’s favorite hymn and that it was specially selected for the occasion. I think watching the event on screen rather than running around as the cameraman finally gave him the chance to take it all in, and an overwhelming sense of responsibility descended on him. Though he was far older than Hamp had been on his own father’s death, I imagine the sensation that overcame him was the same.



Marjorie at Hamp’s military funeral  
Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1982



The U.S. flag presented to Marjorie

As Hamp's only son, my father had just become the patriarch of a family that had now entered a new generation; the mantle had passed, and not just my father, but the entire Colorado Springs Stake had lost its patriarch. Though it had been some time since he had given his last patriarchal blessing, Hamp had still been serving in that capacity when he passed away.

His hospitalizations had become more frequent since a cancer diagnosis and his first heart attack a few years before, but he had also continued to keep himself busy – almost to the point of obsession – with the ambitious task of compiling the history of the Colorado Springs Stake for publication; that task was now left to his coauthors to complete.

My father's video ended with a shot of a bulletin board full of newspaper clippings and certificates that documented Hamp's achievements. In most of the photographs, he appeared in his full military regalia, and I wondered whether I ought to follow his footsteps into a military career myself. I sure wanted to fly, but given the early eighties political scene, at the end of that path I could only picture Slim Pickens riding a nuke to a mushroom-cloud oblivion.

I don't know that Hamp ever saw any real political fruits of his labors with the U.S. Air Force in Germany, but I do have to commend his peace-making efforts. Throughout the history of warfare, one seldom finds an occupying force that rebuilds a country and then gives it back to its people. The Allied forces could have enslaved the Germans, walled them in as the Soviets did, or done much worse to them out of revenge; the surrender

was, after all, unconditional. While there were, of course, ulterior motives for a U.S. presence in the grander scheme of things, one can't detract from the efforts of those idealists who truly felt that the best approach after all of the violence was kindness, forgiveness, and brotherly love. In Hamp's case, no doubt this attitude was aided by his missionary experience.

The emergence of glasnost and perestroika was still years away, but Hamp's prayers were just beginning to be answered behind the scenes when he was felled by a heart attack in 1982. Ever since Thomas S. Monson had stood on the hills of Radebeul just a few years earlier, echoing Orson Hyde, John Taylor, and Karl Maeser in rededicating Hamp's former mission field for the preaching of the gospel, the Church News had been filled with astonishing reports. The very last newspaper clipping Hamp added to his extensive collection, in fact, announced the creation of the first LDS Stake in East Germany – based in the historical Ore Mountains mining town of Freiberg.

Just a month before his death, Hamp had tuned in to hear his old friend Gordon speak in General Conference; interspersed among the news of President Reagan's visit to Welfare Square, how to use the new edition of the scriptures, and special arrangements of *O My Father* and other songs by Crawford Gates, President Gordon B. Hinckley stood at that famous pulpit and made an announcement that would drive a chisel straight through the Berlin Wall: Negotiations with the East German government had begun; the German Democratic Republic would have a temple. It would be the first, and –

though few would have predicted it at the time – the last temple to be built behind the Iron Curtain. It had seemed impossible for so many years, but sure enough, just a few short years after having dedicated the land for the preaching of the gospel, Thomas S. Monson once again made his way across the border and broke ground for the Freiberg Germany Temple the next year.

In his role as the Church Historian, Homer Durham frantically collected and recorded each piece of news emanating from the East Bloc into the official Church archives. He felt honored to witness prophecies being fulfilled first-hand as the temple walls rose. When his best friend Gordon prepared to travel to East Germany to dedicate the newly completed temple in 1985, he had hoped to come along and witness the historic event for himself. But Homer's health, unfortunately, was failing, and a trip became out of the question. Just before midnight on a cold, winter night in Salt Lake, while the scene continued to unfold in Eastern Europe, a heart attack took the life of the renowned educator, author, and historian.

Gordon felt the loss particularly hard as he spoke at the funeral. He had to smile, though, as he touched the casket one last time before it was wheeled out of the funeral home. Just the week before, Gordon had visited Homer in the hospital. Knowing that due to his position, he would have a Church-sponsored funeral, Homer appealed to Gordon's well-known frugality by joking that the Church could save a few dollars of material costs by ordering the shortest casket available.

Of the foursome, the tallest and shortest had now passed away; only the two prophets remained to witness the miraculous global events that were ensuing. Rulon preached of the end of the world and used the signs of the time as justification to further isolate his constituents in preparation for Christ's imminent reappearance; Gordon preached about the opening of doors and used the same signs of the time to step up the work, travel abroad, and bring Mormonism to an ever-expanding audience.

When Gordon traveled to East Germany just a few months after Homer's funeral, he passed through the same areas that he and Homer had visited exactly half a century before. He was amazed at the change: time had not progressed nor even stood still in these areas – it seemed to have actually reversed course. Fifty years before, the streets had been sparkling clean, with a backdrop of whitewashed buildings accentuating the bright red Nazi flags hung in preparation for political rallies. Now, fifty years later, the dismal scene reflected the horrific events that had transpired in the meantime.

While much of the western world had modernized and prospered, living conditions in East Germany had actually worsened. Everything was drab and gray, and Gordon could sense a mood of despair. He passed churches that had deliberately been left in ruins as a purported reminder of the fruits of fascism; he knew full well that this intent doubled as a smokescreen for the perpetual lack of reconstruction funds available to the pervasive government.

As his entourage pulled into Freiberg, though, Gordon's hopes rose once again. There on the hill, the

temple stood in stark, contrasting white. A crowd of thousands had gathered for the occasion. As he shook hands and greeted the local leadership, he almost mistook a short, elderly gentleman for Homer. He missed his best friend dearly and had to force himself back to the present to acknowledge the stranger.

“Nice to have finally meet you,” Herbie said in a broken English phrase he had memorized just for the occasion.

Gordon smiled and gave him a warm hug. “I’ve heard so much about you, dear Brother Schreiter,” he said, “I’m very much looking forward to our meeting.”

Following the temple dedication – within the walls of the miraculous edifice and with the aid of a translator – Gordon held a lengthy interview with Herbie and set him apart as a temple worker.

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Half a world removed from this sensational setting, a scrawny kid with a Midwest mullet sat in his bedroom, spinning a globe around and stopping it with his finger to see where it might take him. I was a newly declared teenager at the time, but being the *only* kid in my school deprived of cable, I had just four channels to choose from; the brand new phenomenon called MTV was not among them, and the injustice of it all was echoed by the rock anthems that blared from my cheesy alarm clock radio: *We’re not gonna take it...You gotta fight for your right...*

My Legos and other toys suddenly seemed juvenile, and Saturday morning cartoons had somehow become uncool in my newly self-conscious mind;

unfortunately, though, my only alternatives on our old Zenith TV were golf, bowling, and a PBS telethon. With nothing of interest on TV and no way to escape the rural outskirts of Blandville, Michigan, I just sat there simmering while my head banged to the beat of the music. “What do you wanna do with your life?” Dee Snider was asked over the airwaves. While his answer, “I wanna rock,” echoed over and over again in the background, I started penciling my own list of things to do before I die.

I had grown up in the Bavarian Alps, where my father – wanting to top his gig as a military brat – had taken a temporary work assignment making airplane gadgets in a small factory. Trying to make the most of our time on this *Sound of Music* set, my parents had decided to rent a vacation apartment on a picturesque dairy farm rather than cramming us into a townhouse in the city. The *Bichlhof*, or Hilltop Farm, as it was fittingly called on the maps, became my childhood home, but I had grown up in this idyllic setting without much appreciation for it at the time. As a further unappreciated bonus, every time a business trip came up for my father, we’d pack up our VW camper van and tag along; in that manner I had seen every corner of Europe by the time I turned twelve.

Now, freshly returned from a place where the third, vertical dimension was an inherent part of life, I found myself trapped in the two-dimensional flatlands of the industrial American Midwest, spinning circles in Governor Romney’s political playground. Hoping I might at least be able to see over to the next town, right after we

moved into our new home I had found the tallest tree around and climbed to the very top – where I had hammered in some planks and started constructing a precarious perch. As it turned out, though, I couldn't see the next house or anything else beyond even the next tree.

It would take more than a tree house to get me off the ground; I turned back to the globe and spun it around again, wishing I could fly somewhere else. I grabbed some string and decided to tape it down anywhere my finger landed. With hair-metal glam-rockers crackling through my radio, I began to fine-tune my *'round the world* trip by moving the string to different destinations.

Having already been all over Europe, I skipped that part completely and instead hit some of the amazing places I had only read about. I knew that the coolest bands and movies came from Australia, for example, so I'd have to start in Sydney. From there my string went to Bangkok, Bombay, Cairo, Johannesburg, Rio, and every destination I could squeeze in between. It was just a string for the time being, so why not hit Patagonia, pull it over Antarctica, and go heli-skiing in New Zealand on the way back?

With my orbit complete, I transcribed the itinerary onto my new *bucket list*, added a nuclear clause, and vowed to visit each stop. The nuclear clause, of course, exempted me from completing my trip if Reagan and Gorbachev couldn't work out their differences and I ended up with radiation poisoning. Barring that, however, I fully intended to circle the world before leaving it behind.

I blew a whole weekend with these dreams and went back to my humdrum school the next Monday morning. These were the days when break-dancers in parachute pants – carrying oversized ghetto blasters up on one shoulder and huge pieces of cardboard under the other arm – roamed my junior high's hallways. At lunchtime, we would all stand around and watch while the b-boys laid out the cardboard and practiced moves designed to attract the largest crowd: backspins, buttspins, and plenty of failed attempts at head spins. I stood there watching as well, but my own head was still spinning with my globe back home.

Before I knew it, someone threw me a wave. Back in the day, you couldn't turn down a wave thrown in your direction; you caught it, busted some moves, and threw it back to the sender once you had put him to shame. That was the game. But a dancer I most definitely was not; the wave flopped and sputtered out.

"That's it?" the b-boy said.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Come on!" he taunted.

I just stared across the lunch room. Some of the girls snickered, but the lunch tables gave me an idea. Though I couldn't break dance, my mother – who had been a diving champion during her own glory days – had taught me how to do a back flip off a diving board over the summer. The lunch table was about the same height as a one-meter diving board...

By the time I got up the courage to try my potentially humiliating and permanently debilitating move, the circle had closed back around the cardboard

dance floor; I had lost my shot in the meantime. Next time, I told myself, I'd catch that wave and rather than laughing, everyone would gasp at the feat while I launched myself off the table and completed my back flip.

Perhaps a little practice wouldn't hurt first, I figured; so when I got home, I set my sister's gymnastics mat against the wall and backed away. I took a deep breath, ran toward the wall, and tried to kick off. Unfortunately the style of the day dictated that high-tops remain untied. Needless to say, my foot slipped out of my shoe, and I landed straight on my head.

Too dazed to try it again, I went back to my room and lay on the bed, wanting to escape the pull of gravity. I pulled out my bucket list and somewhere in between the Ironman in Hawaii and BASE jumping off the Sydney Harbour Bridge, I scribbled in *Do a standing back flip*. I stared at the globe again and spun it around a few more times. I just wanted to fly away somewhere; it didn't really matter where.

A slow set of knocks on my bedroom door interrupted my thoughts; I had no idea that my wish was about to be granted – albeit in a way I hadn't imagined.

“Bad news,” my father told me, having just hung up the phone after a lengthy, long-distance call, “Herr Geissinger died yesterday.”

My adopted grandfather – the old farmer who had served as a surrogate for my own grandfather during our stay in Germany – had suffered a fatal mishap. Memories rushed through my mind. I couldn't believe he was gone; he seemed as fit as men half his age and had, in fact, still

been working the farm in his old age. I thought of his family and realized that on top of the emotional loss, his wife would now be left shorthanded for the upcoming harvest season.

“They could use some help,” my father said with a discernible hint in his voice.

I could see where this was going; he had already volunteered my free labor and was just letting me know why. I looked over at my globe; Germany was already checked off, and with so many other destinations awaiting my arrival, I wasn't necessarily crazy about the idea of going back there until I had knocked off the rest of my list first. I sighed and nodded. Though I wouldn't be following my string to Australia, I resolved that this summer stint would at least get me away for a while.

My sister and I promptly shipped off to Germany, where I shed my Nikes for rubber farm boots. As kids, we had taken in all the benefits of farm life with none of the accompanying work; now it was time for that debt to come around full circle. After a few early mornings of *Stallarbeit* – which among other tasks included moving a whole lot of manure in all its forms – I was quickly tiring of the work. When the sun came up, we'd move from the stalls out to the fields, where some of the neighbors and relatives from around the area joined in the effort. I complained about my blisters, and the other farmhands just laughed when they looked at my smooth hands.

“Like a baby's butt!” one of them said, and they all had a good laugh at my expense. Getting a spoiled American teenager to do a full day's worth of farm work

certainly was a challenge; they felt that I needed some more words of encouragement.

“Like our fellow Alpenjodler Arnold says, ‘What doesn’t kill you...’”

“I know, I know,” I mumbled, having heard the quote one too many times, “...makes you stronger.”

“You realize this is a picnic, don’t you?” one of the older fellows asked me as we sat down to *Brotzeit* – a morning break for a snack. He then proceeded to rattle off a set of war stories that, indeed, made shoveling manure feel like the most scrumptious picnic imaginable.

The tough-as-leather farmhand told me that he still had sobbing nightmares about the bombs that fell all around him during his middle school years in Munich. He could whistle quite loudly – having perfected the art to corral his cattle – and he proceeded to imitate the sound of falling bombs, starting with a high-pitched whine that got lower and louder until he made the sound of an explosion. He told of the shrill air raid sirens, the panicked race into a possible tomb, the excruciatingly claustrophobic wait for the drone of the bombers, and the asphyxiating sense of doom as the whistling bombs got ever louder. The piercing sound of each approaching bomb was like hearing the painfully slow click of a trigger in a game of Russian roulette. Night after night he sat huddled against a concrete wall, knowing that any one of the thousands of whistles might end not just with the sound of an explosion, but by blowing him to pieces, burning or burying him alive.

I could draw absolutely no comparisons to my own cushy existence. I wanted my MTV, my break-

dancing stank, and my tree house was inadequately low; that was the extent of my junior high trauma. With nothing of substance to complain about, I kept my mouth shut, and the days began to pass a bit less painfully.

Periodic respites came from the frequent Catholic holidays that break up a Bavarian summer with their ornamental richness. As we waited and watched the various processions wind their way through town, I began to ask more questions and found that each of the farming families in the area had faced their own tragic wartime losses. Among these I discovered that Herr Geissinger’s cousin from a neighboring farm, who had incidentally served alongside Hitler as a courier during the First World War, had been one of the many local fatalities. In the cemeteries of the sparse mountain villages that dotted the horizon, hundreds of enduring grave markers attested to further losses. The serene church bells and cow bells set a contrasting tone to the former violence, but the reminders of the war’s outcome became all too clear each time a U.S. Air Force fighter jet on a training run trumped the peaceful ringing with a sonic boom.

In the evenings, Frau Geissinger would play her accordion in the *Stube* and relate stories about pre-war life in mystical Silesia. She told us of her subsequent flight as a refugee, including her feat of riding a bike all the way across Czechoslovakia. I didn’t necessarily grasp the magnitude of the difficulties she and others like her had faced, but the imagined injustice in my own life certainly seemed embarrassingly trivial in comparison. I still missed the morning call for *Stallarbeit* more than once, but armed with these tales, I didn’t feel quite so

sorry for myself anymore while I sloshed around in the manure pile.

When my parents came for a mid-summer visit, they offered a welcome hiatus, and we all took a trip to East Germany to see some family friends. After crossing the heavily armed border, we made our way to Freiberg, where enthusiastic crowds were gathered around the new temple. There were only a few thousand East German Latter-day Saints; yet we were told that over 100,000 visitors – virtually all of them non-Mormons – had attended the temple open house.

Interspersed with the crowd, twenty full-time *Stasi* agents also reportedly stood guard, sparking fears among the believers that the East German secret police had bugged the temple. Having tapped into the nearby Trans-Siberian pipeline – strongly opposed by Reagan and even sabotaged by the CIA – to draw fuel for the temple complex, the Church had drawn fire from critics on both sides of the Iron Curtain for negotiating with the East German government in the first place. Rumors that the Church had paid off the regime for the construction permits were being circulated among dissenters, a few of whom had gathered outside the gates.

Despite all the controversies, however, President Hinckley, President Monson, and the others involved in the negotiations had somehow managed to walk a fine line; there – miraculously – stood the almost unbelievable result: a temple in the communist bloc.

Swarms of cars – each with a rattling lawnmower engine and wide-eyed passengers glued to the windows – arrived from every direction. Some of the passengers

were looking at the temple, but as we approached the grounds, I noticed others pointing at us. Our family certainly made for a conspicuous bunch, arriving in our *Wessie* car and matching apparel. I knew that anyone from the west was assumed to have deep pockets, so I wondered whether they just wanted some of our *D-Marks* – the coveted hard western currency.

A group of teenagers surrounded me near the entrance gate, and one of them tapped me on the shoulder.

“100 marks!” he said.

I didn’t have 100 marks on me. I shook my head and pulled out a 10-mark bill; it was all I had. He laughed.

“For your jacket,” he explained, tugging my collar between his fingers. I had completely misunderstood; he actually wanted to *pay* me for my Levi’s jacket! 100 marks amounted to more than triple what I had paid for it myself. I nervously straightened my collar. Paranoid that the border guards might lock me up for having traded on the black market, I shook my head and politely declined.

Besides, we had a government mandate to spend money, not earn money. As prescribed in the conditions of our entry visa, after registering with the police in every city we entered, we had to squander a set amount of D-Marks – converted to East German marks at an exchange rate five times less than we would have netted on the black market. As an amusing twist, there didn’t seem to be anything worth buying, not even in the *Intershops* that the government had set up especially for tourists. The items we did end up buying were then confiscated by the

border guards with their snarling guard dogs when we crossed back into West Germany; they were running quite a racket!

It certainly was an intriguing time in all respects. After we left Freiberg, we stayed with family friends in nearby Dresden; jealous that we could leave while they were trapped, some had spoken of escaping; in weighing out the risks, though, they wondered whether the Wall might collapse on its own in the near future. In any case, they had to speak softly; their neighbors – suspicious of their motives in entertaining westerners – spied on them and recorded every creak of the stairs, flush of the toilet, and other mundane facets of life for the Stasi in endless notebooks. This widespread surveillance system, while low-tech, was enormous and thus quite effective in promoting paranoia among the populace.

Armed with our foreign passports, we were able to cross no-man's-land out of East Germany – passing with relative ease through a wall that most of its own native citizens couldn't penetrate. There was, however, a noticeable difference at the border this time around. When we had crossed the same border in the late 1970's – while the Strelzyk and Wetzel families were frantically sewing quilts into a hot air balloon for their life-threatening *Night Crossing* over the border – very few vehicles approached the tight border. By this time in 1985, though, a steady stream of both East and West German cars were lined up on both sides of the border, armed with visas granted by a regime that was steadily relaxing restrictions and loosening the grip on its people.

We finished our labors on the West German farm and at the end of the summer crossed back over the Atlantic to resume our lives in America's heartland. The next year, strong winds blew Chernobyl's fallout right over the Bichlhof's crops. As the hay and fodder went to waste, the Bavarian farmers joined the activists who recognized that the price of competing in the Cold War's contest had left an unsustainable regime poised for collapse. With this added momentum, a revolutionary movement began to approach critical mass.

An irreversible path had been laid, and within a few short years – in contrast to so many previous revolutions – a spark was ignited not with Molotov cocktails but in candlelit processions; the emerging flames were then quickly fanned by the *winds of change* sweeping over Europe. Undeterred by news of the violent retribution of Tianaman Square – that could very well have served as an alternate ending to the European saga – the people of Eastern Europe took to the streets. Unopposed, the peaceful processions ultimately led to the famous freedom trains and then, finally, Mr. Gorbachev *tore down that wall*. Though Reagan had issued the challenge, even Einstein himself had predicted that the world's next conflict would mark the end of civilization, leaving people to fight future battles with sticks and stones. Little did anyone imagine that the Cold War would be frozen into the past rather than having erupted into a nuclear holocaust; it was nothing short of miraculous.

On November 9, 1989 Berlin hosted the world's biggest party – held atop a teetering wall by triumphant,

ad-hoc crowds; fortunately for humanity, the only shots fired were celebratory. *The Day After* never came; fallout shelters, nuclear drills, and ICBMs began to sink into the past as relics of a bygone era. A heavy load that had been accumulating for forty years, weighing down the shoulders of society, suddenly lightened and ultimately fell to the ground; the contagious euphoria ushered out the end of the eighties.

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“Please make your way to the break room for a special celebration,” crackled the announcement. The production lines halted before the sound had even finished echoing around the huge warehouse.

“Not another birthday,” I thought – though they had never actually halted production for the mundane cake-and-song routines that seemed to be turning into a lunch room staple of late. The recess was welcome, though, and I’d surely forfeit my piece of cake if I reacted slowly. I had just picked a heavy box off the line, so I quickly placed it onto the palette and followed the crowd into the break room.

“Must be the CEO’s birthday,” I joked to a coworker as we waited to squeeze our way through the break room door.

“Retirement’s more like it,” he replied with a laugh.

I nodded in agreement. “Van Andel or DeVos?” I asked, “What’s your bet?” Amway’s chairman and president had each long since passed retirement age, but the geriatric billionaire cofounders were still holding the reigns of the company.

“My bet’s on a two-for-one,” he answered. The seats at the tables were long gone by the time we entered the room, so we resigned to standing in the back.

After having pulled double shifts for a few days straight, I was feeling like a permanent fixture in the factory; but it was just a temporary job to earn some mission funds. I had been relieved to get a mission call to Germany, since I already spoke the language to some degree; and as an added benefit, the Dresden Mission was one of the cheaper missions in the Church – still less than \$200 per month. With just a few more weeks on the line I’d be able to pay my whole way. The job hadn’t left much time for mission preparations, though, so I was beginning to feel a bit ill-prepared for my looming departure. I hoped to be able to quit in time to devote a whole week to full-time preparations – and to catching up on World Cup replays for all the soccer games I had missed while on the job.

Surrounded by line workers, the marketing director at the front of the room looked quite out of place in her designer office attire. We waited for the big news, whatever it might be. Frankly, I didn’t really care; my eyes were on the cake.

“As a company, we stand on the verge of reaching \$2 billion in annual sales this year.” She cleared her throat, trying to get the crowd’s attention; but the numbers bore no meaning to me or to anyone else in the room. “We have now finalized the arrangements to implement a plan that is certain to push us over this milestone for the first time ever,” she continued. I looked

around the room, trying to calculate whether there might be enough cake for everyone.

“As you know, the Berlin Wall’s collapse has changed the maps of Europe,” she said.

Suddenly she had my attention.

“We have been working hard to make the necessary logistical and legal arrangements to officially open this exciting new market for Amway.”

I listened intently.

“Just yesterday, we received the official government approval of our strategic plan; in keeping with this plan, we now intend to fill 5,000 distributor positions in East Germany. New distributors recruited from the local labor force will certainly need training, so we’ll be looking for volunteers to assist in these historic efforts. We expect many similar announcements to follow as other exciting, new markets open. With barriers falling around the world, Amway will lead the charge to bring our business to the people!”

Her announcement was met with subdued cheers, but I was too dumbfounded to even clap. 5,000 distributors? The number seemed staggeringly huge in comparison to the measly LDS missionary force. I knew that a handful of missionaries had been transferred to East Germany from surrounding missions over the previous months; others had had their mission calls changed in order to reroute them to Dresden. From what I had heard, though, my batch of six new missionaries – the first to be called straight to East Germany – represented one of the largest groups yet to be sent to Dresden. We would be followed by another group of eight a month later. But at a

rate of less than ten bodies per month, how could our efforts even make the slightest impact when other forces were sending in 5,000 representatives at a time? Amway was about to show the East Germans what America was all about. I, for one, place about as little credence on pyramid marketing as I do on Soviet-style cooperatives, and I cringed at the thought.

Germany was in the news that night when I got home, not on account of Amway’s announcement but for topping Argentina in the World Cup finals. The announcer hinted at the political uncertainty and how the future might affect the soccer team – if Germany reunited under a new nation, for example, the reigning World Cup Champions would be from a country that didn’t exist anymore – an unprecedented prospect. And how might the East German team be absorbed into the mix?

The questions going through my mind that night raced from one track to another. Having been duped by Hitler and then Stalin, would the East Germans roll over for the new capitalists? How might we be received as missionaries and how might the other mobilizing forces affect our reception? Where would religion fit into the picture? With the celebratory break-room scene still fresh in my mind, it truly seemed that a starting gun had sounded. I wondered how many East Germans, blinded by euphoria, had even the slightest inclination at the time that intense races for their hearts, their minds, and their money were well underway.

A few weeks later, I entered the Provo Missionary Training Center with five other newcomers; each of us wore a conspicuous “dork dot” on our collar, marking our

lot as greenies to the more seasoned MTC soldiers. Given the stories coming from the front lines, we longed to join the troops shipping out to the battlefield. Trapped in Basic Training, we felt we were missing out on the action. On the second day of October – midway through our curriculum – my companion and I lowered the East German flag at the MTC, just as we had done every other day. The hammer and compass in its center distinguished it from the West German flag. We dutifully folded it and returned it to the store room. But the following day – on October 3, 1990 – East Germany ceased to exist, Germany was reunified, and history was made; the East German flag was permanently packed away and never flew again.

Generally, Church members are pleased to see another flag raised at the MTC when the doors of a new country are opened for missionary work. This day, however, the number of nations in which the Church was operating decreased by one, and the news was met with delight. The German Democratic Republic retired completely out of existence, and it was missed by few.

I'd like to think that Hamp in some small way contributed toward opening these doors. The Freedom Bell that he had been given was neatly stowed away in a dark closet at Grandma's house, but if he had lived to see a temple constructed under the communist regime – not to mention the 100,000 residents who toured the temple with full governmental endorsement – along with the creation of stakes, the opening of a mission, and the complete collapse of the wall that he hated, he probably

would have rung it himself in commemoration. To me, the chain of events constituted a bona fide miracle.

Soon enough, we caught our plane bound for Dresden to join the infantry on the ground. On that same plane with us were salesmen, marketing representatives, and opportunists of every caliber. When we landed in Dresden, the plane's doors opened like the hatch on a landing craft storming the beach; our battle was about to begin.

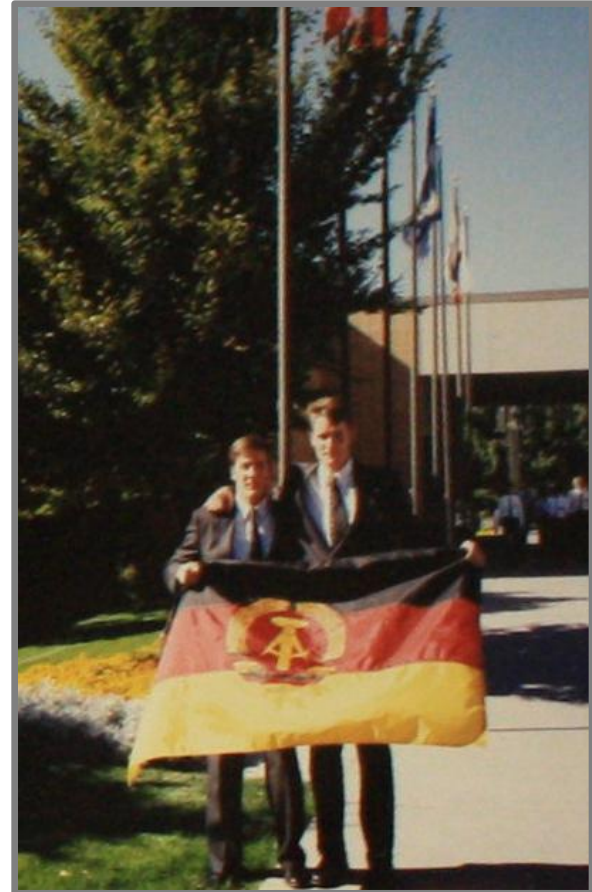
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Standing in line for the 1985 Freiberg Temple dedication



President Hinckley dedicates the Freiberg Temple



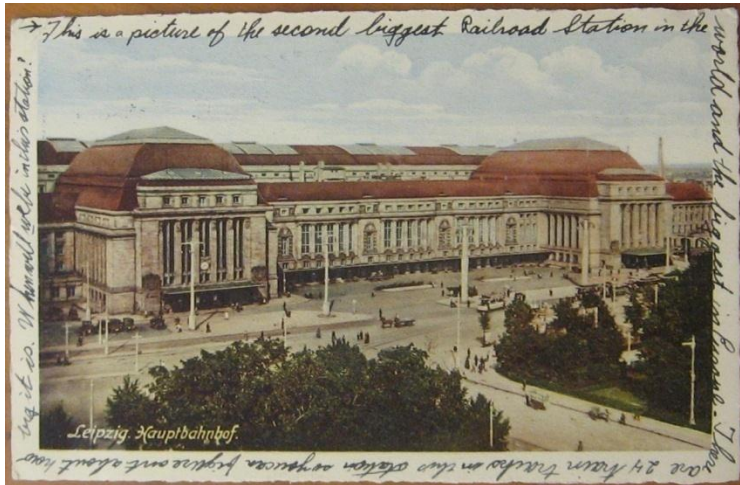
The East German flag at the MTC is lowered for the last time on October 2, 1990

Part IV: A Circle Inscribed

Chapter 18: Hauptbahnhof Leipzig

The immense train station was surreal, a window into a hundred years of history. Twenty-two sets of tracks hit a dead end in Leipzig, more than in any other German terminal. We came to a jolting halt outside the station; the chain reaction of compressed couplings resonated through the cars like a wave of dominoes as the electric locomotive reversed direction. I opened the window and peered out to watch the darkness under the approaching arch swallow the rear cars of the train. The high-pitched squeal of the brakes contrasted with the deep, almost inaudible, German voice echoing over the loudspeaker. “Train 173 from Dresden, now arriving on Track 4.”

Despite the station’s immensity, my car near the front of the train was left protruding out in the open, unprotected from the chill wind. I closed the window and made my way down the aisle with my luggage bouncing off the seatbacks. I tossed my garment bag out the door and onto the platform, then backed my way down the steps; my oversize suitcase nearly knocked me over as I awkwardly dragged it down the steps while trying to brace it with my knees. The cold seeping in from every angle drove in the realization that my new trench coat was going to be horribly inadequate for the next two winters. I turned to face the station, took my bags in hand, and drew a deep breath. “Well then, Elder Price,” I mumbled aloud, “let’s see what you’ve got...”



Hauptbahnhof Leipzig

The deep breath had been a mistake: I started coughing up soot before I could even finish the sentence. The thick, sulfurous discharge from ten thousand coal-heated buildings burned my eyes and throat as I made my way forward into the station. My arms were quickly tiring, but the tiny wheels on my suitcase were of no use on the rough surface, so I kept moving with one arm outstretched, holding my garment bag as a counterbalance to keep the heavier suitcase just barely off the ground. My flat-soled shoes provided little traction on the frosty asphalt, and my cautious gait drew a few quizzical glances from passersby.

The backlight on the acrid haze made the station appear completely dark inside. I squinted as I approached the main atrium; a few rays of light found their way through the soot-blackened skylights. Gradually my eyes adjusted to the dim interior.

Time may as well have stood still for a century or more in the Leipzig station. I was curious to see a *Deutsche Reichsbahn*-era steam engine on the track beside me, but it didn't seem a bit out of place in this setting. The old steam engine must have had quite a history, I thought, puffing its way around Europe for so many decades. Looking around at the masonry walls of the station, I noticed light, grouted pockmarks contrasting with the darkened sandstone blocks of the support columns – telltale scars of war deliberately left untended by the 40-year regime that had collapsed less than a year before. It seemed odd to me that the soot didn't stick to the grout like it did to the sandstone.

The heavy Saxon dialect was a bit intimidating as voices echoed from all corners of the station, blending together into a white noise that may as well have been Mandarin. In an instant, eight weeks of language training suddenly disintegrated into a purely academic exercise. Some excited teenagers passed by, and I tried to decipher small fragments of their conversation. I forced myself to think in German and tune out the overall din, but to my dismay the only words I understood were the English terms they interjected: "...Stars...Film... Hollywood..."

I was so busy fretting over my language woes that I didn't stop to think about the context until I rounded the end of my train and saw Nazi flags draped all across the station. I realized that I had been duped by the steam engine and other props; as it turned out, the whole train station was serving as a movie set! Pre-war Germany was being cast complete with propaganda posters, munitions, and storm troopers in uniform. The frantic teenagers who had passed me by joined a throng surrounding the directors' chairs.

My mission call to East Germany had thrown me right into the wake of the Wall's fall, and the reality of the new freedoms and opportunities descending on the population through the rent Iron Curtain was embodied in these star-struck teenagers. They stood with open notebooks in hand, lining up for the chance to spot their new idols. Less than a year before, they had just begun to watch western TV openly after years of secret viewing, and here they were getting autographs from the stars themselves.

I left the crowd behind me and neared the front entrance of the train station where, I had been told, a local stake missionary would meet me and serve as my temporary companion until transfers were complete. I wondered how on earth would he ever find me given the huge crowd and all of the commotion – until I saw my reflection in a kiosk window. The suit, the nametag, the luggage, the deer-in-the-headlights gaze... Missionaries are certainly conspicuous, I acknowledged – greenie missionaries on transfer day even more so. I propped myself up against a stair rail and began to scan the crowds.

No sooner had I set down my luggage on the steps, than a spry, elderly gentleman approached me. He looked at my nametag and extended his hand. “Elder Price?” he said.

“Yes,” I answered. I began to apologize that he would be stuck with a greenie still learning the ropes.

He wasn’t listening. “Elder Price,” he said again, very slowly this time, staring at my nametag.

“Yes!” I answered again.

“Elder Price,” he said once again, even more slowly, with his brow curled in deep thought.

This time I didn’t respond, but rather waited for an explanation of his odd behavior.

He tapped on my nametag. “You know,” he said, “when I was a full-time missionary many years ago, I had a companion named Price. We used to call him Hamp. I know it’s a big place over there across the pond, but is there any relation?”

“Of course,” I answered, “he’s my grandfather!”

“Well what do you know?” he said, “I’m Elder Schreiter! Your grandfather called me Herbie.” A smile emerged on his wrinkled face. “To think that I’d be serving with Hamp’s grandson sixty years later!” he added, “We’ll have lots to talk about, but first we need to catch our bus.”

Though eighty years old and barely over five feet tall, he still insisted on carrying one of my bags across the street to the bus stop. A noisy, Hungarian-built bus nearly struck us as it pulled into the stop and spewed a thick, black blanket of exhaust over the waiting crowd. We boarded the bus, which set off along the traffic-ridden streets toward Herbie’s building. Along the way, I asked him question after question about my grandfather, his own mission experience, and all that had elapsed in the meantime. Though I hadn’t spent much time with my grandfather while he was alive, I felt now like I was connecting with him in real time.

Leipzig is an amazing city, full of culture and a conflicted history. Herbie quickly shifted into tour guide mode as we passed various landmarks nearly hidden by dark, approaching storm clouds. As he proudly recounted, Bach and other famous composers directed choirs, composed masterpieces, and performed their works among the cathedrals, concert halls, and conservatories dotting the skyline outside our bus window. My drooping eyes turned the backdrop into a dreary daydream, interrupted at each turn by another historical note from my new companion.

Though the former regime had left a dismal scene encircling the historic buildings, the newfangled vibrancy

of the population was palatable; in fact, the pivotal role the city had played in the course of history seemed to be repeating itself. Right about the time Joseph Smith grimaced in pain at the hands of leg surgeons in a log cabin on the American frontier, the fate of nations was being decided on the outskirts of Leipzig – where Napoleon finally met his match in the *Battle of Nations*, predecessor to all modern warfare. Now, after having been all but completely destroyed in the Second World War and neglected in the following decades under the occupational Soviet empire, Leipzig was coming back to life.

Herbie was proud to proclaim that it was, in fact, the people of Leipzig whose peaceful protests along the very streets we were traveling had sparked the beginning of the end of the Soviet Superpower and the Cold War. This new, pivotal role had put Leipzig on the front page of the history books once again.

After a clamorous, bumpy bus ride alternating between disheveled cobblestone and rippled tarmac, we finally entered his building in a courtyard of the *Altstadt*, or “old town.” The scene could well have jumped straight out of one of Hamp’s mission photos; only now the buildings appeared even more dilapidated. Sister Schreiter, a lively old lady with a warm smile, greeted us by tapping on a frosted window three floors above. We climbed the flights of creaky stairs, passing a shared toilet on every other landing that would have sent chills down my spine even without the winter winds whipping up through the plumbing. Sister Schreiter rushed down the

steps to meet us and was already taking my coat before we even reached the apartment door.

I set my luggage aside, trying in vain not to block the small entryway. She immediately took my arm and offered me a seat around a small corner table, letting me know I had arrived just in time for “Abendbrot,” literally evening bread, or a light supper. A coal-fired stove radiated heat onto one side of my face. When she left the room to slice the bread, I stood up to turn and warm the other side. I spotted a wedding picture on the wall and wondered whether my grandfather had played any part in pairing up the newlywed couple. When Sister Schreiter re-entered the room with some open-faced salami sandwiches, I remarked to her that she didn’t look to have aged a bit since the wedding picture.

She laughed. “Oh no,” she said. “We’re actually newlyweds now.”

“Really?” I said, wondering whether she was kidding around.

“That’s not me in the photo,” she explained, “It’s my sister!”

“Oops,” I said. As I thought about what she said, though, I became more confused than embarrassed.

“You see, behind the Iron Curtain, if you wanted to marry within the church, your selection was very limited.”

From my expression she sensed that I’d need a lengthier explanation.

“My fiancé at the time went off to fight in the war. He had volunteered to serve on the *Wehrmacht*’s eastern front, but he never came back from Stalingrad.

Well, the Wall went up, my choices went down, and I never did marry.”

I was even more intrigued, and she continued her tale.

“But my sister always told Herbie, ‘when I pass through the veil, you have to marry my sister.’ So he did just that. A year after my sister passed away in 1985, Herbie and I were married. People ask if she’ll be jealous in the afterlife, but I think we’ll all get along just fine!”

I certainly had landed in another world, and I suppressed my initial judgment after hearing her story.

Meanwhile, Herbie had brought in a shoe box of photographs along with letters, postcards, and newspaper articles that Hamp had sent him over five decades of correspondence. Some of the letters had been intercepted by the intrusive Stasi, with suspicious content blacked out by meddling letter-openers.

I was caught up with questions and found myself particularly enthralled with what Herbie had endured in the post-war years while trying to patch the Church back together. He had quite a story to tell, but – perhaps tiring of my questions – told me I would have to wait for the book to hear the rest of the story. I thought he was joking, but Sister Schreiter promptly assured me that a book of stories of the East German Saints – including Herbie’s personal accounts – had been compiled by Hartmut Schulze, the Leipzig stake president, and was currently in publication.

A knock at the door interrupted our conversation. My new companion, Elder Koblenz, a tall Swiss Army recruit freshly released from his regiment, had arrived to

pick me up. He appeared to be in a hurry to keep on schedule, so I quickly gathered my things and bade the Schreiters farewell. On the way out the door, Herbie handed me a picture of him and Hamp as missionaries.

“I want you to have this,” he told me.

The sight of the mismatched pair made me laugh.

“That’s just the effect we had on the whole town of Rathenow,” he said, acknowledging my laughter with a wide smile.

I slid the photo into my coat pocket and gave him a heartfelt handshake and a gentle tap on the back that on account of his age deliberately fell short of the customarily forceful missionary back-slap.

We crammed my luggage into the miniature-sized Opel Corsa, leaving Elder Koblenz crammed against the steering wheel as he put the car in gear and pushed the accelerator to the floor. The wheels spun out on the wet leaves; once we got traction he maneuvered like a madman in and out of traffic. The late afternoon skies were prematurely dark with the combination of storm clouds and smog. Obscured by the darkness and freezing rain, the weak tail lights of Trabants and Wartburgs – East Germany’s pitiful excuses for automobiles – would suddenly come into view directly in front of us, and more than once I just about kicked a hole in the floor panel trying to hit an imaginary brake pedal.

I was finally able to relax when we were forced to slow to a crawl in standstill traffic “What’s on our agenda tonight?” I asked, trying to strike up a conversation with my new companion.

“We’ll have a half-hour drive to Halle, but our first order of business will be to get gas for the trip,” replied Elder Koblenz.

I strained to keep up with his Swiss accent. I looked at the fuel gage and curled my brow.

He handed me his weekly planner. “We’ve still got half a tank, but we’re booked for the whole week,” he explained, “so it’s the only time I could squeeze it in.”

Amused by his typically Swiss clockwork, I joked with him. “Well how much time did you schedule for this traffic jam?”

Elder Koblenz shook his head. “This isn’t traffic,” he retorted, “It’s the line for the gas station!”

East Germany’s infrastructure was in shambles with no sign of relief; it certainly could not keep pace with the influx of western vehicles. I looked up and saw a dim, neon “T” at the end of a sea of cars marking the location of the communist-era *InterTank* station. Elder Koblenz continued, “And, by the way, if you’ll look over the planner, you’ll see I blocked out an hour to fill up.”

The recent surge of interest in the Church that accompanied the fall of the Wall had missionaries in East Germany scrambling to keep up with appointments. The planner was booked solid with appointments, and – sure enough – he had an entire hour blocked out for getting gas. And sure enough, it did end up taking the entire hour and then some. I studied the planner while we waited, and – to make use of the time – began to copy appointments onto my own, blank planner sheets. By the time we pulled out of the station, we had to make up some time

yet again; with the full load, the little Corsa struggled to keep up with Elder Koblenz’s right foot.

As we approached the outskirts of Leipzig, a noisy *tha-thump tha-thump* resonated from the expansion joints in the concrete through the Corsa’s miniature suspension system and directly into my spine. The concrete of the *Hitler Highways* – built during the 1930s as part of a highway network that was to serve as a model and precursor for Eisenhower’s future interstate system – had held up amazingly well considering the lack of maintenance since that time. Huge bridge piers, still unfinished more than fifty years later, stood like chimneys dotting the deep valleys – abandoned when the public works labor force transitioned to feed the military machine.

The beat of the tires crossing the joints began to accelerate as we maneuvered through the thinning commuter traffic, and then reached a steady tempo as Leipzig disappeared into the haze behind us. The rhythm was almost soothing as the darkening sky hinted that an invisible sun must have passed an invisible horizon, masked by a thermal inversion like I had never seen. I could make out the outline of bleak concrete housing blocks in the outskirts of the city, which, in turn, made way to decrepit older buildings in the countryside. The villages we crossed through looked like medieval ghost towns, but an occasional dim light flickering through a window indicated that someone was at home there.

We passed a sign that read, “Halle 50 km.”

“Only 30 k’s to go,” said Elder Koblenz, glancing over to see if I’d be confused.

I complied. “How do you figure?”

“That’s a trick we used in the Swiss Alps, too,” Elder Koblenz explained. “Signs were replaced with errant distances in order to confuse the approaching artillery. They hoped the Russians would overshoot the city.”

It all made sense in a strange new way, except for the question of why the signs hadn’t been replaced after all those years.

I stared out the window into the darkness; the occasional village lights eventually gave way to a constant, eerie glow from the surrounding industrial areas, dwarfing everything else in view. In my head I was trying to formulate some questions for Elder Koblenz in German before opening my mouth and exposing my grammatical incompetence. Meanwhile, I felt the seatbelt tugging at my shoulder and realized the photo Herbie had given me was beginning to bend under the pressure. The headlights of oncoming cars shone through the metal barriers in the median. I pulled out the photo and stared at the silhouettes illuminated by the pulsating strobe lights.

There they were – quite an odd-matched, young pair battling language barriers and cultural differences – but bound together by a common belief and adopted heritage. They had been deployed among a people who were looking for a new future after passing through the ravages of war, poised on the verge of an utter economic collapse. I knew they were both destined to be Patriarchs, and I knew where *Germanity* was heading in that moment in the 1930s as if it were an inevitable path into a deep chasm. But what could those two young fellows have

imagined while looking into that camera lens sixty years before? No more than I could have imagined what life might have in store for myself, my new companion, and a new nation at that juncture in 1990.

The little Opel raced forward through the night, zipping past Trabants, Wartburgs, Ladas, Skodas, Moskoviches and other, irreplaceable relics that – despite their go-kart engines – still couldn’t quite be rendered obsolete. Though Elder Koblenz had the pedal to the floor, occasionally a sleek, black Mercedes or BMW would, in turn, race past us like we were standing still. Who was at the wheel of these *Wessie* status symbols? Entrepreneurs, insurance salesmen, bankers, drug dealers, Amway distributors, computer programmers? Which would the people embrace and which would they reject? The gathering forces were ready to capitalize on every ounce of naïvety and excitement in the air, and the unwitting populace was about to get it all crammed down their throats.

A hundred unseen regiments were forming their ranks; some would be allies to the East German people, but others were most certainly enemies and obstacles against which the people hadn’t had the time to develop defenses or build up immunity. I knew full well that the preachers of the established parishes placed us somewhere between the drug smugglers and pyramid frauds on the parasitic scale. Their battalions were in red alert mode, with printing presses and distribution networks in full steam to arm their parishioners with an arsenal of anti-Mormon literature. I had felt like a pioneer when I opened the letter bearing a prophet’s personal

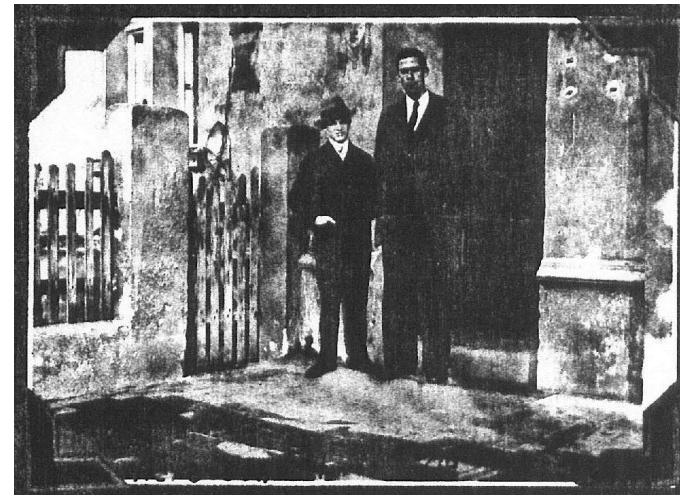
signature a few months prior. Having himself served in this setting during the opening volleys of the Cold War, President Benson had called me into action at its close. But now I was wondering whether we had missed the wave; our race down the derelict highway seemed symbolic of the race for the souls of a newly liberated people.

A lengthy conflict that could have ignited into World War III in any previous year of my life was now fizzling out into a great, unknown void all across the East Bloc. It was a time of unprecedented uncertainty and opportunity. I laid the photo of Hamp and Herbie into my Bible; the jet lag finally caught up with me, and it knocked me out completely.

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Elder Schreiter and Elder Price, 1991



Elder Schreiter and Elder Price, 1931



## Chapter 19: Ha-Noi

I barely remember arriving at our apartment, but I clearly remember the unwelcome sound of the alarm clock at 6 am.

“If we don’t cure your jet lag right here and now, you’ll struggle for weeks,” sang Elder Koblenz in his Swiss dialect. “I’ve broken in a few greenies,” he added confidently, “so you’d better believe I speak from experience.”

I groaned a reluctant acknowledgment.

“It’s your turn,” he said, throwing me a shovel and my trench coat, “but I’ll have to show you how to open the cellar the first time.”

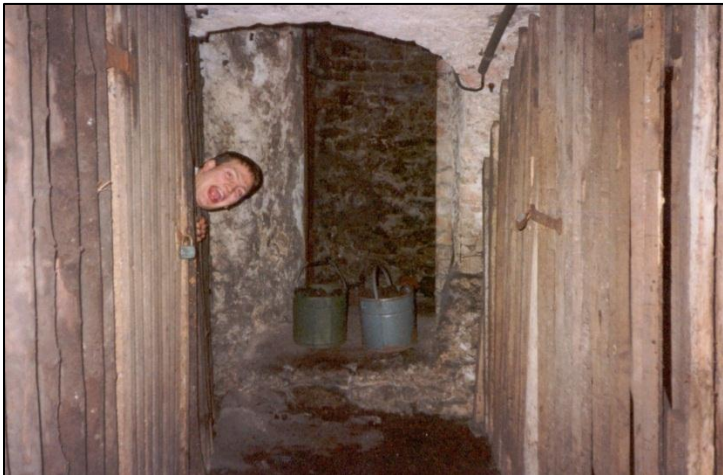
My down featherbed seemed all too soft; it was certainly a contrast to the lumpy, straw-filled mattress. The previous night’s supply of coal had long since extinguished in the furnace, and the floor was literally freezing. From a hook near the front door, Elder Koblenz grabbed an oversize key ring that could well have come straight out of the dog’s mouth in a Disney pirate scene. We made our way down the creaking stairs, out into the courtyard, and through a trap door into the catacombs below, dragging along as many buckets as we could carry.

“Well, they sure didn’t teach us anything about this in the MTC,” I remarked as we shoveled the coal and heaved the heavy buckets back up the stairs. “How does this compare to boot camp?”

“Ha!” he replied, “This is nothing.”



Missionaries in Halle, Christmas 1990



Hauling coal from the Halle catacombs

I laughed, knowing that I had just summoned some superlative stories of the grueling tasks he had endured in Basic Training. He certainly obliged; back in the apartment we sat down in front of the furnace and waited for the radiant heat to emerge; eventually he interrupted his storytelling and looked at his watch.

“We’re late for morning study!” he exclaimed.

We gathered our study materials on the table and dove into the books, taking turns reading and then role-playing the various concerns we might face in teaching others about Mormonism. I am certainly not an actor, and I found the task to be quite awkward. After an hour of joint study I was relieved to have an hour of personal study to myself. After fighting heavy eyelids through the second half of my new routine, we finally headed out the door.

“Wait!” Elder Koblenz said, stopping dead in his tracks. “Do you have your *Little White Bible*?”

I had left my mission rule book back on the bookshelf. I shook my head.

“We have to choose one rule to read each morning before we head out the door.”

I started to roll my eyes, but caught myself halfway as I looked up at him and saw that he was dead serious.

“Go get your book,” he ordered.

I hesitated for a moment. “I don’t need it,” I said, “I’ve got them all memorized.”

“Oh really!” he replied, “Well go right ahead, then.”

“Chapter 3, point number 1,” I said resolutely, reciting the only rule I actually remembered verbatim from the book, “Sleep in the same room as your companion, but not in the same bed.”

As near as I could tell, Elder Koblenz actually cracked a smile at our standing joke from the MTC.

“At ease, Elder,” he said, and we broke ranks to march out the door. Maybe he had a sense of humor after all.

Our schedule was booked solid with teaching appointments, and we rushed around the city from one to the next. Our apartment above the Halle chapel was in a decrepit part of the *Altstadt* historical center. The chapel had been a lecture hall in a sixteenth-century university that had eventually evolved into the Karl Marx University, which ironically enough was a bastion of godless communism if there ever was one. The university buildings shared the skyline with a few towering cathedrals that been miraculously spared during allied bombing raids.

Halle *Neustadt*, or the “new city” of Halle, was the dream of Soviet planners gone wrong. Located just outside the old city walls, its poorly reinforced concrete apartment blocks stretched as far as the eye could see. I only had a few engineering classes under my belt, but I knew enough to realize that any seismic activity would level these structures in a heartbeat.

Each subdivided area had a grocery store, a school, a bus station, and a so-called park. Propaganda postcards idealized the blissful life here, but the people knew full well these were just facades of urban planning.

*Ha-Noi* was its nickname; the contraction of “Halle-Neustadt” was a play on words, comparing it to its communist counterpart in the Far East.

As our first day continued, we climbed the noisy concrete stairwells in the Neustadt and the creaking wooden stairways in the Altstadt. We sat down in one meager, carbon-copy apartment after another, and I struggled to understand the people with their thick, Saxon dialect; they, in turn, struggled to understand Elder Koblenz’s even thicker *Schwiizerdütsch*. A few of our hosts turned to me and asked, “What did he say?” and I slowly repeated what little I had managed to understand myself.

Some of the people we visited turned out to be more curious about America than Mormonism. Feelings toward Americans were definitely mixed here in the State of Saxony. The people of this particular part of the state had originally found themselves under Allied control after the Second World War. We were told about how the Saxons felt betrayed when the Allies traded their cities to the Russians for the little island of West Berlin. Wherever possible, we squeezed an introductory Church lesson into any lull in the political commentary and invited our hosts to the Sunday services.

After a few hours on the go that first day, we passed a service station. We still had plenty of petrol, but we were between appointments, so I asked Elder Koblenz if he could pull over so I could take a quick break.

“No toilet breaks!” he answered, “We just don’t have time.”

I laughed, but then he drove right past the station. “I thought you were just messing around,” I exclaimed, a bit perturbed.

“Listen, we don’t stop,” he said, “My commanding officer used to blow up at our whole platoon when a greenie would request to break ranks for a pit stop. ‘You’ll learn to hold it,’ he’d tell them.”

“You can’t be serious,” I replied.

“Well if the Swiss Army can do it, God’s Army can do it, too,” he retorted, “and even better!”

I wanted to make a snide remark back to him, but I couldn’t think of the German word for canteen. I wondered how much stronger he’d feel being out of commission with a bladder infection.

I said nothing, so he broke the silence to drill in his point even further. “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” he quipped, and then – in an apparent attempt to validate the quote by its association with his supersized hero from the other side of the Alps – he turned his head toward me and punctuated the remark with a nod. “Conan!” he added as a final emphasis.

“Nietzsche,” I mumbled to myself. It certainly wasn’t the first or last time I’d be hearing the stolen, overused quote. I pulled my planner out of my suit coat pocket and looked the rest of the day over, trying to identify the next possible opportunity to answer the call of nature.

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As the days passed by, we pulled twelve-hour shifts after morning study, and never once came back to the apartment for lunch or a rest stop. Even P-days, a

missionary's well-earned R&R time for "preparation," were unheard of. Slowly, I became accustomed to this new life, stretched bladder and all.

A few months before I arrived, the Church had placed an advertisement in the *Stern*, a widespread German publication that just happened to be eponymous with the German *Ensign* at the time. The secular *Stern's* circulation had exploded when the Wall came down, and the East Germans jumped at the chance to add a free book to their newly uncensored libraries. We had a box in the apartment with hundreds of clipped responses to the Church ad. Those addresses closest to our apartment had already been visited; the remaining deliveries were in the surrounding cities and villages.

One day a week was blocked out for out-of-town trips. On this day, we would take our box, map out a route, and travel around the countryside in the little Opel. Many of the areas we visited once held Church branches that had completely dissolved. Decimated by the ravages of war, the few members who hadn't fled the bombs or the post-war hunger had eventually escaped to the West in the face of the tightening political noose, hoping to be free again to practice their religion.

One of these towns was Naumburg, an isolated enclave that lay an hour or two up the Saale River – where Hamp had spent his Christmas holidays in 1931. The branch had not managed to sustain itself financially during the Great Depression, however, and Hamp had been directed to close the area. The Church's presence in Naumburg had faded away entirely; when Elder Koblenz and I drove into town, armed with three addresses and a

box of blue books, our little one-day operation represented the first new hope for the Church in sixty years. We had dreams of finding a "golden" family who would build up a branch that would grow into a ward or even a stake – fresh from the MTC, every possibility seemed realistic to me. We drove past the towering cathedral in the town center; a line of people stood outside, winding their way around the building.

"Full house," I said to Elder Koblenz, "with standing room only."

"Looks like people are returning to the churches," he said, nodding his head, "That's a good sign."

We stopped to ask someone on the street for directions. Out of curiosity, I asked him what all the commotion at the church was all about.

"*Kirchensteuer* kicks in this week," he answered, "so they're all taking their names off the Church records."

For years, the communist government had not allowed the Protestant or Catholic Churches to directly garnish wages. Under the new regime, however, the East German churches were now being allowed to implement the *Kirchensteuer* – or Church Tax – to automatically deduct "donations" from their members' wages as was typically being done in West Germany. I stared at the line, bewildered. Sure enough, these people – who had retained their church membership through decades of communist persecution – were now leaving the churches in droves, citing a new form of capitalistic persecution.

We followed the directions and drove on through the historic city, passing Nietzsche's house and even the

school where he was educated. The line around the church was a bad omen, but we hoped for better results from our referrals. Our first two delivery attempts were a further reality check, however; we found only vacant apartments. Like many others who had first responded to the advertisement several months before, in the meantime these two individuals had apparently left the town's skyrocketing unemployment to pursue new opportunities in the West.

Our last hope in Naumburg lay in a dismal little apartment under a stairwell. The lights didn't work, and as we approached the door, I found it partially open.

"We've brought the book of scriptures you requested," I said with a knock on the door.

A synthesized voice replied from inside the apartment. "Haven't you heard?" it said, "God is dead."

I was growing tired of the overused Nietzsche quote. If I had been quicker on my feet, I might have retorted with the famous bumper sticker line, "Nietzsche is dead... -God." But the robot voice had startled me, and I just paused for a moment. Before I could think of a comeback, the voice said, "Come on in."

I was shocked at the invitation, but I pushed the door open and peered inside. An overwhelming stench hit me and I had to take a step back to catch a breath of air before making my way inside the damp apartment. The only heat came from the neighbor's walls, and the only light came from a small window in another room. I had to wait for my eyes to adjust to avoid some obstacles in my path. As it turned out, the man was bed-ridden, with makeshift bedpans, buckets of vomit, and bottles of

vodka scattered around the room. I had to breathe through my sleeve to keep from vomiting myself. We handed him his book, though I wondered how he would ever be able to read it in this condition.

He started asking us some questions, and I slowly accustomed myself to the new, computerized voice box he held up to his tracheostomy. He apparently knew who we were and had been waiting for his chance to do battle with the religious forces threatening his country. We tried to explain a few tenets of Mormonism, but he had already heard all he was willing to listen to, so we thanked him for letting us in and made our way back to the car.

After this, our third strike in Naumburg, we resolved that we were "planting seeds" and left the town for another generation of missionaries to harvest. As we passed caravans of semi-trucks on the road back to Halle, it seemed ironic that the same new economy that had granted this particular fellow's voice a second chance had also brought a more efficient supply chain that would further assist him in drinking himself to death. I wondered how much longer he would live and whether I would one day forget the smell and remember the man; Christ and his apostles didn't let the stench of lepers keep them away, after all, and the Gospels speak only of healing and not the smell. This alcoholic's peculiar aroma moved from our suits into the Corsa's upholstery, though, ensuring that he and his odor were kept fresh in our minds until we finally scheduled a stop at the car wash and dry cleaners into our planners.

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Each week after making the rounds to our teaching appointments in Halle, we'd head back out into the countryside for our delivery runs. We methodically went through our stack of orders and marked off each area on a large wall map; during our outings, we'd travel through small villages, through farm towns, along muddy dirt roads or tractor trails. Wherever the postman could deliver a *Stern*, we could route a Book of Mormon.

I especially looked forward to these days in the country, but I seldom appreciated the historical significance of the places we explored at the time. We went to Dessau, for example, with its famous Bauhaus school that Hitler had closed for the "un-German" architecture it spawned. We went to Eisleben, the city of Martin Luther's birth and death. We drove past the famous chapel doors in Wittenberg, where his 95 theses once hung as the opening volley of the Reformation. We visited Weissenfels, where the composer Telemann worked, and where Händel was first discovered playing the organ as a child.

Countless other historical events had transpired in each of these places; but it wasn't just ancient history we encountered. Future history was being made as well. During our frequent visits to a tiny town called Merseburg, for example, little could we have known that a geeky teenager there named Yawed, enthralled with the new influx of technology, would someday revolutionize the world by founding You-Tube.

Windows in even the remotest villages began to glow with brand new television and computer screens, but modernizing the buildings themselves would prove to

be a much lengthier process. It seemed a shame that these amazingly historic places had fallen into such a state of disrepair, but the deterioration itself invoked an enduring sense of time. Some of the dilapidated villages we visited seemed completely isolated from the winds of change – not just from the fall of the Wall, but from every change of the past century.

On one occasion, we knocked on the door of a marvelous, Gothic building in a tiny town that might as well have been knocked back in time a hundred years or more.

"We've brought the book you ordered," I said when the door opened.

"No thanks," came the reply, "I joined the Jehovah's Witnesses last week."

The slam of the door shocked me. I called through the closed door. "Do you still want your book?" I asked.

"I've heard enough about you from our elders," his muffled voice answered, "Your people stood by while Witnesses died in the concentration camps."

It unfortunately wasn't a charge I could easily refute. "So..."

"So take your book to hell with you!" he shouted emphatically.

I was infuriated but saw no point in a rebuttal. "How did they beat us here?" I asked Elder Koblenz as we made our way back to Halle. The race was on, and I began to take up his fervor. There wasn't a second to lose, and a military-style operation actually seemed appropriately relevant.

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Our one time to relax came each Sunday evening when we'd call President Walter Peters, our mission president in Dresden, from the home of the only Church members in town with a telephone. I'd write a quick letter home while Elder Koblenz checked in with President Peters. Because the East German toilet paper was as stiff and rough as sandpaper, on a few occasions I actually wrote letters home on the toilet paper to demonstrate the discomfort (and possibly translate any achieved sympathy into care packages). If they had just airlifted in rolls of Charmin during the communist era, I thought, the revolution might have happened earlier. Had the populace been armed with soft, imported TP, the regime's propaganda-meisters never could have kept them in the dark about the supposedly deplorable conditions in the West.

On one of these evenings, our host family brought me a little transistor radio. Hartmut Schulze, the Leipzig stake president from the tiny nearby town of Bernburg, was being interviewed. Church members weren't used to having much publicity, let alone positive publicity, so the interview created quite a buzz among them. The radio host asked him question after question about the Church's background and doctrine. I was impressed with the answers and particularly touched by the story of his conversion to the Church as a fatherless child in the hungry, post-war years.

Although his father had been felled by an American bullet, he expressed his gratitude toward the stateside Saints who had assembled *Büchsen* on welfare farms and in bishop's storehouses, shipping them off to a

vanquished enemy. Hearing the struggles that he and his fellow *Büchsen Mormonen* faced under an oppressive regime made me feel at the same time fortunate and naïve. The days we were facing – though long – were tackled in a heated automobile. No spies followed us; no laws targeted us. We really did have it easy.

Armed with this newfound perspective, the work began to feel more like a privilege than a forced military march. The temperature kept dropping with the approaching Winter Solstice, and soon our coal furnace began to lose its battle with the drafty air; having heard the stories of winter church meetings in a bombed out chapel with no roof at all, however, I didn't actually mind the cold so much. Though I never acclimatized to the sulfur in the air, I did eventually become accustomed to the cold mornings around the stove, the language with all its dialects, the long days without a break, and every other aspect of life as a missionary. Though each day seemed to last a week, eventually one day began to blend into another, and the weeks passed by like days.

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The December days were at their shortest, and it was usually dark by the time we returned from our appointments and approached the familiar glow revealing the factories on the outskirts of Halle. An eerie glow radiated through the dense smog around the factories, and I wanted to hold my breath anytime we got too close.

To the demise of my lungs, Halle was located right between *Leuna* and *Buna*, two massive chemical plants that had been expanded after the Second World War to support the Soviet regime with ammonia and

other supplies. A white powder clung to the tile roofs of the surrounding buildings. I still to this day haven't figured out that powder's composition, but if my eventual death results from lung cancer or radiation poisoning someday, there's a good chance of a connection to the gift I received from Leuna and Buna's double-dose. (*Gift*, incidentally, is the German word for *poison*!)

The scene around the factories was like a post-apocalyptic sci-fi movie where the whole earth has turned into nothing but contorting pipes, glowing refinery fires, endless smokestacks and blazing flood lights. This industrial hub had a darker side as well. Like its namesake adjacent to Auschwitz, Buna had employed slave labor during the Second World War. Leuna likewise capitalized on the war effort, but went further by producing some of the first runs of ammonia for the infamous Farben/Ford Industries – processes that were eventually refined to generate the infamous agent *Zyklon B*.

With the reunification in progress, compliance with even the loosest environmental regulations would have been entirely cost prohibitive, and the West was pressuring local governments to shut down the plants. As a result, batches of 30,000 employees at a time were getting pink slips. Frustrated workers lost their livelihood, and many of them – particularly the older employees – stood absolutely no chance of receiving gainful employment elsewhere. The situation seemed very similar to the unemployment rates my grandfather wrote about during the depression years.

The scene wasn't all dismal, however: Christmas was actually quite a treat in *Händelstadt* Halle, literally the "Händel City of Halle," as its official nickname goes. Every morning we'd pass right by the Händelhaus, the actual house in which Händel was born. It was the first Christmas for a unified Germany, and there was an ambient spirit of hope in the air. One morning we walked across the central market place; the Christmas market was in full swing, but the booths were still boarded up at this early hour. When we passed the open doors of the *Marktkirche* cathedral, we heard the strains of Händel's *Messiah* and stepped inside the back of the chapel.

We found a choir rehearsing for a Christmas concert, accompanied by a full symphony. Until that point, I had only heard the famous chorus within the limitations of a recording; in this setting, however, the air was filled with all the nuances and subtle changes in sound that you can only pick up in person, with each voice and each instrument coming from a different direction; the air seemed to move around us, not just pulsating from the sound waves, but actually having been set into motion from the breath of the vocalists and the organ's bellows. The harmonies resonated inside the acoustic surroundings, with the statues, the stained glass, the altar, and even the pews producing their own overtones in response. It seemed to be as close as one might get to imagining how choirs of angels would sound. It was a surreal experience, representing not just something musical, but at the same time peace, beauty, humility, and all that is good in humanity.



We couldn't stay long, since we still had a schedule to keep; when we exited the cathedral, though, I spotted an old man who stood frozen under the arched doorway. He had tears in his eyes. "Beautiful, isn't it," I said to him as we passed.

"Bavarian?" he asked, having discerned remnants of a dialect from my childhood days on a Bavarian farm.

"American," I replied. He gave me a confused look, and I tried to think of a way to quickly summarize my father's overseas assignment as an Airbus contractor. We were running late, so I opted for brevity. "Long story," I said, offering him my hand, "but it's nice to meet you."

When I shook his hand I immediately felt the absence of several fingers. He saw me look down at his hand and answered my questioning look before I could answer his.

"Left them on the battlefield," he explained, sparking a brief conversation about his life as a soldier. He had dreamed of this opportunity for forty years, he said: the moment where he could go about his worship unobstructed by the authorities.

"If only my dear wife had lived a few weeks longer, she could have witnessed it for herself," he lamented. As it turned out, he had led his Seventh-Day Adventist congregation through the same trying situations I had heard from the Latter-Day Saints. Up to that point I hadn't really considered the extent to which other Christian sects had likewise suffered. I asked him if he'd like to discuss things further with us, but Elder Koblenz turned to me and whispered that we didn't have time for

any more appointments. I handed the man an invitation to our sacrament service and bade him adieu.

As we walked out, others were walking in. In contrast to the line-up for the fiscal exodus, this time they were entering for more positive reasons; the familiar music had the power to touch hearts and draw the people off the streets. As the upcoming concert date got closer, it seemed Händel's music had stimulated a new pride in this piece of their history; people began to flock not just to the concert halls but to the renovated museum exhibits that had been added to the Händelhaus as well.

Just down the street, in striking contrast to the Händelhaus, was the house of another famous German from Halle, Richard Heydrich. There was no music as we would pass by this house, just loud shouts and chants. Heydrich himself came from a line of composers and musicians, but he put his creative skills to another use: as the architect of the Nazi concentration camp system. That ought to be enough to earn him universal disdain, but as the choirs were singing praises to God at the Händelhaus, neo-Nazis were gathering *en force* at the Heydrich House. It was hard to fathom that people could adopt extermination as their rallying cause, and at Christmas-time to boot! But that was just what happened; it got so bad one day that the police had to step in. Eventually they even had to move Heydrich's nearby grave because it was becoming such a popular gathering place for neo-Nazis. Halle had produced the personification of worship right along with the personification of absolute evil, all within a few blocks of each other. The dichotomy was readily

apparent: The newly acquired freedom to worship allowed both the wheat and the tares to flourish.

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One day Halle's entire market place was filled with protesters; anti-war demonstrators had been growing steadily more vocal with news of an escalating conflict in Kuwait, and I was afraid the clash had reached the boiling point. Hamp had run into a riot on this very square sixty years earlier as labor united under a new political banner. That one – stirred up in part by deported American communists attempting to make strides overseas – had nearly erupted into a massacre, and took a madman arriving on the scene to mobilize and eventually polarize the unguided masses. As it turned out, though, this gathering had absolutely nothing to do with international politics and everything to do with the domestic pocketbook. It had only been six months since the *Währungsunion* – the adoption of a unified currency – but these were angry shouts already demanding a return to the old ways. Like Aaron in the desert, an old man with a megaphone stood at a podium, trying to sell the people the idea that better times were coming if they'd just be patient. I picked up a flyer off the ground and discovered that the speaker was Willy Brandt, the former Federal Chancellor and Lord Mayor of Berlin.

Just a few weeks before, Herbie had mailed me a copy of a newspaper photo showing Hamp and Willy Brandt in a handshake during the height of the Cold War. Mayor Brandt had awarded Hamp with a Berlin Bell – a token of the City's appreciation for his efforts in fostering German-American relations. Would he still remember my

grandfather? With Elder Koblenz close behind, I started pushing my way through the throng with the full intention of walking right up to the podium when the speech was finished. I'm unsure now how I expected that to unfold, but in any case it was of no use; we were already late for an appointment, and the crowd was too tight to even get anywhere near the bodyguards. I'd have to convert the Chancellor another day.

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As a new year dawned, another kind of referral began to arrive. Though most East Germans found themselves in dire financial straits in the early years of the reunification, some had managed to capitalize on newfangled opportunities. These lucky few took their first trips to the United States in fulfillment of lifelong dreams that had seemed impossible just a year before. For many of them, the American West was the destination of choice. Despite having never traveled to the American West himself, Saxony's most famous author, Karl May had written one Western adventure after another, enthralling German readers with his Native American heroes.

Armed with this lore and having longed for so many years to see the untamed wilderness of Winnetou's Wild West, East German travelers to America made a special point to visit the lands that might have served as a setting for these novels – lands that just happened to be centered around Salt Lake City. Entire tour buses of East Germans would descend on Temple Square; guided by American missionaries, these tourists would fill out a card, check the box to get a free book about the American

Indians, and expect to find one in their mailbox upon their arrival home. What they did not expect, particularly in the remote villages, was to have a duo of American missionaries show up at their doorstep. Flabbergasted, they'd sometimes ask us to come in and have a seat, thinking we had just traveled 5,000 miles to hand-deliver their book.

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In another amusing chain of events, religion – previously a forbidden school subject – had suddenly become a required subject, and the schools found themselves with a dearth of teachers. As missionaries, we were legally authorized ministers, and we carried government-sanctioned certificates to prove it. In this capacity, we volunteered to be teachers. Oddly enough, some of the secondary schools thus found themselves offering *world religions* as a subject – taught by Mormon missionaries!

There was definitely a buzz about, and people were hungry for the new knowledge at their disposal. While there was some spiritual curiosity, we were approached by many people with a purely academic interest. One late afternoon, for example, we ran to an appointment that had been requested by a university official. We arrived to find ourselves meeting with the head of Karl Marx University's philosophy department. He apparently wanted to become better educated on the mysteries of Mormonism. As we tried to explain each tenet of our faith, he struck each down with fundamental arguments against theism in general. He was incredibly adept in the art of debate, and after two hours of defense

against his buffeting attacks, I was absolutely worn out. It wasn't the type of discussion we typically engaged in, but this was a high-level official who would be explaining Mormonism to his own students, so we really wanted him to have a proper understanding of Mormon history and doctrine. By the end, though, he had me as close to questioning God's existence as I've ever come, and as we left his office, I became acutely aware of the insanity of what we were trying to do.

Among people of other faiths – even those steeped in long-standing tradition – you may unfold some doctrinal issue that sheds light on their previous understanding of the Bible or their own holy scripture. You may even convince them that mistranslations have skewed their previous understanding of God's interactions with mankind, or that a boy's vision – in another century and another hemisphere – offers a new facet that can provide a missing piece in their spiritual puzzle; that is a hard enough sell. But to engage those who are convinced that all of religion is a farce? To discuss doctrinal details when the whole concept is discounted or denied? It is a superhuman task when there is no foundation at all to build upon. I, for one, could not see in this setting how any argument could ever possibly achieve lasting results. What were we thinking? This professor sat on his throne and pitied our naivety; and he was absolutely convincing. This country was full of atheists – millions of people who had been raised from birth to ridicule religion. I found myself vulnerable and defenseless – completely stumped. I walked away with my head hung low and my tail between my legs.

My growing doubts surrounding our chances for success, however, made it even more surprising when each passing Sunday – with neighboring church bells ringing – a student, a truck driver, or even an entire family would dress in white and meet us at the town’s Roman baths. The congregation’s hymns, underscoring the baptismal ceremony while echoing off the dozens of tiled arches, seemed amplified by a deeper presence. The new converts were washed clean and began a new life; given the people’s background and entirely secular education, it made no sense at all, but the people were coming to Christ nonetheless.

We could see the church towers from our apartment window, and I sometimes went to the window to stare out over the old city when I heard the bells ringing. Halle’s sky was gray, even on a cloudless day, and as the months went by I managed to forget that a clear sky could ever actually be blue.

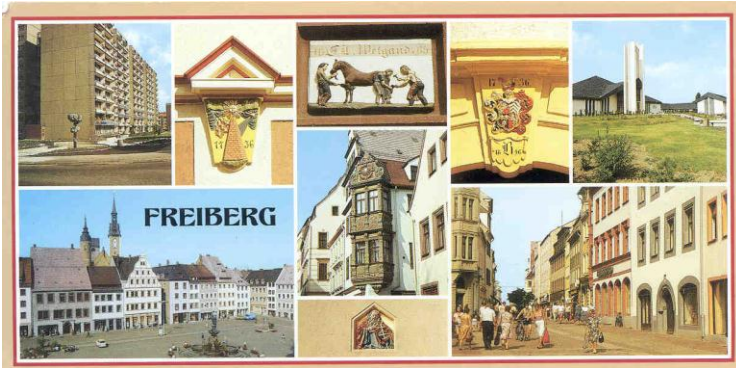
Interspersed with the medieval shapes on the skyline, communist artifacts – statues of raised fists and other monstrosities – stood strong as their fate was debated. Should they be demolished out of disdain or be preserved and maintained for their historical value? The pervading public sentiment was in favor of a complete renewal, and these icons were torn down one by one without opposition

Most of Halle’s buildings were colorless, with years of soot built up on their walls. Every so often, though, I would catch a painting crew at work; in their wake I would sometimes find colorful, pastel houses on one side of the street – standing in shear contrast to the

colorlessly drab structures on the other side. The transformation was slow, but steady nonetheless. A new environment was in the making – not just in the buildings but also within the people themselves. East Germany and its people were coming to life, and it seemed a unique privilege to be there as a witness; the scenes left behind by the colorizing crews justified every bit of optimism Hamp had expressed through decades of tireless efforts during decades of tense conflict.

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## Chapter 20: The East Bloc



Freiberg postcard showing the temple



Dresden and Berlin office staffs clowning around in undersized, donated jackets

As time moved on, I left Halle for other areas but found them all facing similar issues. I traveled through Karl Marx Stadt, which had just recently been renamed back to *Chemnitz*. Lengthy, politically derived street names – like the often-mocked “Street of German-Soviet Friendship,” of which every East German city had at least one – were being reassigned to their pre-war designations. *Lenin Alley* became Landsberg Street, the *Street of Liberation* became Main Street, and the *Place of the Socialist Youth* became Central Square; as was the case in Halle, there was public momentum to do away with all of communism’s relics. On my way through Chemnitz, I spotted an imposing statue of Karl Marx’s head. I snapped a picture of the city’s former namesake through the window of the bus just in case it disappeared before I returned; sure enough, it was gone the next time I passed through.

My next stop was Freiberg, where President Hinckley had dedicated the temple just five years before – with the Iron Curtain still fully drawn. Though the ambient curiosity appeared to have died down since our family visit in 1985, there was still enough interest in the temple to warrant the presence of a makeshift visitor’s center comprising a few backdrops housed within the adjacent stake center. An elderly missionary couple served as tour guides, but one day each week – on their P-day – we would relieve them. We hosted school groups, politicians, tourists, and curiosity seekers; it was quite a treat to let the people come to us for a change.

The most awe-inspiring visitors, however, were the Church members who arrived from the east. We met some of the first groups of LDS Hungarians, Poles, Czechs, Yugoslavians, and Russians arriving in chartered buses for the newly translated temple sessions. In some cases, these sparse busloads represented the entire active membership of the Church in their respective countries. Each group had faced challenges over the years – some similar to the East German Saints, and some uniquely their own.

Hamp's own L.D.S. High classmate Wallace Toronto – the Church's longest-serving mission president – had continued operating as the Czech mission-president-in-exile after his arrest and deportation from Czechoslovakia in 1965. The fruits of his 32-year labor seemed to be dwindling when he passed away – still serving in the capacity of mission president – three years later, but if Wallie and the rowdy Toronto boys could have witnessed this moment, they certainly would have been astounded at this re-ignition from the ashes.

New Polish members from Wroclaw, Gdansk, and Zelwagi – formerly known as Breslau, Danzig, and Selbongen – had in the meantime taken the place of their German counterparts in their respective cities. Having now pioneered branches of their own, they built on the remnants of the foundation laid in Silesia and East Prussia by Hamp, Elder Widtsoe, and so many others and now took the long trip to the temple as a new body of Saints.

The people of Freiberg – both members and non-members alike – referred to the edifice as “our” temple;

city postcards even included it as a landmark. There had been so much publicity surrounding the construction of the temple that the entire town had taken the tour during the open house. In stark contrast to the situation in Halle, all of the people on Freiberg's streets seemed to recognize us. The Freiberg Cathedral's organist, for example, waved to us in passing one day and invited us in to the massive Lutheran church to hear him rehearse on Freiberg's famed Great Silbermann Organ. It might as well have been a private concert; his performance was flawless. I stood in awe as the sound penetrated right through us.

It seemed odd to have a thriving ward in such a small town, when some cities with even ten times its population had only a handful of members, if any at all. The flip side of this was that everyone in town seemed to have already made up their minds about the Mormons; we decided to focus our efforts on the dwindling stack of referrals that took us out into the small *Dorfs* of the Erzgebirge – the Ore Mountains – to villages that had served as the foundation of so many worldwide Christmas traditions. On these “Dorf Days,” we would haul the rattling bikes out of the cellar or board country trains or buses bound for obscurely nestled villages. Like Hamp's visits to the Silesian Beskids, we were transported back in time with each trip. As we searched for secluded addresses, we found water wheel-driven carpentry shops, hand-powered community laundry presses weighed down with rocks, and bakers with brick ovens inherited from their grandparents.

In contrast to the rustic, backwoods charm, the area was also home to a number of abandoned uranium mines that the Soviets tried hard not to publicize. The market for uranium had crashed with dropping demand, and the mining work had halted without the slightest hint of a cleanup plan; perhaps we should have kept a Geiger counter in our rucksacks... I did not realize it at the time, but as we went about our teaching efforts, the Soviet Union was perched on the verge of collapse. The last of the occupying troops were being recalled, and from Freiberg we saw endless convoys and long trains of tanks being sent east to Russia; given the nature of our mandate, I was entirely unaware and disinterested in the fact that we were actually watching history unfold.

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My next assignment – continuing in Hamp’s footsteps – took me to Dresden, where I found that it was not just military personnel being recalled; civilians were affected as well. A few of the people that I met in Dresden embodied the human component of this unfolding historical saga particularly well. In the recent past – with the Iron Curtain securely in place – other communist nations had felt comfortable exchanging university students and providing a supporting labor force for East Germany’s primary industries. The Soviets and their *Comecon* council partners – dubbed the “Commie Con” countries by the Western powers – had arranged cooperative exchanges for people from every imaginable walk of life, be they mill workers, masons, or miners. The larger industrial cities even had rows of apartment blocks in specially zoned areas designated for these foreigners.

In the face of the changing political scene, however, many of the foreigners on student or work exchange programs were beginning to find their visas being revoked. To their native nations – some still stalwartly communist – the breach in the Wall now represented a significant threat. Alarmed at the prospect of losing their brightest minds and their most productive skilled labor forces to the West, the respective governments quickly issued paranoid orders demanding that these students and workers return home. The longer these temporary visitors remained in Germany, they figured, the greater the risk that they might be exposed to the capitalist agenda.

Some of the students and laborers ignored the warning completely, sure that their own nations’ paradigm shift couldn’t be lagging far behind East Germany’s. Others felt compelled to heed the warning, however. The Cuban and North Korean workers, in particular, didn’t dare defy the evacuation order. Within these nations – and well beyond their borders thanks to an intact, international espionage network – Big Brother was still watching intently, staunchly defiant of any pending global change in ideology. In former days when the Wall stood strong and impenetrable, fleeing to the West would almost certainly have resulted in reprisals against their families. Now that the West had overrun the former border and enveloped them in the process, the potential repercussions of defection were less clear but equally threatening.

With their time quickly expiring, some of the *Gastarbeiter* – or guest workers – desperately sought an

avenue of escape, be it through political asylum, a sponsor, or some other means to free themselves from the grip of their own immigration departments. Any passport-bearing U.S. citizen represented a potential freedom train, and rumors spread among them that there were Americans roaming the streets. We were instantly recognizable in our missionary attire; whether we were grocery shopping, traveling in the streetcars, or just walking down the street, some of these foreigners began to seek us out.

In response, our mission president had placed a ban on proselyting efforts within the foreign worker housing projects. As the East Germans had become more cautious since the reunification, the prospect of “easy” baptisms among the foreigners had apparently been motivating some concerted missionary efforts within the walls of the projects. When missionaries would set foot inside one of these buildings, a trail of people would follow; as they sat down to teach a lesson, the audience would typically grow before they even finished. One lesson would tend to lead to another with friends down the hall; that lesson would, in turn, lead to another; and so on. At the very least, the growing interest made leaving before curfew a challenge.

The visits generally began with a gospel lesson, but often became interspersed with questions about America and how one might get there; genuine interest in the message of the Restoration was difficult to discern. Many Gastarbeiter had joined the Church after the Wall had collapsed, but the changing economy was resulting in rapid transfers between factories. The flux quickly

resulted in logistical nightmares for ward clerks who could not track the whereabouts of their new members. There were no easy answers, but the mission president had sought to curb the problem by refocusing efforts on German families. How could the migrant workers possibly be expected to function as Church members upon their return, we were asked, when the Church had absolutely no foundation and no official presence in their native countries? What chance did the newly converted, returning Gastarbeiter realistically have to remain in the faith? Armed with these arguments, we complied with the guidance to avoid the foreign worker housing areas unless specifically invited.

With this protocol in place, we were approached by a couple of foreigners one evening and naïvely followed them back to their apartment block to teach a lesson. As we had been told would be the case by other missionaries, people flooded into the room and we had quite an audience coming and going. I arrived back at our apartment, however, with a clear understanding of the nature of the interest that night: my passport was missing from my backpack. My heart sank, since I knew obtaining a replacement would be difficult; it soon became even more of an ordeal than I could have imagined.

By the time I traveled to the U.S. embassy in Berlin to get a new passport, the Persian Gulf War was in full swing. Anti-American sentiment had been growing and had reached a flashpoint. The Mormon Church, adopted by many Germans during this time as a symbol of American imperialism, became a prime target.

Demonstrators marched to the *Siegessäule* – the Berlin Victory Column – directly past the adjacent LDS Tiergarten Chapel. The marchers were burning Old Glory and shouting anti-American slogans; on any other day this scene might have been mistaken for a street in the Middle East. Molotov cocktails were thrown at the chapel; rocks and bottles shattered the windows. Word made it to the mission office that missionaries were being threatened. The order came back that we were to get off the streets as soon as possible.

The embassy was on its highest security alert. A very suspicious U.S. official began to question every detail of the alleged theft. He told me that selling a genuine U.S. passport on the black market could have netted me \$5,000. He then had to assure himself that I had not taken my eyes off the backpack deliberately in an attempt to profit from a staged theft. He scrutinized my response to his interrogation and finally convinced himself that I was just a sucker and not an enemy of the state. He gave me a look of absolute consternation; his parting shot came in the form of a guilt trip about having compromised the security of the United States with my carelessness. Had I just granted a terrorist direct access through our doors? I felt like a traitor as we left the embassy and boarded the train back to Dresden.

Although from that point forward I questioned the motives associated with any invitation to the housing blocks, we did return a few more times when the intent appeared sincere. As it turned out, a handful of migrant workers used their last precious moments of freedom – quite possibly the only taste of freedom they would ever

experience – to seek out the gospel with no political motives whatsoever. A student from North Korea and an iron worker from Cuba each went through the discussions. Their baptisms were certainly memorable, but deeper questions surrounded their future as their visas were revoked. We were definitely concerned about the lack of a Church structure in their country, and I never knew what became of them after they were repatriated. But I imagined an irritated Kim Il-sung or a fuming Fidel Castro pounding on his desk, having found out that he had managed to snag a few newly baptized Mormons in his trawling efforts.

These were turbulent times in many nations; among the new members adding to the colorful diversity of the Dresden Ward were students from Ghana and Nigeria, nations that had found themselves under military governments while awaiting a return to democracy. These students were unsure whether the promised regime change would occur. Would another military coup threaten their friends and families? Would they even have a country to return to? Would their passports be revoked, leaving them as political refugees without any valid citizenship? They received periodic news from home with much interest, but seemed to accept the uncertainty as just another part of life. We were expatriates just the same, but our perspectives were completely different. I tried to imagine how it might feel to wake up each morning unsure whether one's government back home still exists. As an American, I found it nearly impossible to apply such a temporary viewpoint to my own

government; and I began to clutch my own passport a bit tighter.

Meanwhile, new marching orders arrived, and I was pulled out of the trenches and into the relative comfort of HQ; I was assigned to the mission office to serve as the personal secretary to President Peters, a former military officer. Never mind that his military experience came in an army that is constitutionally forbidden from fighting; that certainly hadn't stopped him from taking his job seriously. He dictated letters with precision; transfer orders moved from the inbox to the outbox like clockwork, and his staff scuttled around his bunker beneath the Dresden chapel at an insane pace. His office was like a war room, and the transfer board could have passed for an army's situation map. Stories of how President Peters and his hand-picked band of eight missionaries had penetrated the Iron Curtain were already becoming legendary. Their success was due largely to his handle on the complex logistical issues they faced. Given my vice of keeping things in a constant state of relative disarray, I certainly had a lot to learn from him.

We office missionaries got a special treat one weekend when the Tabernacle Choir passed through, accompanied by Elder Russell M. Nelson. My companion and I had the unique task of carrying the suitcases for the organists so they wouldn't strain their high-priced fingers and forearms. We attended the concert along with a sold-out audience of thousands in the *Kulturpalast*, nestled between the *Frauenkirche*, the *Hofkirche*, and Dresden's other famously fire-bombed landmarks.

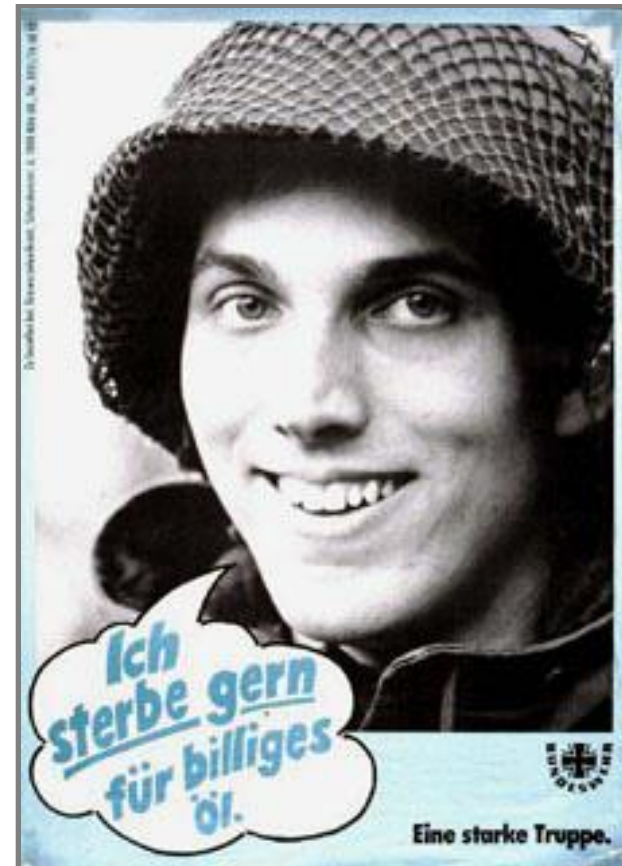
The iconic *Frauenkirche*, having deliberately been left in ruins since the closing weeks of the Second World War, still served as a memorial and a tomb for those who sought shelter and solace within its supposedly impenetrable walls. Meanwhile, the meat locker in Slaughterhouse-Five – where the author Kurt Vonnegut and other American POWs were beaten and imprisoned, but in which they also survived that horrible night – had reopened as a tourist trap.

The city certainly didn't possess the splendor apparent in Hamp's photographs from 60 years before, but despite an obvious lack of maintenance, Dresden was nonetheless a beautiful city. Restoration efforts were beginning on the famous *Zwinger* museums, and the *Semperoper* opera house was receiving a constant dose of sandblasting. The crew would steadily move around the edifice, sandblasting the soot to expose a lighter sandstone. But with coal-fired furnaces still being Dresden's prime heating source, the blasting crew would start the process anew each time they finished a round. I wondered if the losing battle stood any chance at all.

In serving in this amazingly historic setting, full of culture and contradiction, I managed to meet some likewise amazing people whose own stories were intricately intertwined with this history. While our ministerial time was split between teaching and organizing new units of the Church, we also served as secular servants, feeding and visiting with the invalids in nursing homes, some of whom could still readily and vividly recall life in the 1800s.

The clock was ticking on my two-year tour of duty, and time was flying as my “hump-day” approached. The momentum of the gospel’s spread seemed to be accelerating; hundreds of new members were joining the Church. Salt Lake certainly took notice, splitting the mission in two and sending sixty new missionaries to each half. With this split, I was asked to move to the newly formed Berlin Mission, as office manager and personal secretary to the newly called mission president, a man by the name of Hartmut Schulze.

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Anti-War Poster: “I’d love to die for cheap oil!”



Freiberg Temple, Easter 1991



Mormon Tabernacle Choir in Dresden's Kulturpalast,  
June 1991

## Chapter 21: Split in Two

We split the office equipment in half, packed a van full of supplies, and made our way to the newly absorbed island of West Berlin. When we arrived, we found that the building contractor had run behind schedule and the mission office was still under construction. It was officially the first day of the Berlin Mission's existence, but newly called President Schulze was attending his son's wedding and wouldn't arrive for several days. We stared at each other, a leaderless lot with nowhere to go, wondering what to do next.

Eventually we got things sorted out, and I finally met President and Sister Schulze in person. He had been a Russian teacher under the old regime, he told us in our first meeting together, and had never learned a word of English. I asked him if he had met any Russian Church members yet. Before he could answer, Sister Schulze quickly corrected my grammar; she had apparently been a German teacher back home in Bernburg.

"By the way," President Schulze said, "my wife, Inge, will also have a role as a member of the office staff." From that day forward, she would get to apply her skills by correcting my letters until I got them perfect.

After this brief introduction, he shared some stories with us to give us a better understanding of their background. His stories of the post-war years struck me in particular. His father had been killed by American soldiers, and here he was leading an army comprising primarily draft-age Americans. The irony was obvious.

But the story that enthralled me most was the tale of how he came to know the Church. In the destitution of the post-war years, his widowed mother had dragged him up and down the streets scavenging for food. At one point during their daily struggle for survival, his mother looked up to see a printed placard that read, “Will man live again?” along with the address of the Church. Having witnessed so much of death of late, this placard struck enough curiosity in her that she visited the church and eventually became a member.

It was a touching story, but for me the most mind-blowing element was to discover that the placard had been placed by none other than Herbert Schreiter, who at 41 years of age was serving a four-year mission away from his family to rebuild the Church in East Germany. The printed placard sounded vaguely familiar to me. So when I went back to the apartment that night I opened up the folder with the album pages Herbie had copied for me. As I went back through the album pages from his first mission, I found a photo of a printed poster right next to a photo of him with Hamp. And the caption read: “Here’s one of the posters Hamp liked to make.” So there lay yet another circle: Herbie had applied sign-making skills learned from my grandfather to convert the man who ended up as my mission president. Some might make the case for coincidence, but I certainly felt like a greater work was underway.

Over the following weeks, the days in Berlin became quite adventuresome. We prepared for an onslaught of thirty new companionships, which meant a nearly impossible task of leasing thirty new apartments,

acquiring thirty sets of furnishings, opening sixty new bank accounts, and taking care of related legal matters like driver’s license conversions, visa registrations, and countless other logistical concerns. All of these things had to be done under a system that was still caught between expired East German laws and new West German laws that hadn’t yet taken effect. In the interim, legal solutions were being implemented arbitrarily, and our frustrations mounted.

Adding to this bureaucratic chaos, an influx of hopeful workers had claimed every vacant apartment. Costs were rising dramatically in the East but wages had not kept pace and jobs were scarce. As a result, many former East Germans sought the higher wages offered by West Berlin employers. I was experiencing the effect first-hand: As prices rose, I watched my own savings account disappear at twice the original burn rate; as a result my mother had to return to work to support the missing half of my mission funds. I felt indebted and at the same a bit more accountable for my work. I began to understand what Hamp, Rulon, and others might have felt, knowing that their loved ones were putting in the hours back home just to keep them there.

The influx of immigrants from around the globe caused racial tensions as well. West Germany’s constitution, which was now beginning to apply to East Germany as well, guaranteed every newcomer a job and a roof overhead. The policy – adopted in part to beef up the labor force but also to combat the label of intolerance earned by the Nazi regime – looked good on paper; implementing and maintaining that policy, however, was

another story. Most asylum seekers and *Gastarbeiter* lived in specially constructed housing blocks. Though slightly more livable than their counterparts in the former East Germany, the West Berlin apartments were likewise overcrowded, and conditions were deplorable; their residents certainly were not treated like guests.

Berlin not only has the status of being the largest German city – with twice the population of runner-up Hamburg – it is also well known as the world’s second largest Turkish city. The Turks, even those who had been living in Germany for thirty years or more, began to feel the brunt of a growing level of discrimination. Even at Church, the Turkish members complained of perceived feelings of resentment and hostility directed their way from among the Germans.

With barriers falling in rapid succession, a flood of immigrants from Poland, Yugoslavia, Romania, and other neighboring countries added to the dishevelment. The flood wave crested as new families entered Germany in the hope of providing their children with a better life. Disenchanted with the news that their jobs and apartments were going to foreigners, many Germans began to question and openly protest the government’s immigration policy.

When a new law guaranteeing German citizenship to anyone born on German soil – including those born to foreigners – took effect, flares erupted under the mounting tensions. Some German youth, no longer willing to do penance for their fathers’ historical intolerance, opposed the policy – ironically enough – with intolerance of their own. Neo-Nazi bands of

skinheads roamed the streets of Berlin, wielding clubs on a discriminating hunt for immigrants. News reports covered beatings, stabbings, and fire bombings of the housing projects by violent street gangs.

Just as had been the case in the former East German cities, missionaries in West Berlin had sometimes been targeting foreigners in their proselyting efforts, and the German ward members sent numerous complaints to the mission office. We had been called to serve among the German people, they claimed, not the Africans, Afghans, Asians, or Turks. Again, there were no simple answers, but in light of the recent violence, the proselyting ban already in force in the East was applied to the worker housing complexes in West Berlin as well.

In the midst of a housing shortage and this tumultuous atmosphere, however, we still found ourselves on a desperate search for thirty new apartments around Berlin. I typed up an appeal from President Schulze to the Church’s Missionary Department to reconsider the numbers or hold the missionaries a bit longer in Provo. Managing Director Herman Crumb – MD of the MD – replied himself. It turned out the MTC was overcrowded as well. An expansion of the MTC was underway, but it wouldn’t be completed in time to alleviate the problem. The sixty flights were already booked, we were told, and he had faith that we’d find a way to accommodate the arriving missionaries. So the greenies were coming whether or not we were ready for them; and some executive in a suit, sitting in his high-rise office overlooking Salt Lake, thought a positive attitude ought to do the trick. Perhaps I hadn’t portrayed the

gravity of the situation well enough in my letter. I drafted up a more detailed and pointed response, but President Schulze tore it up and told us to get to work. We were up against an insurmountable deadline, and I certainly had my doubts regarding our chances of success.

This period was an absolute blur; on some days, we would get up at 3 am and line up outside the *Ausländerbehörde* – the immigration office – in the dark. If we were lucky, they'd call our number before shutting down for the day; if not, we'd come back again the next day to find an even longer line of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Frustrating and chaotic as this scene was, we had the opportunity to strike up conversations with a captive audience. We met people from every corner of the planet – people who certainly added some perspective to our woes. Our complaints about the bureaucracy's red tape paled in comparison to the medieval tales we heard from others standing in the same line. Political refugees told stories of pursuit, monitoring, and reprisals by their governments; economic refugees told us about empty shelves and unpaid wages from their employers; religious refugees told us of banishment, disownment, and dowry deaths dictated by their religious leaders. We had been whining to Salt Lake, cranky about missing a few hours of sleep; now our troubles seemed trivial.

Over the following weeks, one by one, apartments began dropping into our laps. The local Church members joined us in the hunt and spread the word; a friend of a friend would call the office with a lead, and we'd rush out to secure the lease. Housing applications that had been

placed among huge stacks on some bean counter's desk somehow managed to float to the top. Other Church members came forward with their own offerings, sometimes renovating their houses with new entrances and other upgrades to allow missionaries to live with them. Somehow – through mostly legal, though at times unconventional methods – the housing fell into place. By the time the last big batch of missionaries arrived two months later, sure enough, everyone had a place to stay. All was well, I wrote to Missionary Department. Within the Church Office Building, I could imagine Elder Gordon B. Hinckley poking his head into the board room where Missionary Department was meeting and asking if there were any problems with the troop surge in Germany.

Having read our report, Brother Crumb replies, “Not anymore.” Elder Hinckley smiles and goes about his other business.

As he files the report away next to my previous letter of grievance, I could almost hear Brother Crumb mutter under his breath, “I told you so.”

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When we finally got a chance to breathe, I realized that I had fallen in love with Berlin; interspersed with all of the craziness, we had managed to see every corner of the old capital, a metropolitan city if there ever was one. We saw the Reichstag that had sparked Hitler's rise to power; we passed the Tempelhof airport that saw a cargo plane land every two minutes during the airlift; and we chiseled souvenir pieces off the few sections of the Wall that were still intact.

Though old news by now, the buzz surrounding the Berlin Wall's collapse continued. On a P-day we toured the Checkpoint Charlie *Mauermuseum*, which still remained one of Berlin's top tourist attractions despite the absence of its namesake next door. The museum was operated by a group called the *August 13 Consortium*, named for the dark day in history when the Wall went up in 1961. I was born on the 10-year anniversary of that infamous day; by the time I first crossed Checkpoint Charlie myself on a Cub Scout trip in the late seventies, the *Mauermuseum* already honored hundreds of victims killed during crossing attempts. When my mother sewed the commemorative patch – depicting a strand of barbed wire crossing a German flag – onto my Cub Scout uniform, I could hardly have imagined the Wall's collapse.

Even though the Wall was essentially gone now, pieces of the Wall were still being sold everywhere, some genuine, some merely concrete rubble posthumously sprayed with paint. The whole city seemed to be abounding in ideas for what to do with the newly available open space in no-man's-land. Should it be used for museums, for parks, or – far-fetched as the idea sounded at the time – maybe the seat of a new government?

Coupled with this excitement for the future was finally some unprecedented pride in the recent German past. Burdened by the guilt of sparking two world wars, for years Germans had not had much cause for pride on the international stage. Though their grandfathers were still unapologetic for their role in the *Great War*, the

current generation still couldn't forgive their fathers for the cataclysm of the Second World War and its hundred million casualties. With few exceptions, an entire generation had in some way been embarrassed to be German. Now this rising generation had something to be proud of: where their fathers and grandfathers had instigated war, they had ended one.

The Cold War – which is by any measure quite a misnomer, particularly if one happened to live in Afghanistan at the time of the Soviet invasion – had seemed to be an endless imposition just a few years before; most people with any sense of realism, echoing Einstein and supported by the opinions and projections of the day's experts, felt that the only plausible end to the Cold War – if there were ever to be an end to it – would be in the form of an endless nuclear winter. In absolute contrast, a peaceful uprising in Leipzig had beamed courage and hope to the belligerent forces, spreading a wave of peace around the planet. The Germans people held their heads high, candles and pickaxes in hand, swaying with rock ballads epitomizing the *Wind of Change*. Hungary and Czechoslovakia likewise claimed the credit for themselves, but regardless of the origins of this perpetual chain of events, this generation had managed a tremendous feat: to end history's most expensive conflict without bloodshed.

The excitement seeped into every aspect of life, penetrating pop culture in particular, which, in turn, propagated the frenzy. We got to see it first-hand as we made our way back and forth across the now-defunct checkpoints, trying to keep the missionaries on both sides

of the old border supplied and legally resident. On one occasion we picked up extra furniture from a missionary apartment overlooking Potsdamer Platz, a massive public square. The missionaries there were still buzzing over the chaotic night when they had been confined to their apartment while hundreds of thousands of people flooded the grounds to watch Roger Waters perform *The Wall* live. Years before, I had heard an interview in which Waters claimed that the fall of the Wall would be the only condition on which the epic Pink Floyd piece would ever be performed again. At the time, I never expected it to occur in my lifetime. That the impossible had actually transpired right there was an awe-inspiring thought.

Symbols of the Wall's collapse were abundant on billboards and other media. Posters for U2's *Zoo TV* world tour, for example, were plastered everywhere, drawing heavily on already nostalgic communist relics. Their traveling concert stage featured the Trabant – the miniature East German car model that hadn't changed in thirty years. The little vehicles were hoisted up, packed with spotlights that shone through their head light sockets, and spun around as stage lighting. One was even used to house the DJ who spun records between acts. Though the *Ossies* – as the East Germans were called – ridiculed the Trabants just as harshly as did their *Wessie* counterparts, the Trabant nonetheless held a cherished place in their hearts, and some were offended at the apparent mockery of their past. In any case, the cars made enough of an impact on the tour to earn themselves a permanent berth at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

We had our own little brush with rock and roll fame as well. At one point during our logistical escapades across Hamp's old stomping grounds, we ran into a little old lady in a decrepit East Berlin apartment block. In days past, the only people who had dressed in suits and traveled in pairs were agents of the now defunct *Stasi*. Old pensioners, who were not quite in touch with the daily news developments and sometimes mistook us for agents, would scurry away from us if we approached. This particular lady looked right at us with suspicious bewilderment; I introduced myself when I passed her. She gave me even more of a puzzled look, so I repeated myself, much louder, "We're with the Mormons!"

"Oh, that's what I thought you said," she answered, "I love the Ramones. Come on in!"

My companion and I laughed at the misunderstanding, but sure enough, her apartment was fully adorned in Ramones regalia. And right in the middle of the oversize posters on her wall was a framed picture of her holding a bass guitar. At her side, with his arm around her, was Douglas Colvin, a.k.a. Dee Dee Ramone, a founding member of the band and, as it turns out, her dear grandson. We didn't get any concert tickets or autographed memorabilia out of the meeting, but we certainly took home a story we would wear out in retelling time and again.

For us as missionaries the most notable celebrities were, in contrast, those of the lesser known LDS microcosm. There was a tremendous interest in East Germany from Thomas S. Monson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and other members of the Twelve at Church

Headquarters. Each General Conference included numerous references to the East German Saints and the miraculous chain of events in Eastern Europe. When Elder Oaks, Elder Wirthlin, and Elder Packer attended a regional conference in Berlin, we certainly felt like the focal point of the Church's missionary efforts. When they dropped in for an intimate meeting to check up on the missionaries, the office staff was visibly nervous at the potential scrutiny and overcome by a tremendous sense of accountability.

In addition to our duties keeping up the mission finances, supplies, and paperwork, we began to find another task filling our time: printing tickets and organizing the accompanying firesides for other LDS personalities who were likewise making the rounds. Foremost in the public eye was Steve Young. The America Bowl – an attempt to spread “gridiron” football around the globe – featured a sold-out contest in Berlin, and we organized a gathering to capitalize on the event. After Brother Young addressed a standing-room-only crowd at the Tiergarten Chapel, countless prayers were heard as his faithful 49ers crushed the loathsome Chicago Bears. Lamanite Generation, the Young Ambassadors, and other traveling musical groups likewise passed through to see the breathtaking political changes for themselves.

A popular pilot named Uchtdorf dropped by on a layover to address a small crowd – I had never heard of him, but as Lufthansa's Chief Pilot he was already a bit of a celebrity among the German Saints, who were proud to see one of their own promoted to a prominent position.

Lesser known, but equally motivated LDS scholars, authors, and dignitaries also made the rounds, each with their entourage and accompanying firesides.

We felt like the backstage crew with an all-access pass; despite some of these perks of office life, though, I had a nagging feeling inside that this wasn't what I had signed up for. Providing logistical support seemed more like a job than a mission. As I sat in my office chair printing up baptismal certificates and mailing off new membership records to Salt Lake, at times I envied the elders on the streets. We did get a limited amount of time to pound the pavement at the end of the day, but for a good chunk of my office time, we only had a single investigator. Although she wasn't a member of the Church, everyone called her *Sister Schröder*. She was a widow who would invite us over for dinner once a week. She had heard all of the discussions at least three times; by all appearances she enjoyed the discussions and even seemed to accept most of the doctrinal points we covered, but she didn't feel ready to commit to being baptized. I asked President Schulze what we should do about our *ewige Untersucherin* – our “eternal investigator.”

“Tell her it's time to get baptized,” he said, “or you won't be coming back to see her.”

We promptly followed orders, and – equally promptly – found ourselves without any investigators at all. I never did feel that a missionary's success ought to be measured numerically in terms of converts to the faith, but this loss of our only glimmer of hope did make me wonder about the fruits of my labors. If nothing else, though, during my stint as an office elder, I had learned a

brand new language called *Beamtendeutsch* – agency German. I had found evidence of every accusation Mark Twain alleged in his scathing review of *The Awful German Language*. In the process, I had grown used to conversing and writing solely in the passive voice, throwing in endless words I had chained together at will. Buried within the legalese documents at my fingertips, I had actually run across words longer than Twain’s iconically purported, longest word in the German language: *Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftskapitän*.

Sister Schulze’s red pen strokes on my draft letters had gradually subsided. Either my German was improving or she was tiring of the corrections. Finally one day, a letter came back from her review entirely ink-free. The letter was addressed to me. It was, perhaps, redundant to print my own transfer letter, but I brought it in to President Schulze for his signature just to prove to myself that I’d actually be leaving the office.

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Packing up the mission van in Dresden to open a new mission in Berlin



“The Wall”: Pink Floyd mural on the Berlin Wall



Hamp and Herbie's first placard attempt

## Chapter 22: A Senseless Pact

After eight secretarial months, I departed the office environment to rejoin the troops on the front lines. I left the big city and found myself in a northern town called Neubrandenburg. As in every area before, there were hundreds of intertwined events here that, on their own, might have passed for coincidence; collectively, though, they were nothing short of miraculous. Again I found a handful of connections to Hamp's ministry six decades before; none, however, was so personal as the juncture I found here.

I spoke from the pulpit in my first sacrament meeting to introduce myself to the Neubrandenburg Branch. After the service, an elderly widow named Sylvia Kuroпка approached me and – just like Brother Schreiter had done eighteen months before – asked if I was related to a Hampton Price. She began to cry when she saw me nod. She extended a dinner invitation and said she had some things she'd like to show me. We entered her humble little apartment that afternoon and ate a meaty meal, topped with a prized helping of grease that – in Sister Kuroпка's eyes – was certain to ward off starvation for a few more days if the bombs started dropping again. After this heavy dinner she handed me some photographs of the branch members in the 1930's, including a photo of Hamp.

"Turn it over," she said. On the back of the photo was an inscription written by Hamp himself. I was struck by the optimistic tone of his note.

“We were all young and idealistic back then,” she added. “I was dating my future husband at the time and we spoke of visiting America on our honeymoon.”

I glanced at the photograph she had handed me; Hamp was younger than me at the time, but his mustache made him seem older.

“Hamp told us he was a tour guide at the Grand Canyon,” she continued, “I have never forgotten the splendid photos he showed us. In fact, I always dreamed we’d go there ourselves someday.” She sighed at the thought and said somberly, “Perhaps things might have been different in another world.”

In contrast with that dream, she told us instead about the dreadful fate of her husband – a fate shared by each of his friends in a close-knit group of LDS youth. When it had become apparent that our two countries were drifting toward war, these teenagers had engaged in a pact together. Being well acquainted with the American missionaries who had served among them, they decided that if it came to war, they would refuse to fight them. Their counterparts – their American “brothers” – made the same pact.

It wasn’t long before the American missionaries were forced to flee the spreading conflagration. The German elders remained and served lengthy missions to try to hold the Church together. With the outbreak of an all-out Blitzkrieg, even their missions ended. They avoided taking up arms as long as they could but were eventually drafted into service by the Nazi war machine. They felt obligated to obey the orders, both to protect their families and to preserve the Church; but these

particular boys hadn’t forgotten their pact. If they went to the Western Front, they might risk firing upon their friends; so they volunteered instead to fight on the Eastern Front.

No army is apt to allow its infantry soldiers to pick their preferred battlefield, but in this case, volunteers for the Eastern Front were a unique breed. German soldiers knew that, if captured in the west by Allied troops, they might wait out the war on a British farm or a Georgian cotton plantation. Those taken prisoner on the Eastern Front, on the other hand, if even granted the chance to surrender, were sure to be horribly mistreated. Not only couldn’t the Russians afford to take on the extra burden of caring for POWs, but they were also bent on vengeance for every act of cruelty inflicted on them by the Germans; mercy toward a German soldier was unthinkable. As a result, there were countless volunteers hoping to head west, yet only a handful who wished to head east.

These Mormon brothers-in-arms eventually got their wish; for some, it was a death sentence. As their troop transports ripped across the Polish countryside and they prepared to face the legions of peasant comrades being called up from across the sweeping Soviet empire, most of the German infantry soldiers knew full well that the only reasonable outcomes to the conflict involved either their capture or their death. Secretly, they hoped for a third, less likely alternative: to sustain a serious but non-fatal wound that would land them in the relative safety of a military hospital. Victory was merely an illusion being propagated by the regime – that much was

already becoming clear – but, nonetheless, every day they stood tall with their unit and reluctantly mouthed the words to the Hitler Oath, swearing their allegiance to the madman himself rather than to their nation or their army. The words of the oath clearly echoed an unthinkable expectation: They were to choose death over surrender if it came down to that choice. It was truly a no-win situation.

While Hamp and his former classmates served in a supporting role, shielded from the actual fight, their German counterparts found themselves having drawn – or rather chosen – the short straw.

As Sister Kuroпка related to us, most of these young men never came back from *Operation Barbarossa*, Hitler's failed attempt to conquer the Reds. Her young husband was one of these unfortunate souls. They had only spent a few precious days together as a married couple. She had never discovered the actual circumstances surrounding his death, but she had heard enough of the unthinkable tales coming back from the Eastern Front to reconstruct his final moments and haunt her imagination for fifty solitary years.

A few days before Christmas, Corporal Kuroпка lay shivering in a shallow pit, having frantically tried to dig a foxhole into the frozen ground with the butt of his now defunct Karabiner rifle. His only warmth came from the blood that dripped from shrapnel wounds inside his stiff uniform. His head was ringing wildly; he was nearly deaf from the percussive explosions overhead. His own spent cartridges littered the snow around him. Under constant fire in a frozen wasteland, he finally resorted to a

vain attempt at concealment from the approaching enemy, using his empty magazine to scoop snow over himself.

Meager rations had weakened his body ever since his Army Group's supply line had been cut off weeks before. He faced a constant struggle between fatigue and any remaining survival instinct he could muster. It was a losing battle; for deep inside, he knew there was no hope of reinforcements. The shells finally stopped exploding overhead in a misleading respite; the brief silence signaled to the approaching Red Army troops that the German positions had been softened sufficiently for an infantry charge.

Rifle shots began to echo through the charred tree stumps as thousands of Soviet troops tightened their noose around the stranded, dazed, and purposeless German army battalion. Many of the Russians had initially stormed into battle as cannon fodder, without a weapon of their own, driven by relentless officers, primordial fear, and a powerful propaganda machine that had instilled a pervading eye-for-an-eye mentality. Some had managed to snatch a rifle from a fallen comrade and pressed forward. Having been dragged into this war against their will, they were motivated by rage and the added incentive of well-placed snipers on their own side who had been ordered to shoot them if they retreated. A commandant who placed that little value on individual life within his own ranks was never going to value his enemy's life enough to spare it at the sight of a white flag or raised hands.

The redundant order to “take no prisoners” had already been standard operating procedure by the time it made its way down from the top in this chapter of the conflict. In dealing with the surrounded enemy soldiers, the only question for the officers in command was whether they could spare a bullet or whether an old-fashioned bayonet would have to do. To the Russians, with their munitions factories in shambles but with an endless stream of peasants joining the ranks, infantry soldiers were replaceable; bullets were not. Because bayonets were messy, risky, and bad for the troop’s morale, however, for this assault the commanders opted for bullets, on the condition that shots be conserved until they could be fired with deadly accuracy at point-blank range. The Russian soldiers obeyed their orders to wait until the last moment; then, seeing the proverbial *whites of their eyes*, they fired at the cowering enemy soldiers without hesitation.

As the gunshots rang ever closer, Brother Kuroпка knew that these were not just random shots fired toward the horizon; each represented a fallen countryman. A hopeless sense of despair overcame him, and the tattered German army all around him awaited its doom; not a shred of the pride that had swept through their rallies a few years earlier remained in their hearts. Their world had been completely overturned, their hopes replaced with the deepest shame and regret. Their fathers had found themselves in a similar quagmire a generation before when – unexpectedly and unbelievably – a Christmas truce was called. This time, however, there would be no troops in opposing trenches singing *Silent*

*Night* together in a ceasefire. This battle, sadly, wouldn’t break for the holidays.

The young newlywed’s short existence fed his mind memories and expectations. What of the life he had imagined with his new bride? How had that promising destiny jumped the tracks and plunged down this awful chasm? Convulsing with fear, he removed his gloves and put his fingers – blackened from frostbite – together in a fervent prayer. His prayer gave way to a dream in which he saw himself entering his little apartment in Stettin, embracing his wife on Christmas Eve.

He lit the candles on the advent wreath, felt the warmth of the hearth, smelled the Christmas tree’s boughs, heard the sound of familiar carols, and tasted the savory, home-cooked meal. His diverted senses were at home, but in the snow, his arms crossed around his weakening body and squeezed tightly. In his heart and in his mind – with every emotion his soul could stir up – he embraced his wife and hung on for dear life. Through his tears, he tried to picture their unborn children opening presents one day at the foot of the tree: chocolates, a nutcracker, or perhaps a hand-carved manger scene. It was a vision of what might have been; it was – devastatingly – the last dream he ever had.

Sister Kuroпка’s eyes told the end of the tale, unalleviated by the passage of time. The single bullet that had ended her bridegroom’s dream hundreds of miles away had in the very same instant sentenced this unwitting widow to fifty years of loneliness. We shook our heads in silence, unable to think of any words that

would do justice to the moment; she continued with the fates of his cohorts:

A few of Brother Kuropka's friends had managed to survive the slaughter and surrender to Russian soldiers who had run out of bullets. Little did they know, however, their trials were only just beginning. When the long-awaited *V-E Day* signaled the official end to fighting in Europe in the spring of 1945, German POWs held by the Western Allied forces began returning home to help rebuild what was left of their country. For Germans being held in Soviet captivity, however, the war was far from over. They were sentenced by the dreaded NKVD to indefinite "corrective labor" in a Gulag and incarcerated alongside forcibly repatriated Soviet POWs and civilian refugees.

Stalin truly lived up to his adopted *man of steel* alias in dealing with post-war Russia. When the Western Allies liberated German prison camps, they found Russian soldiers and civilians alike who had been captured by the Germans and enslaved in support of the war effort. They proposed to send these people back to their homes now that Germany had surrendered, but the people begged the commanders not to deport them. "Stalin will kill us," they said.

Caught up in their victorious euphoria, the American, British, and French commanders simply couldn't imagine that sort of cruelty. The war was over, after all; what would Stalin stand to gain by executing his own people? Besides, Stalin had asked the authorities for the return of his people and had personally guaranteed that they would be treated justly. Little did the

commanders know, however, the justice to which he referred included facing accountability for the charge of treason: They should have chosen death over surrender, he reasoned; having aided Germany in her war effort, they were nothing but traitors in his eyes.

As Stalin ordered German factories under his jurisdiction to be dismantled, shipped east, and reconstructed behind the Ural Mountains, the Western Allied commanders unwittingly loaded up rail cars with Soviet citizens and likewise sent them east. But Stalin never let the trains stop when they got to Moscow; they kept rolling much farther east – straight to Siberia. Upon arrival in the cold frontier, some were summarily executed as traitors and others spent the remainder of their lives in the frozen tundra doing penance for having survived the war.

With this little regard for his own people, Stalin placed the German POWs even lower on the ladder. Only one in twenty German POWs survived Siberian internment; most were never heard from again. Even the few survivors would never have seen German soil again had they not been saved by Stalin's death in 1953.

By the time Khrushchev turned on his predecessor and granted the POWs amnesty to return home, the returning soldiers had spent a full eight years after the so-called end of the war – more than twice the time span of the entire U.S. involvement in the war – in an intolerable prison camp. Solzhenitsyn's journals recount the atrocities and hardships they withstood: systematic torture, random executions, debilitating disease, forced labor, frostbite, starvation, and even cannibalism. They



arrived back in post-war Germany emotionally stunned and physically stunted, scarred forever in both mind and body. Once finally reunited with their families, many kept silent and reclusive about the almost unbearable ordeals they had endured; but their pain-stricken eyes divulged the austerity of their experience just the same.

Unlike their fellow prisoners, the LDS POWs who had engaged in the earlier pact knew they had chosen their own fate. I met several of these survivors, including one elderly member of the Neubrandenburg branch. Perhaps their survival was mere luck, or perhaps a higher purpose gave them the will to survive, knowing that their sacrifice was sanctified; in any case, as far as I could tell, none ever regretted their decision.

Hearing these stories, though, I for myself couldn't help but to question the logic of the pact these boys made. Why? Why make such an arbitrary agreement? Why not just go to the west and try to specialize in something non-combative? And if you are somehow forced to shoot an American in the process, how is that any more or less moral than shooting a Russian? Had hatred of the Russian people seeped in during the years of Aryan indoctrination, even among the Mormon ranks? Did they feel that the Russians were somehow inferior to the Americans or that the Americans were somehow more innocent? How is a Russian soldier who was drafted into the Red Army to defend his country any less innocent than a U.S. soldier who happens to be LDS and fights to liberate France? Neither of these opposing armies began the war as an aggressor; each could be considered an equally innocent defender.

How easy it would have been to rescind the pact! If I had naïvely made such a consequential agreement as a teenager and then found myself years later trying to support a family, I think I could easily have argued my way out of it. I might have even convinced myself that rescinding the pact would be an unselfish act, intended to protect and secure a future for my wife and for my children.

This lonely old widow was nearing the end of her days in a meager box of an apartment. The other families in this little branch were now thriving; her line would end with her death. Now I waltz in, having lived a life of comfort and speaking of my grandfather: a grandfather who was part of the force her husband had been unwilling to fight. Her fifty years as a widow had begun with that practically suicidal decision. Had it all been worth it? It seemed absolutely senseless to me. *What a stupid thing to die for*, I said to myself. Though further questions and doubts raced through my mind, given the burdened look in Sister Kuropka's eyes, they seemed entirely inappropriate to ask; I held my tongue.

She went to the kitchen to fetch us another helping of rye bread with lard spread; I stood up to look at the framed photos on the wall: pictures of old Stettin, Breslau, Danzig, Königsberg – cities adorned in their earlier splendor that had subsequently been leveled to the ground.

“That was my hometown,” she said as she re-entered the room and caught me looking closely at the detailed ornamentation of Stettin's famous fountain at the *Berliner Tor*. “It's all gone now, but we cobbled together

what was left of our old branch right here in Neubrandenburg.”

Her own plight as a refugee didn't sound like all that much of an improvement over the hardships of the soldiers. In Silesia and in East Prussia, everything that might define a culture had vanished. I had met many Silesians and East Prussians in Bavaria when I was younger; I always assumed they were still parts of Germany, but I could never find them on a map – I had no idea at the time that they had actually ceased to exist. It wasn't just the masonry that lay in ruins after the war; each of these cities had been stripped of their German population as well. Gone were the people along with their entire cultural identity: traditional dress, cuisines, dialects, holidays, architecture – all were obliterated as the residents were hunted down before the advancing troops of the vengeful Red Army.

She told us absolutely horrible stories: families forced by sergeants to play Russian roulette with each other; systematic rape; infants stripped from their mothers' arms; bodies strung up from the light poles for all to see – the scenes she described would have made the devil himself proud of his work.

Those who managed to beat the Russian advance found themselves facing the incendiary bombs of the Americans coming from the opposite direction. Caught in the crossfire, with nowhere else to hide, the remaining survivors dug in and awaited their fate.

In the eyes of most Americans, this annihilation may have been a deserved reward for the collective guilt

of the Nazi war crimes. But when you face one of the victims directly, it is impossible to cast any judgment.

“What can I say?” she asked, “We were all duped by a lunatic who made lots of promises.”

It is easy enough to condemn the compliance of everyday German citizens with the aid of 21<sup>st</sup> century hindsight. At the time, however, when the whole world was caught in a depression, there was no way to know which system would prevail. Had President Roosevelt been tempted with grand delusions of power, FDR himself might have gripped a struggling nation and secured authority that would have completely undermined America's constitutional freedoms. Had Hitler been replaced by a more sensible figure head, his replacement might have mobilized the nationalistic and patriotic sentiment of the day toward something positive that would have swept the world in a different form and been a model for good. Had Stalin been blessed with an ounce of humanity, he might have transformed the Soviet empire into a prosperous, model society of his own. In hindsight we wonder why the people didn't stand up and fight the injustice and the tyranny, why they didn't have a crystal ball. Guilty of nothing more than a laissez faire attitude, countless Depression-era Germans sat unwittingly and complacently teetering on the edge of a great abyss. Little did they know, their inaction would be counted as a vote for Blitzkriegs and KZ camps.

Seeing history personified in this humble little apartment, I was dumbstruck by the senselessness of it all: it was a calamity that did not have to be.

I kept thinking about the pact and eventually came to the conclusion that, whether or not it made any sense, it boiled down to the simplest loyalty: honoring a personal promise. Like the people of Ammon in the Book of Mormon, these friends lay their lives down for the sake of a promise. When the Sons of Helaman found the situation overwhelming – and self-defense entirely justified – they had been ready to rescind their pact and take up arms again. Though Helaman may have questioned the wisdom of making a pacifist pact in the first place – particularly during a defensive war – he stood by them and convinced them not to break their oath, fearing they might otherwise lose their souls in the process.

The Ammonites adhered to their word even when it meant sending out 2,000 of their own sons – quite possibly – to their deaths without the additional protection they might have provided by fighting alongside them. As far as the German boys unwilling to fight their American brothers, in the end, I felt oddly inclined to side with Helaman. I may not have understood their original intentions, but having made the covenant, I cannot question their integrity in adhering to its terms. If I had been there myself as they shipped off to an unwinnable battle, in some strange way I felt like I would have stood by them to defend their right to die.

Initially, the pact seemed to represent a foolish thing to sacrifice oneself for; war is war, after all. Any military death on the offensive side absurdly avoidable, and people will die whether you're shooting one direction or another. But as I thought about the survivors I had met

among the rest of the German population, the cause of these brethren-in-arms took on a new meaning for me. Twentieth-century warfare had left Germany with four million widows, many of whose husbands had been inspired in their cause by hatred, fear, bigotry, arrogance, or some combination of related factors. Well here was one widow whose husband had deliberately died for love. He loved those who had come to serve among his people – my grandfather among them – and come what may, he could not bring himself to shoot in their direction.

When a war ends, some names are spoken for good, some for ill, and most not at all. I had always been proud that my grandfather had served his country and fought for our freedom; that pride is typical of a whole generation of Americans. In Germany, on the other hand, war monuments, veteran's days, and other reminders of the conflict represent – understandably – just the opposite; they are to many a source of shame. In stark contrast, this band of elders represented one small fragment of meaning in an otherwise meaningless conflict.

Hearing about the pact cleared up another long-standing question for me as well. Hamp knew every inch of Berlin, of Dresden, and of so many other Allied bombing targets. I had often wondered why he – armed with an intimate knowledge of Germany's cities and their people – wasn't stationed in Europe during the war. Why was a lieutenant colonel in the Army Air Forces who spoke fluent German and had a ground-level perspective of German life sitting out the war at Pearl Harbor's

Hickam Field? Shouldn't he have been a formidable force in directing air operations over Germany?

Heinz "Henry" Kissinger, in contrast, was using his knowledge of his own German hometown, the culture, and the language to direct intelligence activities that helped win the Battle of the Bulge. Even junior officers like the author J. D. Salinger used their knowledge from previous travels abroad to help predict the German tactics, knowing the subtle geography of the land before them. Having seen it first-hand, they provided valuable insights to the other soldiers who blindly forged ahead.

Surely Hamp held enough knowledge and influence to inflict greater damage on Germany than the thousands of fresh new recruits steaming their way across the Atlantic to fight the unknown Hun. It is not something he left any indication of in his journals, but I am left to assume that Hamp remembered that pact as well.

Somehow in the process of rising through the ranks, he must have miraculously managed to convince his superior officers that he would be better suited for service in the Pacific Theatre rather than in Europe. Perhaps his commanding officer came to the conclusion that conflicted feelings toward the enemy would be a liability rather than an asset: better not to risk appointing a leader who would hesitate to pull the trigger or drop a bomb on a friend. Whatever the case may be, Hamp never had to fight his former companions, and they never fought him. To the end, they were true to their word.

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As my own time in Germany ticked on, I met other veterans and widows, but the image of Sister

Kuropka's sorrow stayed with me long after we left her sparse apartment. Her loss was driven in even deeper by the rustic charm and authenticity of the Christmas season that surrounded me with all of its accompanying sights, sounds, and smells. As I spent my second Christmas away from home, the traditional German Christmas markets, wood carvings, candles, and other elements took me back to my childhood in Bavaria; it seemed to stand in stark contrast to the consumerist kitsch of the American holiday season.

Hamp had had this same impression as a missionary decades before; the home-spun German Christmas he experienced after only a few weeks abroad – with the deep-rooted traditions that had spread around the world from their German origins – helped him to shed his homesickness and adopt a love for Germany. The warm scenes he witnessed as a guest were representative of millions of similar settings around the German nation – scenes that in the decades to come would have made a Christmas spent at the front or in bombed out, post-war building shells that much more difficult for German families to swallow – and particularly for those who would have known that this was what they had sacrificed for their pact.

Each conversation with another war veteran or survivor – of either the Great War or its sequel – stirred up perplexity at the tragedy's magnitude. The initial shock of their stories became somewhat tempered through repetition, but I also found the disbelief coupled with increased amazement at the manner in which these people had actually overcome their trials. I couldn't begin

to imagine starting over, having lost absolutely everything. How could you build your life up again from scratch? How could you ever let your mind return to normal thought processes after having witnessed some of the horrific scenes that had accompanied these wars? Yet we found so many humble survivors living their lives and graciously giving of themselves to help a couple of homesick strangers with nametags experience Christmas like we were part of their family. It certainly was mind-boggling.

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For six more months, I traveled around to each of the branches in the State of Mecklenburg. My companion and I were lucky enough to have the only Church vehicle north of Berlin, so our itinerary included the far-flung villages and farm towns out of the reach of public transit. There were early mornings, long days, and a few scattered miracles like the emergence of newly committed souls from the Baltic Sea in the freezing rain and crashing waves. With the approach of spring, the lakes and villages around Neubrandenburg underwent a transformation. Soon the canola fields bloomed a vibrant yellow, and the coastal towns transformed into Spartan seaside resorts.

My time as a missionary was nearing an end, but it seemed anticlimactic from a numerical perspective. I had emerged from the mission office to find a whole new nation before me. The scene had evolved completely; the people's initial curiosity had been largely stifled. In contrast to my first few weeks – where we had more teaching appointments than we could possibly handle –

by the end of my time we were spending all day, every day knocking on doors or approaching people on the street. In some cases we would go weeks on end without setting foot inside a single apartment.

The 5,000 new Amway representatives had doubled their forces and dutifully made their rounds – sometimes on a weekly basis; 10,000 new Jehovah's Witnesses had gone out before us, having placed their visible marks on the doorways again and again; insurance salesmen had hawked non-existent policies; pyramid marketing schemes had enjoyed a flash of success before consuming themselves again, taking out the entire bottom rung on their way down and leaving those at the helm to count their money. Having no practical experience to discern a scam, many East German people had been duped by one fraudulent enterprise after another. Word eventually spread that nobody on your doorstep could be trusted. The tide had definitely turned against the missionaries, and growth in Church membership had effectively ceased. We didn't want to focus on the numbers, but it did seem a sour note to end on.

To add to these concerns, we began hearing dismal statistics about how few of the newly baptized converts were actually still attending church services. The bubble had burst; what had been gained? Accompanying these doubts for me were thoughts questioning my own effectiveness as a missionary. How many opportunities had I missed? After all this time, was there still someone out there whom I needed to find? I wanted very much to end on a high, but I did not see much cause for hope.

With one week to go and no one to teach – barring a miracle – there would definitely be no one to baptize.

The relationships I had formed and the examples of loyalty that I had seen – especially among the Church members – had certainly impacted my life forever. I would always have that in my heart; perhaps that was the message I was meant to take home from the experience.

As I attended the sacrament service on my last Sunday I hurriedly greeted each member of the congregation as they arrived. I barely noticed an elderly man pass me by until I shook his hand. The missing fingers in his handshake nearly floored me. It was my old Adventist friend from Halle whom I had met during the *Messiah* recital. I was astounded to hear that Brother Gerhardt, as he was now known, had visited the Halle branch after I left, was taught by a missionary who happened to be a childhood friend of mine, had been baptized in the Roman baths there, and had now moved to Neubrandenburg to live with his son. The next stop would be the Freiberg Temple to be sealed to his beloved, departed wife. I was overjoyed to see him. Something felt complete as yet another circle had completed its round. Someone snapped a photograph of us, and I found myself enlightened as I left the meeting.

The photo went into a memory book that a branch member prepared as a parting gift; I stopped by to pick up the book on my last day in the field. After the rest of the day's work, we returned to the apartment a bit early so I could pack my things. Armed with that book, with Brother Gerhardt's photograph, and with his testimony in particular, I felt any regrets about missed opportunities

being washed away. If this were the only experience I took from my entire two-year endeavor, I felt like I would have done it again in a heartbeat.

The feeling of peace was short-lived, however; as we pulled up to the apartment, there was just a bit of daylight left. I still had a nagging feeling inside: Was there one last person searching for what we had to offer before I called it quits? I could always pack later; I talked my companion into heading back out on the street. After an hour of tracting, though, we hadn't had any better luck than on any other evening. The sun set and it was growing late; a knock on one last door gave me my final chance to finish with a bang. An old, tough-as-nails woman opened the door. Shockingly, she let us in. We began to introduce ourselves, but she interrupted us.

"Show me your hands," she said. Curious, we extended our hands. She proceeded to take our hands into hers, turned them over and stroked our palms. My companion and I glanced at each other with a cringing look that said, *Weird!* She threw our hands down in disgust. Wrinkled and calloused, she showed the signs of a life of poverty, hard labor, and unending struggles.

"You've both got girl hands," she remarked snidely, "Soft as a baby's bottom!"

I looked at my hands. They had long since lost their calluses from my summer stints shoveling manure and loading palettes – were they really *that* soft, though?

She shook her head and sat back down on her couch. "You've never worked a day in your lives," she mumbled.

My companion and I looked at each other again, not knowing whether to laugh or to get defensive about the accusation. But the old lady spoke up, never giving us the chance to voice an objection.

“And you’ve come here to tell me something about life?” she shouted, “Get out of here!”

So that was it: the final contact before my return to civilian life; if nothing else, at least my ministry had ended on a humorous note. If she had seen me cleaning out my suitcase that night, however, perhaps she might have changed her mind. I went through my belongings and threw out my worn-out items: my suit pants with dismembered socks sewn into the crotch as makeshift patches, my smelly shoes with holes worn right through the soles, my pit-stained rags that in a former life had been crisp, white dress shirts at Mr. Mac. If she had taken a peek at these souvenirs of service and the other relics filling the wastebasket that night, she might have understood something about the labor of love. Despite my *baby-butt* hands, I felt confident that I had “fought the fight, finished the race, warred the warfare,” and – ultimately – “kept the faith.”

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Mission accomplished:
Back-flip outside the Freiberg Temple visitor’s center



Baptism in the Baltic Sea



Hauptbahnhof Leipzig in 1990,
passing for 1940 Berlin on the big screen

Chapter 23: Homeward Bound

By the time I arrived at the mission home in Berlin, I was as physically and emotionally drained as I had ever been. I gave my report to President Schulze and headed off to the airport, completely wiped out. Despite my exhaustion, I boarded the plane more anxious for some solitude and introspection than sleep. Was this really it? Was I really heading home to nearly forgotten family and friends? Was this plane really going to transport me back to that parallel universe of academia, where grades and girls governed above all else? The deeper questions that followed never even had a chance to register; by the time the pilot pulled up the landing gear, I was already drifting into a world of dreams.

My sleep was interrupted a few hours later by the voice of a Nazi commander; I opened my eyes to catch a glimpse of a steam engine. I thought I was losing touch with reality, but there, right in front of my eyes, was the Leipzig Hauptbahnhof, swarming with Nazis and passing for Berlin on the on-board movie. It was the very same movie set I had stumbled onto the day after arriving in Germany almost two years before: the same steam engine, the same banners, the same goose-stepping extras. The rest of the world had apparently gone about its work: within the time that had elapsed since my initial arrival in Europe, someone had spliced and edited and distributed a movie, all while I went about my less tangible work among the people of East Germany.

The work of the producers seemed to be quite an accomplishment; they had managed to turn the phony sets

into authentic backdrops on celluloid. I wondered how my own efforts compared. Could a missionary's influence among the people rival that of a Hollywood production? The time warp in front of me made my small role feel like part of something much greater. On screen, the Leipzig train station seemed frozen in an era of shock troops and fascist propaganda. But if I could rewind the scene far enough, I'd see Hamp and Herbie passing through peacefully, completely unaware of the pending doom. Jump ahead a bit and I'd see Gordon and Homer as tourists, awestruck by the gathering storm. Fast forward even further, and I'd see Ezra Taft Benson, with Herbie at his side, passing through the rubble that remained of the station, leading the charge to gather the Saints and keep them alive – both physically and spiritually – through the dark days to come.

An unintelligible, foreign voice came over the loudspeakers. I must have been thinking in German, since my brain hadn't switched over quickly enough to understand the Lufthansa pilot's English – concealed within a thick, German accent. Window shades came up, and the blinding light dimmed the flickering movie. I strained to understand his words as he continued his tour-guide commentary.

"The coast of Greenland is visible over the starboard wing," he said. I cracked open my own window shade and squinted my eyes. The endless expanse of the North Atlantic spread all the way to a crisp horizon. Above the firmament, only an occasional contrail broke up the scene.

"Star light, board to right," I recited in my head as my mnemonic reminder, disappointed that I wouldn't be catching a glimpse of Greenland.

"...and the wreck of the *Titanic* lies under the waves on the port side," the Captain continued, offering the bland but historic scene as a consolation prize to those of us stuck on the left side of the aircraft.

Somewhere, miles below the surface, the newly discovered wreckage of RMS *Titanic* lay in pieces, its whereabouts having remained a mystery since the day it plummeted to the depths. Given the vast sea before me, it seemed no wonder that it took so long to find the miniscule gravesite. I continued to stare out the window and spotted a few cargo ships, traceable from rippling wakes that gave away their positions like monstrous arrowheads. Though they were following the *Titanic*'s path, each of these leviathans was now armed with radar, sonar, and a newfangled GPS system gradually being uncloaked in the aftermath of the Cold War, rendering ice bergs virtually harmless.

We passed each ship in a matter of minutes, and I thought of Hamp's own missionary voyage home. What had been a week-long voyage for him, Homer, Gordon, Rulon, and thousands of others who had made the crossing by ocean liner, I was covering in a single, restless bout with sleep.

My next jolt to consciousness came from the landing gear hitting the JFK runway. I was upset with myself for having missed the entire landing approach, including what would have been my first view of New York City's skyline. It was a brief layover, though, and if

the next leg departed on time, I figured there would be just enough daylight left to watch the sun set over the Big Apple and maybe even catch a glimpse of *Lady Liberty* herself. I crossed my fingers for a smooth transfer process and soon got my wish. After a quick crew change, we taxied back out to the end of the runway and waited for clearance to take off.

The light was fading fast as I stared out the window and eagerly awaited takeoff, but I still hoped to spot the famous Empire City landmarks I had seen time and again in the movies. I was relieved to hear the cockpit crew announce that we were next in line; but after a few minutes, we still hadn't moved. Twenty minutes and then half an hour went by, and we still had no update. We ended up sitting on the tarmac for well over an hour with no word from the cabin. The passengers were getting quite restless; theories regarding the cause of the delay spread from one end of the cabin to the other. I impatiently looked at my watch, knowing that my welcome home party in Michigan had already left for the airport and would now wait a minute longer for my arrival with every additional minute we spent on the runway. Either way, I'd now have to settle for a night-time view of Gotham.

Finally the Captain's voice came over the loudspeaker. "There's been a problem with the plane ahead of us," he said enigmatically, "and we'll be returning to the gate." He offered no further explanation, and everyone in the cabin groaned.

We were all asked to disembark at the gate, and I knew something had gone horribly wrong on a massive

scale when I saw the crowds concentrated around television screens that were broadcasting breaking news. I packed myself into a throng to get a closer look at the news report; my heart sank at the sight: a jetliner in flames!

A stranger next to me saw my jaw drop. "You can see it in person if you manage to get close enough to a window," he said, pointing toward the horde glued to the large plate glass overlooking the runway. I forced my way through the crowd to see the calamity for myself; sure enough, thick smoke was billowing up from the wreckage of a huge plane, lying directly in what would have been our take-off path.

Hundreds of flashing lights strobed from an army of emergency vehicles. The fire engines' pumps continued to douse the shell that remained, which had almost certainly been a tomb for dozens of unwary passengers. These were passengers who just an hour before had no more inclination of their fate than I did of mine. Though I was watching the real-life spectacle with my own eyes, I felt like I was really viewing a scene straight out of a disaster movie. If it's possible to go into shock in proxy, I was feeling the onset. Our pilot had likely seen the crash in real time, but opted for censorship in a deliberate attempt to avoid panic among the passengers who would have felt trapped inside his own aircraft.

Conflicting information was being broadcast in the news reports, but eventually the truth emerged: The pilot of ill-fated TWA Flight 843 had aborted takeoff shortly after lifting off; the plane hit the ground so hard

that it damaged the wing, spilling a trail of fuel. The plane skidded off the runway on its belly, and the sparks had ignited the fuse. When it finally came to a halt just short of Jamaica Bay, the heroic crew had apparently evacuated all 300 passengers down the emergency slides within 90 seconds – just before the flames spread through the cabin. There were spontaneous bursts of applause throughout the terminal as the good news gradually emerged: There had not been a single fatality. The sense of relief was palpable.

I checked the departure screens for an update. A string of six monitors, each showing dozens of flights, flashed the word “cancelled” after every single flight. The entire airport was shut down and – given the cleanup task ahead – nobody would be leaving that night. I tried calling my family from a payphone to let them know what had happened, but there was no answer; they were already waiting for me at an airport five hundred miles away.

The counter agent handed me a hotel voucher from a quickly disappearing stack. I caught a shuttle bus to a nearby hotel, checked into my room, and sat back in a chair in disbelief. I stared at the fancy bedspread but never touched it; I was fully jet-lagged in the wide-awake phase. I turned on the TV for an update on the situation; though the flames had been extinguished and the debris was already being cleared from the runway, each station was still playing incessant footage of the wreckage being consumed by flames. Facing a sleepless night alone to reflect on things, the bizarreness of the situation was starting to hit me. At that very moment, a small crowd of

well-wishers was taking down their banners and returning home after realizing I was AWOL. What a strange way to finish a mission!

I shut off the TV, put my camera on the table, and set the auto-timer for a quick self-portrait of my last day as a missionary. The flash went off, and I kept right on staring at the camera, thinking of the images I had captured through that lens. My random shots could never do justice to the whole experience that had somehow ended up culminating in a New York City hotel, but I treasured them nonetheless. Armed with my insomnia, I pulled my little box of mission photos out of my tattered suitcase and decided to put the pictures in order. I finished the task within a few minutes and stared at my watch. With the memories still fresh, I decided to start writing any names I could remember on the back of each photo. The subjects began a procession across the stage in my head as I recalled their names and their stories. Among others, I saw:

- ✚ the aging fellow who got laid off from the Red Army tank factory and, being too young to retire and too old to learn a new trade, had been on his way to hang himself in his garden house when my companion “just happened” to approach him and ask for his thoughts on the afterlife;
- ✚ the former minister who had lost his livelihood, his house, and his friends upon joining the Church and – having been kicked to the street with no practical way of supporting his family anymore –

worked a charity job as the Berlin chapel's custodian;

- ✚ the single mom whose ex-husband had escaped authorities on murder charges and who lived in constant fear of his return;
- ✚ the drunk in a Berlin ghetto who on first sight of us had chased us out of his building with a loaded gun;
- ✚ the Russian who could open beer bottles with his eye – and actually had scar tissue in his eye socket from doing it so often;
- ✚ the North Korean who joined the Church just in time to get extradited back to his homeland, where he would be the sole Church member in his entire province;
- ✚ the elderly gentleman who would worship with the Seventh-Day Adventists on Saturday and with the Mormons on Sunday and – just to make sure he covered his bases – paid 20% tithing on his measly pension...10% to each church;
- ✚ the weeping mother who longed for the days of lesser freedom while lamenting the loss of her wayward pre-teen to a street gang;
- ✚ the elderly Russian in a nursing home who still remembered the czars; and of course,
- ✚ the patriarch who had greeted me upon arrival with his tales of Hamp's mission, reminding me that I was continuing the circle of a much larger work and heritage...

These few photographs had captured just a small sampling of the people I had met. Upon arrival in Dresden two years before, President Peters had asked each member of our greenie bunch to try to meet at least 25 new people every day; more often than not, we'd easily reach that goal. Over two years that added up to well over 10,000 ice-breaking conversations, each initially with a stranger.

Many of these faces flooded my mind with vivid memories, but there was no way to keep that many images compactly filed away in my brain. I could still see the East Bloc pioneers arriving at the Freiberg Temple from their diverse, native lands for the newly translated temple sessions – the stalwart Church members who had tacitly ignored or even actively fought against their communist oppressors. But I could also see the less-than-valiant members who had previously joined the Communist Party and then later returned to the fold to be met with grudges and, at times, fisticuffs.

An endless line-up began a procession through my head; we had met with anybody willing to give us a minute of their time. In the process, we had engaged both Skinhead nationalists and the foreign refugees they hunted at night. There were Ossies and Wessies, communists and capitalists, imperialists and peace marchers, alcoholics and chain smokers, war widows and Red Army veterans...the list was unending, covering every imaginable background. There were Atheists, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus, each with their own conviction. There were Kazakhs and Slovaks, Greeks and Ghanans, Cubans and

Cossacks, each with their own unique blend of nationality and ethnicity.

These people had shared with us their stories of brutality, hunger, hopelessness, and despair, coupled with kindness, forgiveness, restitution, and all of the things that are inherently part of this human experience. Their faces were etched into my mind; by proxy of the stories they shared, their experiences had been driven even deeper into my psyche and seared into my heart. They had opened their lives to a couple of spoiled Americans they had barely met, sometimes offering much more detail than we could possibly process, and sometimes only hinting at stories they couldn't bear to retell themselves. And a few – really just a handful by comparison to these masses – a chosen few came to the sweet realization that there's more to this life than meets the eye, dressed in white to enter into the waters of baptism, committed their lives to Christ, and never looked back. In my mind's production, aided by jet-lagged delirium and a box of photos, they all came out together to take a final bow.

I had to smile and shake my head at some of the characters who had crossed that stage during the performance. In a two-year span I had compiled statistically significant proof that normal, sensible people won't open their door to a stranger...and they certainly won't invite you in. That latter category comprises a special cross section of humanity. These souls include debt-ridden drug addicts, chain-smoking drunks, overzealous bible bashers, asylum-seeking refugees, desperate housewives, lonely homosexuals, the terminally

ill, the mentally ill, the outright insane, and – hidden somewhere in that mix – a handful of elect truth-seekers.

A good chunk of my two-year effort was spent sifting through these masses to identify the bonafide truth seekers from among them. After almost 200 years of modern-day missionary work, Missionary Department still hasn't figured out a more effective or efficient way to help its 50,000 full-time missionaries meet that challenge. Perhaps I wasn't properly in tune enough with my internal divining rod to accelerate the process; but looking back on it, I wouldn't have wanted a program that would have deprived me of the sifting process itself, much as I would have welcomed it while knocking doors.

I had entered Germany two years before intending to shed light on the convictions of others. Teaching had been the primary goal; learning was only secondary on the agenda. In the end, it seemed, the roles ended up reversed.

I had personally learned something from each one of these contacts, and I would hope that the benefit was mutual, whether or not they accepted our message. Sitting in that hotel room, I had one of those epiphanic moments where the journey itself suddenly becomes more important than the tally sheet at the end. Perhaps this whole experience had been more about opening my own eyes to humanity rather than spreading my beliefs to others. In that retrospective moment, I wasn't so sure that I'd trade in a single connection to this diverse and lively group of people for a "golden" investigator.

Having overloaded my memory circuits, I couldn't process any more; I turned the TV set back on to

see if the airport had reopened. Instead I caught a newsflash about an erupting conflict in the Balkans. My previous knowledge of the situation had been limited to cursory comments on the street; I had been naïvely oblivious to the politics and comfortably numb to the few rumors I had heard about the conflict. The horror of the real situation now unfolded on the television screen. Over the past few years, democracy and freedom had spread and paved the way for the preaching of the gospel – or vice versa if you asked the East German Saints – but at what price?

I knew from the very onset that the same fissure in the Iron Curtain that allowed us to enter as missionaries would likewise indulge scam artists, mafia bosses, pimps, prostitutes, drug dealers, child slave traders, and all sorts of similar forces for the populace to contend with. And it didn't surprise me that I ended up meeting hundreds of people who preferred tyrannical rule to this devilish deluge. In spite of this backlash, though, I had still been under the delusive illusion that democracy's descent on the people would eventually solve their problems. The *winds of change* would certainly sweep the world, I thought, and freedom, liberty, and democracy – coupled with capitalism – would surely prevail in the process.

My naïvety was becoming apparent with this news report. It became all too clear that the iron fist – that for all its faults had at least kept racial tensions in check – was exploding into thousands of trigger-happy fingers. Those finding themselves on the wrong end of the gun's

barrel were certainly crying to bring back Stalinist rule in place of this new lunacy.

I wasn't prepared to entertain these broader thoughts; I was still selfishly stuck in my own itinerary. Instead of being met with cheers and banners, my homecoming had now been blocked by a flying machine in pieces on the ground. The burning wreckage seemed somehow symbolic of the conflagrations beginning to erupt around the world, bringing an end to blissful ignorance and peaceful obliviousness. Had the world's optimism at the Wall's collapse been merely an overreaction? Was this a sign from above to stop cheering and get to work?

The world powers seemed to stand idly by in these early days of this new conflict, perhaps blinded by the stunning period of public elation that had transpired over the previous years. Engulfed in our glasnostic euphoria, it seems we had collectively convinced ourselves that the flames of war would subside on their own. Apartheid was famously crumbling, after all; so what if a few sparks of racism were scattered around the Balkans? Surely the world as a whole was on its way toward lasting peace, and these minor problems could be whisked away and swept under the rug of denial and ignorance.

Those blind hopes were now dashed; instead, news reports were surfacing with present-tense terms that had been out of use in the western media for fifty years: war crimes, genocide, ethnic cleansing, systematic rape... These were supposed to be relics of a bygone era from which we as a civilization had graduated. Hadn't these

ghosts been exorcised in Nuremberg, yielding lessons we learned long ago? Yet in that very instant, as I sat glued to a television screen, innocent villagers were being rounded up and massacred just a few hundred miles from my mission field.

Though perhaps less systematic, these crimes were no less gruesome or hate-driven than those committed by their Nazi counterparts. These were the very scenes that prompted a missionary who had returned from the Balkans to record the haunting harmonies of the *Prayer of the Children*, in which war-torn children try to make sense of “angry guns in their shattered world.” Kurt Bestor’s lyrics were about to be driven in with a whole new measure of force. The gathering powers were polarizing all across the Balkan Peninsula, and I wondered what harsh turn things might take from there. Would the wave of peace make a rebound or would it be just the opposite?

I listened ever more intently to the reporter, but the relatively brief newsflash soon gave way to a breaking story: Reports were surfacing that a pop duo had lip-synced their concerts, and an all-out hunt for the real Milli Vanilli was ensuing.

I was still a missionary. I had a right to ignore politics for one more day, and I certainly didn’t care one bit about Milli or Vanilli. So I shut off the TV – briefly bothered by my complicit guilt as a spoiled consumer with a short attention span – and packed my box of photos back into my suitcase.

Before I knew it, the telephone rang, and the airline representative let me know they were back in

business and I had been rebooked on the next flight out. Never having touched the neatly made bed, I pushed in my chair, picked up my suitcase, and made my way back to the airport. This time we took off uneventfully, and I finally caught a view of that incredible skyline, including what was to be my first and final glimpse of the Twin Towers.

Having wrapped up his ministry, Hamp had watched that same skyline fade into the distance in his rear view mirror as he embarked on the final leg of his journey home. Back in those Depression years, thousands of nobodies in New York City were desperately trying to become somebody. And hundreds of these starving actors, artists, and musicians did, in fact, succeed in eventually giving up obscurity and making themselves into household names. As the skyline shrank, I wondered what still-anonymous celebrities inside those apartment windows might be on the verge of becoming future global phenomena.

The Finger Lakes came into view along with the endless forests that surround them. One of the rolling hills dotting the landscape from 30,000 feet was Cumorah – the origin of an entire dispensation. As he pattered off to upstate New York in a crippled Plymouth, Hamp had shared his mission stories with his mother and sister. They had stopped at an inn in Palmyra but didn’t retire to bed; instead, they stayed up late in the evening while Hamp laid his mission photographs out on the large oak table in the atrium. On that muggy summer night in 1933, Hamp pointed to each photograph and – with crickets

chirping loudly in the background – recited one life story after another to his audience.

As each set of photographed eyes stared back at them in the flickering electric light, the trio never could have imagined what life might have in store for these people. The smiling faces in the photographs were completely unaware of the calamities that were about to descend on them. How could they even begin to comprehend what they would be called to go through – on parade grounds with fluttering red banners, in bomb shelters with fire raining down around them, or in Siberian death camps with no defense against the bitter cold?

Nearly every building in Hamp's photographs would be reduced to rubble in the following decade. Every German citizen would in one way or another be pulled into the global conflict. They would be forced to choose sides by one occupying force after another, gambling their lives by trying to predict the future victors. They would – in many cases – pay the ultimate price for their choice of allegiance. Many would not emerge from the conflict alive; the rest would be forever scarred by their experience. Armies would sweep across their lands; in some of the cities in Hamp's photographs, every German would be eradicated from his home and hunted down, with the survivors ultimately forced to flee the fight in an endless stream of refugees. On the other hand, every American companion in Hamp's photographs would feel torn at the prospect of doing battle with their former friends.

As he finally retired to bed that night within earshot of the Sacred Grove, Hamp must have thought of the lives he had touched as a missionary. What purpose had the message served among these people? Some had been converted to a new set of beliefs centered on the Restoration that had commenced in Palmyra. Some would remain faithful and would find their faith strengthened in the ensuing furnace of affliction; others – including some long-standing Church members – would lose their faith in the face of these pending trials, not only their faith in the Latter-Day message, but their faith in God and humanity as well.

Were my photographs any different? What unwritten mysteries might life have in store for these people, for my companions, for myself? Would we all just get along and live out our days in peace, harmony, and prosperity? Or would there be some test ahead – some descent into chaos that would tear us in different directions? The balance of powers that had kept a nuclear nightmare in check was evaporating – what might a fight over the dismantled pieces have in store for the planet? Who would survive and who would succumb in the generations ahead?

I certainly had a growing list of questions – and no answers to speak of – but before I knew it, the airplane had touched down, and the cabin door opened. A brave, new world lay beckoning from beyond the jetway. Hamp and hundreds of thousands of other returning missionaries must have felt the same, strange sensation as they crossed gangplanks, airstairs, and other contraptions back into the real world.

Day in and day out, I had left a piece of my soul with the German people. But now I was entirely on my own, re-entering a mad, mad world of politics and pop culture. I had spent two years in the land of Schiller and Goethe, Bach and Beethoven. The changes that had occurred during my period of insulation had been staggering. The English Language had a whole new set of catch phrases, courtesy of Wayne and Garth, and a brand new language called html had been coined in the meantime. I had missed the advent of e-mail and the explosion of the World Wide Web. I knew nothing of Seinfeld's debut, Bart-Mania, the birth of grunge, or the death of techno. I had missed the Rodney King L.A. Riots, the Persian Gulf War, the dismantling of apartheid, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and, as it turned out, the first shots of the Bosnian War that was just beginning to rage. As I passed through the plane's door, I reluctantly but willingly entered this strange, new environment, completely unprepared to deal with it.

I arrived in anonymity; there was no welcome home party, no greeting at the gate. My best friend Vera picked me up at the curb, dropped me off at home, and rushed back to work. She would soon find herself entering the world from which I had just emerged, preaching the gospel in the same Silesian towns in which Hamp had labored, but under the direction of the newly opened Warsaw Mission; for now, though, we were both stuck inside the maniacal present-tense of everyday life, making everyday decisions with everyday consequences.

I was done with the introspection and reminiscing. Now it was time to dive back into this real life, with

concerns over money, a major, and – somewhere in the process – marriage. The mounting choices seemed overwhelming. My next transfer would be entirely my decision; I wouldn't have the luxury of opening a transfer letter and leaving the responsibility for the inspiration to someone else. How would I decide where to go? How would I decide who to be...and whom to be with? Which trait changes would be permanent, and which ones would wear off with time? My body had made it home, but my mind certainly had a long way to go in the transition.

I looked around at my old bedroom, which had been completely transformed in the meantime by a kid brother who had apparently welcomed my absence as a chance to remove any trace of my existence. "Welcome home," I said to myself. But this wasn't my home anymore; I was just a visitor. I had looped the loop, and this particular slide down the helter skelter ride was over. Like it or not, it was time to find a new ride – to climb up those stairs alone and start a circle of my own.

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"Yell at me in German again, Dad!"

I laughed at Jaedin's request. In trying to locate the photograph Hamp had signed for Sister Kuroпка, I had been digging through a box of my mission memorabilia; Jaedin recognized the red, black, and gold stripes of the folded German flag and pulled it out of the box. He loves the sound of German – especially when harmless words are shouted like expletives with Nazi-style intonation – and he thought he'd get another taste of it.

“OK, but remember, you asked for it!” I answered him with a smile.

I picked one of my most prized mission artifacts out of the box. Back in the day, as Elder Koblenz had so dutifully instilled in me, every missionary was asked to carry the *Little White Bible* – the small booklet with a white cover containing the mission rules – in his suit coat pocket and read a page every day, *lest we forget*.

It just so happened that there was also a miniature German edition of Sendak’s children’s book, *Where the Wild Things Are*, of the same size, and also with a white cover. One missionary had somehow managed to secure a whole stack of these companion volumes. As a rite of passage, each missionary assigned to the mission office received a copy on his induction. In addition to the official rulebook text, we would then just as dutifully read a page of this alternative *Little White Bible* aloud to each other each morning before leaving the apartment; sacrilege or not, it kept our spirits up, and to this day I still have it memorized. Those memories came flooding back.

“Well, Dad, let’s hear it,” Jaedin said, waiting impatiently for me to stop reminiscing.

I obliged; opening the book, I put on my meanest angry-eyes, and shouted out the words – rolling the *r*’s in my best Austrian dialect. “Du hast nur Unfug im Kopf! ... Ich fress Dich auf! ... Sie brüllten ihr fürchterliches Brüllen! ... Jetzt machen wir Krach! ... Ich habe Dich am allerliebsten!”

“What did that mean?” he asked.

“Well, to sum it up, it means I love you more than life itself,” I replied, giving him a ferocious hug.

Though the past is interesting, it takes moments like these to convince me that there’s nothing like the present; as I put the book back into my box, this snap back to reality convinced me that if there is a meaning of life, it is in the here and now...which I had found right then and there – with a little help from above.

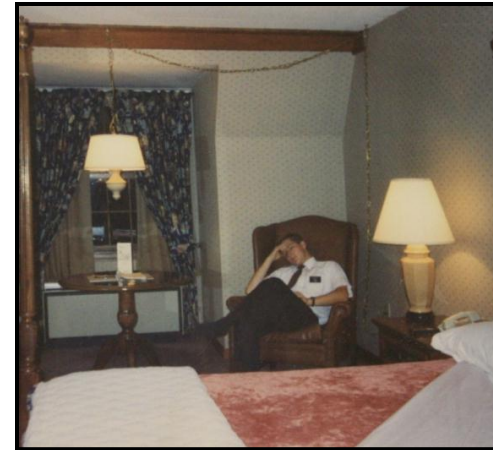
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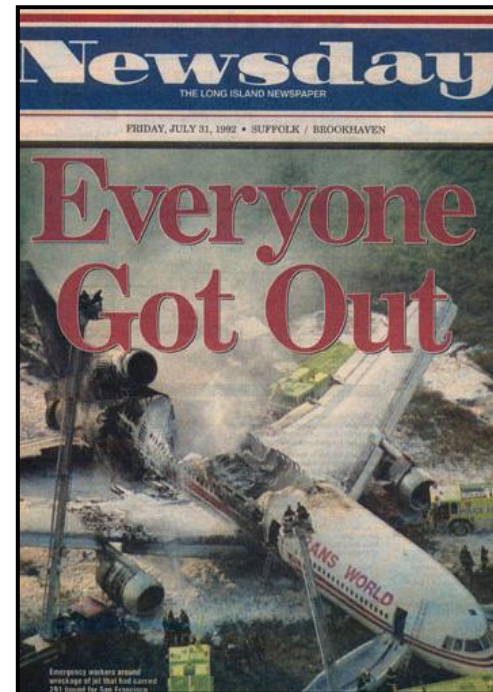
Souped-up "Supertrabi" in East Berlin



Thou Shalt not Covet: The Contrast of West Berlin



Welcome Home: New York City, July 30, 1992



The Morning Paper: July 31, 1992



Jaedin after heart surgery

Part V: Coda

Chapter 24: Rededication

“Grab the paddles,” the attending physician shouted, “Stat!”

The defibrillator instantly appeared from a hatch in the wall, and a fully staffed medical team in scrubs descended on our little recovery room within seconds of the heart monitor’s alarm bell. The technician at the controls of the pacemaker tried time and again to make the pulsating blips catch the rapidly accelerating waves before time ran out. It looked like a harmless video game on the pixilated, green screen, but the look on his face as he frantically turned the dial revealed that this was no game – this was deadly serious.

100 beats per minute turned to 150, then to 200. Fibrillation set in, and the readout showed 250 beats a minute and climbing; by this time, it was obvious that Jaedin’s heart couldn’t possibly be circulating any blood to his extremities. Again and again, the electrical pulses – controlled by a dial in the medic’s hands – tried to catch the rapidly accelerating rhythm of Jaedin’s heartbeat to coax it back to a safe pulse. Once it hit 300 we knew it was only a matter of seconds before the onset of brain damage, a coma, and then a fatal collapse.

Moments before, we had been sitting at his bedside in relative privacy, absolutely exhausted but able to relax for the time being with a difficult surgery just behind us. We were finally breathing a sigh of relief when the alarm had sounded. Now we stood on the

sidelines as the ER team scurried around, each member playing his part; we as the parents, on the other hand, had no role at all to play. We had been reduced to mere distractions; our only job was to stay out of the way. We couldn't even hold our little boy's hand or stroke his head. It was an awful, helpless feeling. All we could do was hope and pray for a miracle.

At that point, we knew full well that Jaedin's life was entirely in God's hands...and in the hands of some stranger with his fingers on the dial of a machine that I couldn't understand in the least. We prayed that God's hands might guide the hands of this stranger – a man we had first laid eyes on a few seconds before, but who had now become to us the most important stranger on the planet. We knew that every second was absolutely crucial. The fibrillation continued, and the paddles were readied. It was like a scene out of a prime-time emergency room drama. I pictured Jaedin's little body reacting to the pulse. What would the jolt of electricity do to him? I could only imagine from what I had seen on television.

Thankfully, the pacemaker caught up to his heart at the very last instant and managed to gradually slow the rhythm, eliminating the need for the paddles. After a few more minutes, the attending physician pronounced the exercise a success. They shoved the defibrillator back into the hatch, took off their masks, and clocked out. They went home to their families and in all likelihood had nothing new to report from this uneventful shift; it was all in a day's work for them. I, on the other hand, had been permanently affected by those agonizing few

minutes. The fear, the uncertainty, the harrowing helplessness...it was indescribable. We typically picture post-traumatic stress disorder being associated with military conflicts or other violent situations, but this scenario to me represented an equally traumatic application.

Three stress-laden years had elapsed since a surgeon closed the door of a small consultation room, sat us down, and told us that a congenital defect had left our newborn son's heart with a single functioning pumping chamber. Jaedin had stopped breathing at just one hour old and was immediately placed on life support, but even that would not prevent him from slowly suffocating. A surgical intervention was his only chance, we were told, but the probability that he would survive the crucial series of open heart procedures was essentially a coin toss. The choice was ours to make, but we had to choose right then and there.

Ever since I had spent time among the veterans and war widows in East Germany, I had wondered how people can possibly handle the trauma of war. A few of the stories we heard had haunted me ever since, like the families who had been forced to play Russian roulette with each other. How could your heart, your brain, or your soul ever return to normalcy after those experiences? Because my life of comfort seemed so far removed, I had always assumed that I could only feel what they felt in proxy, by reading their stories or listening to their words.

The way this news stunned me, though, it may as well have been wartime. It was as if the surgeon himself

were a sergeant, forcing me to play his cruel game. Three bullets in a six-gun; he spins the barrel, hands me the gun, and points toward my son. If I don't pull the trigger, he'll load the other three bullets and do it himself. If I play his wicked game, I've got a fifty-fifty chance of keeping my son alive. What's my move? These were unthinkable scenarios that had actually been faced by real families. In Jaedin's case, foregoing the operations would have added the other three bullets; the chance of losing him would have been certain. To some degree, I think I sensed something similar to the feeling faced by those war-torn families; whether the choice was being imposed on us by cruelty or genetic fate, Jaedin's chance of survival was unpredictable. Surgery was our only choice with a chance of life, so we spun the barrel and fired.

The first operation and ensuing recovery period were excruciating. The knot in my stomach at the sight of our infant boy – and at the thought of losing him – brought me as much physical pain as any illness or injury could have caused. He was hooked up to a matrix of machines and monitors that constantly sent signals and fluids through his body. They had sawed through his sternum and literally split open his little body. He was left in agony for days at a time, with organs exposed in his open chest cavity, his insides so swollen and bruised that the incision couldn't be closed. The heavy sedation couldn't hide the miserable look on his face.

We wondered whether we had made the right decision in proceeding with the risky operations, but our doubts were erased a few weeks later, on Christmas Eve, when we finally got the green light to bring him home. It

was bittersweet, since many of the other families we had come to know in the children's hospital were not as lucky. For me there never was or ever has been since a Christmas Eve quite as gut-wrenching, soul-stirring, or thought-provoking as that one.

Each subsequent surgery became ever more painful, as we had come to know Jaedin's personality that much better in the meantime. Three years later we brought him in for what we hoped would be his final procedure. By the time we kissed him goodbye and they wheeled him into the operating room, I could literally feel the strain on my own heart.

From the waiting room, I watched the clock intently. In those critical thirty minutes on life support, the second hand's tick became an unbearable noise. Machines were breathing for him, pumping his blood while his heart lay still, packed in ice. What if there were a power outage, an earthquake, an equipment failure? A heart no bigger than an acorn was being sliced and sutured; the minutest slip of the fingers could do irreparable damage.

During that journey through Limbo, I discovered that I count my own life for nothing. I had contemplated my own mortality before, but I didn't know until this trial that I would trade my life in a heartbeat for that of my child. I came to realize that I don't fear death in the least for myself; I know that I would beg God to take me instead. Like Jean Valjean kneeling over Marius, I would cry, "Let him live...Let me die."

Following cardiopulmonary bypass, there are no guarantees that the attempts to jump-start the heart will be

successful. For any waiting family, the anticipation during these crucial minutes is excruciating. Already worn nerves are frayed even further, exacerbated by the fact that updates can be delayed by an hour or more before they reach the waiting room. During that time – when a team of strangers knows the fate of a loved one while relatives are left guessing – the minutes seem to stretch into hours.

Finally, an orderly emerged from the operating room with an update: Once again, Jaedin’s pulse had returned. We immediately uttered our prayers of thanks. We didn’t quite have our son back yet, but the worst was over.

Jaedin’s successful bout with fibrillation came a few days later; it had given us quite a scare, but we were relieved to be able to put these troubles behind us. We finally took him home, grateful beyond measure to have no further procedures on the horizon. It was time to return to work and regain a routine in our lives.

An opportunity to present some research at a trade conference arose, and I thought my wife might want to join me for a well-deserved break. A company-paid hotel room at a mountain resort seemed tempting, but the altitude would present some problems for Jaedin. After talking over our options at length and taking Jaedin through a full checkup, we got the cardiologist’s approval to leave him with his grandparents for a few days while we went about rebuilding our frazzled nerves.

As it turned out, though, his troubles were far from over. Soon after we checked into our hotel almost 800 miles away, we got a message that Jaedin’s oxygen

saturation was beginning to drop. We found ourselves on the phone with the airline looking to change our return flights. The next available flight would be the following day, so we decided to relax a bit and enjoy the crisp, September air in the meantime. Early the next morning, we received the devastating news that the downward spiral had continued and his condition was declining further; we needed to leave immediately.

As we scrambled to finalize our travel arrangements, another catastrophic piece of news suddenly saturated every media outlet in a bizarre twist of fate: The Twin Towers had fallen, the country was under attack, and no aircraft would be leaving the ground for days. The nation’s most traumatic day had somehow managed to land right in the midst of the most traumatic time in our personal lives.

We embarked on a frantic, all-night drive, passing through one small town after another. American flags were flying everywhere across a nation united as never before, but the implications of the colossal, international tragedy took a back seat to our mad rush. We finally arrived at the 24-hour urgent care center where Jaedin had been admitted; the doctors in this small facility had never encountered his heart condition before and didn’t know what to make of his plummeting blood oxygen saturation levels. He would have to be transferred to a larger center with specialized pediatric cardiologists.

Doernbecher Childrens Hospital – the closest facility that fit the bill – was over 100 miles away; an ambulance quickly backed up to the emergency entrance and whisked him off. Already exhausted beyond

comprehension, we sped on through the night, following the flashing lights as closely as we could manage. News reports from Ground Zero blared from the car's speakers, making for a surreal cocktail of heart-wrenching emotion.

Immediately after arriving at Doernbecher, a surgical team sprang into action and began their life-saving procedures. In a whirlwind of sleep-deprived mania, we struggled to make sense of the periodic updates being relayed to the nurses' desk.

Finally, the resident doctor emerged from the operating room with a first-person status update. Jaedin had contracted staphylococcal endocarditis, a dangerous, internal infection; they had removed as much of the infected tissue as they could possibly manage, but the Gore-Tex shunts and other artificial components buried deep inside his organs would remain resistant to the antibiotics while serving to harbor the staph infection. We were told that even if he managed to fight off the infection with antibiotics, a potentially fatal strain could reappear at any time. The large incision on his chest would have to remain open, leaving his wounds around his chest cavity exposed; he would need an intravenous line in his arm to pump antibiotics into his system for a year or more – and quite possibly for life, however long that might be.

The drip lines gradually weaned him from the anesthetic over the next few hours, forcing our small soldier's body back to life. Our little boy was in absolute agony. As I watched them wheel him past us, trapped behind panes of plexiglass in a wretched state, I began to question our original choice to subject him to the series of

surgeries. Should we have just let him die peacefully in his sleep right after he was born? We had forced him through what a three-year old can only perceive as intentional torture. How could he possibly know the difference? I couldn't help viewing the procedure through his eyes, where the cardiac surgeon might as well have been Dr. Mengele – the Angel of Death – himself.

Jaedin had been drafted to wage this war without a say in the matter. We had made the choice on his behalf out of love and a stubborn dedication to life; but had it really been for him or had we selfishly made the choice for ourselves? I, for one, was finished. I felt as broken as our little boy – completely vanquished in body, mind, and spirit. No endurance race had ever left me more physically drained. Inside my soul, I questioned the scriptural promise that trials would remain within the limits of our own strength; I don't know if I said it aloud or to myself, but I distinctly remember praying, "No more...I just can't deal with any more."

Right or wrong, however, the choice had been made; the weapons were cast, and there was no retreat from this battlefield.

Later that afternoon, I went for a run in the adjacent forest to catch a breath of fresh air. Somewhere along the way I collapsed in a heap on the ground and cried my eyes out. As I stumbled back over the hospital's sky bridge and watched the sun set behind the Tualatin Mountains, the lyrics of a song that had touched me again and again during Jaedin's trials came to my mind:

You gaze upon the sunset,

With such love and intensity,
If you could only crack the code,
You'd finally understand what this all means.

But if you could, do you think you would,
Trade in all the pain and suffering?
Ah, but then you would have missed the beauty,
Of light upon this earth, the sweetness of living.

In that instant I would undoubtedly have chosen to remove his suffering, but deep inside I knew that someday, in hindsight, I would recognize the truth of those words and accept the necessity of the trial in refining our souls.

As I made my way back inside the hospital I found my wife staring at Jaedin through the glass. We felt awfully alone, but little did we realize as we reluctantly began to drag our way through the trenches on this forced march, a veritable army was already rallying in our behalf.

In a Fresno cathedral, the Hispanic congregation lit candles to the Saints, calling all angels to Jaedin's side. In temples dotting the world, Mormons dressed in white and slipped his name onto prayer rolls, summoning God to hear their prayers. Agnostic coworkers stayed up late around their computers, sending out mass e-mails for fundraising efforts and spreading the word in any way they could.

We're trying, we're hoping,
But we're not sure how this goes.

Calling all Angels around the world were prayer rolls, rosary beads, vibhuti ash, mezuzahs, and other symbols of devotion that people turn to and desperately cling to in times of abyssal need. Each of these emblems in their unique and peculiar way embodied a fervent wish that had for the moment united a diverse group of allies wishing to support us.

A few weeks later, armed with innumerable messages of support, we took him home once again. This time, there were no stitches, clamps, or staples binding his open chest wound. It had left such a gaping hole in his body that we simply couldn't imagine how it would ever close on its own. Each day was a struggle, and we had to bring him back to the clinic for endless blood tests to maintain a delicate balance: keeping his blood thin enough to prevent his heart from overworking itself, yet thick enough to coagulate and prevent him from bleeding to death if he suffered a cut.

Any movement on his part during the blood draw would prolong the process, so I would pin him down with all my strength. One vein after another became damaged and scarred, and the poking and prodding became ever more painful to him. As I restrained him, he fought me with a strength I didn't know he had in him. Each time, he looked at me with a set of expressions that began with confusion and fear and then evolved into anger and resentment for what we were putting him through. It broke my heart every time.

In the end, our little warrior fought his way through this daily battle with all the courage of a

seasoned veteran. Every night we nursed and dressed his wound, which did eventually begin to close on its own. The permanent IV line that pumped him full of antibiotics several times each day became an accepted facet of life. When he eventually began to walk again, the pump had to come with him. We were worried about his spirit, but when we got him a toy shopping cart he loaded up his pump and happily pushed his ball and chain with him everywhere that he went. In spite of my doubts, a look into his eyes revealed that this battle was his own; a God-given strength lay within him, and he would emerge the victor.

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Just a few weeks after the calamity of September 11 had coincided with our own tumultuous time, the Saints gathered in unprecedented numbers to hear the words of the prophets. Never before had this generation felt such a need for guidance, and I was no exception. One by one, the speakers stood to address a stunned General Conference audience reeling from the blow dealt by terror. What message did the world need to hear?

As with the other Brethren, the question had been weighing heavily on Elder Boyd K. Packer's mind over the previous weeks. As he considered the content of his message in earnest prayer, he recognized the similarities between the rubble of the World Trade Center and post-war Leipzig. He could see a four-year old boy and his newly widowed mother wandering through the ruins in search of food. He imagined their suicidal sense of despair at having lost nearly everything in their native – and now nonexistent – homeland in Silesia, alongside the

contrasting sense of hope they felt when they came across a placard proclaiming life after death – a placard placed by none other than Herbert Schreiter.

Elder Packer distinctly felt that this particular rise from the ashes was precisely what the Church needed to hear! As President Schulze's conversion story was canonized in Elder Packer's General Conference address, our own troubles and struggles seemed remarkably pale by comparison. I didn't know whether Brother Schreiter was still alive, but I wondered how he might have felt to hear his name spoken from the pulpit. Having been schooled in the art of printing placards by his tall, American companion, he might have even acknowledged Hamp's small contribution to this epic scene.

I wanted to rekindle my connections to this little circle in Germany, but realistically, I had to concede that I might not see Brother Schreiter again in this life. Given the risks in light of Jaedin's condition, an extended absence for overseas travel was simply out of the question.

A short time later President Schulze traveled to the U.S. to accept a call as an Area Seventy, and I learned that a mission reunion was being organized in Salt Lake around his visit. Though I had not seen President Schulze in years, some updates had reached me by means of other missionaries. Shortly after I had returned from Germany as a missionary, he had helplessly witnessed a swerving vehicle strike his wife Inge as she walked along the side of a German road. On hearing the news of her tragic death, I had sent an e-mailed condolence letter, but it seemed awfully, awkwardly inadequate at the time. I had

been hoping to see him again in person, so I jumped at the chance for a quick trip to Utah to attend the reunion.

Seeing him again brought back a flood of memories. He gave me a vigorous handshake and a firm pat on the back. Though his English was fluent by now, he asked me in German, “So my dear brother, how’s your health?”

I looked down at my growing waistline and grimaced a bit.

“I mean your spiritual health, of course!” he clarified with a gentle smile.

I knew it wasn’t a simple *yes-no* question, but I just nodded my head. “I didn’t know there was going to be a test,” I joked, “Did you bring your stethoscope?”

He laughed and I quickly changed the subject to recount some early memories of the Berlin Mission’s beginnings. We certainly had some stories to tell, but in the back of my mind I was still considering my answer to his first question. I wasn’t prepared to *return and report* on my post-mission life; as with a trip to the doctor or the dentist – where you know you could have flossed more or could have done without that last trip to Krispy Kreme – it was too late to talk about plans or goals and time to just step on the scale and face the truth.

My introspection was getting the better of me when he asked, “Have you met my wife Helga?”

I shook my head and turned to greet her.

I was met with a rather pleasant surprise; I had heard that President Schulze had remarried in the meantime, but I certainly hadn’t expected to see a familiar face. *Helga* was our very own Sister Schröder,

our eternal investigator from Berlin. I laughed as I put the pieces together, remembering how President Schulze had told us there was no hope for her and that we should cut her loose. Apparently she had found her way back to church years later and had been baptized – on her own timeframe; yet another circle closed in my head.

Other former missionaries had lined up behind me, eager to speak to the president, so I excused myself and left to wander around the room...and to fill my curiosity at what had become of my fellow ex-missionaries. I was especially fascinated to find out which poor souls were now legally bound to live with some of my former companions. Though I cherished most of the relationships I had formed with other missionaries, I painfully recalled a few that had me praying for a transfer letter in the mailbox after each month spent together.

As one companion in particular introduced me to his spouse, I faked a smile and shook her hand. Behind my teeth, I said to myself, “He made a month feel like eternity...and you’re in it for time *and* all eternity...to eternity and beyond!”

He pulled me aside after the brief introduction. “Well what do you think, Elder?” he asked with a grin. Nobody had called me Elder for a long time; it was a bit disconcerting. “Isn’t she something?” he prodded, realizing I hadn’t responded yet.

“Yeah,” I said quickly, “you’ve certainly found yourself someone special.” Picturing the patience this poor creature would need over the ensuing years of cohabitation, I added silently, “...you have *no* idea!”

I'm sure the feeling was mutual; no doubt he pitied my wife as well. She certainly also has a challenge on her hands that gives the edict to *endure to the end* a whole new meaning. As I walked away, though, I glanced back at President Schulze and laughed – in spite of our mutual faults, at least we wouldn't have two boisterous and headstrong German women named Inge and Helga duking it out and vying for our attention in the afterlife...

Shortly after the initial reception, we all gathered in the chapel to watch a compilation of mission photos that had been turned into a slide presentation. As the procession of photos marched across the screen, a song called "Mein Berlin" played in the background, recounting various phases of Berlin's history in its German lyrics. The words tell one man's view of the City's transformation through the fall of the Wall. The snapshots covered only a brief moment in the city's history, but I certainly felt that I had some additional perspectives from which to view its many transformations: I could see it as Hamp did in its care-free heyday, when Homer and Gordon saw it overrun by fascist legions, when Herbie saw it in ruins, when my father returned to see it divided, and when I saw it reunited. What would its setting be when I take my children there someday?

In the meantime, it was wonderful to just take it all in and transport myself back to the mission days. I thought about not just the lives that had been affected, but how my own life had changed through the experience. It was a deeply stirring moment to be sitting there watching these scenes with other souls whom I hadn't seen in over

a decade. Last we had seen each other, we had shaken hands, bade each other farewell, and embarked on a much larger campaign. In the meantime, we had now gone out into the world, finished school, landed a job, found a spouse, started a family... We had all been living our separate lives, undertaking our isolated adventures. Some were already divorced, some were still looking for love, some had lost loved ones, and some – like me – had suffered a near-miss and learned to love a child more than we ever knew possible. It felt a bit symbolic of how we might feel when we review the mission of our earthly lives and look back at what we accomplished in our absence from home.

At the slide show's conclusion we sang the German rendition of "God Be with You Till We Meet Again." I looked around at this band of brothers with the realization that there were some I probably wouldn't see again in this life; as for the rest, certainly a whole new set of adventures will have transpired by our next meeting. All sorts of emotions were racing around inside of me; which of those will match what I feel when this life ends? Will I be filled with gratitude, love, pride, or regret? How will I answer when the question of whether I have kept the faith is posed? I don't know how much validity to ascribe to Mormon folklore like *Saturday's Warrior* or *My Turn on Earth*, but having been armed with imagery of that sort since childhood, I could easily imagine that mission reunion being symbolic of a scene in the world to come.

We all have our battles to fight in this life; that much has been made clear to me. These battles may not

bear much physical resemblance to those of our forefathers, but we will have to rise to fight them nonetheless. Our lives of comfort just make the contrast that much more clear when the challenges do come. For President Schulze, the atrocities he witnessed as a four-year old are a thing of the distant past. But even during peacetime, with so many of those childhood challenges removed, he was still called to the frontlines. No matter that the attack came from a distracted driver rather than artillery shells; whether his wife's life was taken by drunkenness, carelessness inattentiveness, or any other cause, it would make dealing with her death no simpler than it had been to deal with his father's death at the hands of aggression and hostility in uniform.

As for Jaedin, he has no recollection of the painful procedures we put him through anymore; my doubts as to the wisdom of our initial decision have now vanished entirely and have been replaced by lessons learned. During those difficult early years, I stood next to the veil time and again, not as a traveler, but as a prisoner trapped on this side, feeling my son slipping past it. Each time we emerged from one of his operations and took him home, I had rededicated my life to the Lord; perhaps the commitment sprang from fear, but it was nonetheless genuine. Each time, though, with the threat removed, my memory of the event eventually clouded over, and my level of commitment would dim again. Our challenge, it seems, is to keep up this rededication, committing our lives to the things that matter most, even when the things closest to us are not threatened.

I used to feel that we might be a bit ashamed to face our ancestors in the afterlife; after all, they physically endured so much more than we typically have to face in our daily lives. At times I have gone out of my way to test myself – putting my body through marathons, triathlons, and other grueling forms of voluntary torture – just to see if I can hold my own and maybe knock a few lines off my bucket list in the process. During these miserable acts of insanity I have found myself out alone on the road, with darkness approaching and the finish line still miles away. Under these circumstances I have tried to push myself to the limits – physically, spiritually, and emotionally – to take myself out to the ledge and force a glance over that edge; that is where I find myself sealed to my predecessors.

These surrogate trials amount to only brief moments from which I can always return to the daily routine of life, where the greatest risk to my health is carpal tunnel syndrome from misaligned keystrokes and my greatest physical challenge is staying awake while reading bedtime stories to the kids. But by studying the lives of others who have gone before and essentially living their lives in proxy, embedding myself in their stories, I have come to realize that the human experience is universal. We don't need to have crossed the plains ourselves to understand how the pioneers felt. We don't need to have fought in a war to know how its victims feel. What we feel is what everyone feels at some point along this journey: Love, pain, gratitude, anger, doubt... I am convinced that these feelings are meant to bring us – *full circle* – back to our roots.

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Warren and Rulon Jeffs

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| <p>FUNERAL SERVICES FOR President Rulon Timpson Jeffs</p> <p>Born December 6, 1909, to Nettie Lenora Timpson and David William Ward Jeffs at Salt Lake City, Utah</p> <p>He passed away September 8, 2002, at St. George, Utah</p> <p>SERVICES HELD Thursday, September 12, 2002, 3:00 P.M. L.S.J. Meeting House, Colorado City, Arizona</p> <p>PALLBEARERS Richard, James, Alan, Brian, Blaine, Dale, Lyle and Wallace Jeffs</p> <p>HONORARY PALLBEARERS David, Alvin, Joseph, Hyrum F., Leslie, Nephi F., John N., Aaron, John, Nephi, William, Ephraim, Abram, Clayton, Seth, Glen, Shem, Enoch, Rulon F., Rulon H., Charles, Parley and all other Sons and Grandsons</p> <p>INTERMENT Isaac Carling Memorial Park, Colorado City, Arizona</p> | <p>FUNERAL PROGRAM President Rulon T. Jeffs Presiding Bishop Fred M. Jessop Conducting</p> <p>Prelude & Postlude Music Luella Barlow, and Instrumentals from Family Members</p> <p>Song..... "Our Prophet's Will" Sons</p> <p>Invocation..... Elder Hyrum Jeffs</p> <p>Remarks..... Elder Fred M. Jessop</p> <p>Songs..... "Here For You" & "Thy Will Be Done" Family</p> <p>Speaker Elder Wendell Nielsen</p> <p>Song..... "He Has Been Renewed" Family</p> <p>Speaker Elder LeRoy Jeffs</p> <p>Speaker ...Elder Warren S. Jeffs for President Rulon T. Jeffs</p> <p>Song..... "O My Father" Choir</p> <p>Benediction Elder Isaac Jeffs</p> <p>Song at Graveside "This One Man" Sons</p> <p>Dedication of Grave..... Elder Warren S. Jeffs</p> |
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Rulon Jeffs' funeral program

Chapter 25: Requiem

Gridlock is generally unheard of in the desolate community of Colorado City, Arizona, but on this particular September morning, the caravans arriving from all directions – Canada, Mexico, Texas, and California – manage to hold up traffic on Hildale Street all the way through town. The meetinghouse itself is cordoned off; those close enough to the deceased prophet are admitted, but the guest list is kept under tight scrutiny. The 5,000 available seats – several hundred of which are reserved for Rulon's immediate family – fill quickly. The general public and the press are kept at bay by untrained security forces – generally teenage boys armed with walkie-talkies and cowboy hats. Non-believers and dissidents – whether they were cast out or whether they left the fold on their own – are quickly turned away. None but true followers of the prophet are welcome inside the sanctuary.

A fashionable family from Utah Valley – looking conspicuously out of place – approaches the dragnet. The bouncer puts his hand up and points to an overlooking area where they can view the procession from a safe distance.

"Rodger Hickson and family," says the head of the household, "We have an invitation."

The bouncer is skeptical, but protocol dictates he call his supervisor to check the master list. He has no doubt that he'll be turning them away in a moment.

"I'll be right there," says the supervisor, his voice crackling over the radio.

The young man in the cowboy hat looks confused; his supervisor soon approaches and personally drops the rope for the Hicksons.

“Let me show you to your seats,” he says politely.

Rodger enters the meeting house with his first – and only – wife and their children. They are shown to their seats in the first row, reserved especially for their family. Behind them, occupying at least six more sets of pews, are Rulon’s wives and his other children, divided neatly into family groups.

Their gazes are fixed on the casket at the front of the meetinghouse, but many can be seen turning to each other, pointing toward the Hicksons and whispering jealously. Some are visibly upset that the Hicksons have even been granted access, not to mention having a place of honor at Rulon’s farewell service. Though he is considered a heretic and a blasphemer for his mainstream Mormonism, no one here can deny that Rodger has secured his place by right of birth. As such, rather than being cast out and shunned for following a false prophet, he is amazed to find himself respected and revered among his half-siblings and the presiding authorities.

As Rulon’s first-born son – had he chosen to follow in his father’s footsteps rather than severing those ties and siding with his mother – Rodger would have inherited this desert empire. As he looks around at the crowd behind him, he realizes that he could have had practically every soul in the audience – along with 10,000 more scattered around in compounds throughout the West – at his beck and call. Megalomaniacal thoughts might have crept into anyone else’s mind; but to Rodger, the

prospect of ruling a sect is entirely unappealing. Throughout his life he has tried his best to dodge the spotlight or even the slightest glint of limelight. He is completely content at home fulfilling his duties as a grandfather and – just recently – as a new great-grandfather.

Rodger’s half-brother, Warren, who has already usurped their father’s position, preaches a lengthy sermon from the pulpit. After several additional sermons by high-ranking members of his flock, the choir sings *O My Father*. To Rodger, it is one of the few recognizable elements in a service in which Warren has preached unfamiliar tenets, debuted personally written songs, and even introduced new doctrines, including the notion that *Uncle Rulon* is still alive and present, attending the service himself and speaking through Warren in a semi-translated state in fulfillment of his earlier predictions of longevity.

Quite perplexed by the time the lengthy service concludes, Rodger stands at the open casket and is granted a private moment by the pallbearers standing guard. He stares at the frozen face. *Who was this man?* Rodger had been abandoned as a child for an alleged vision; he ought to be angry, hurt, and resentful. Try as he might, though, he can’t hold the decision against his father. Much as he questions the source of the vision, he never has been able to bring himself to question its reality nor his father’s unwavering commitment to follow it through.

Warren walks up to Rodger to shake his hand, interrupting the moment. They speak just a few terse

words to each other and part ways with a pat on the shoulder that is meant to mark the moment with more significance than a handshake, but the gesture falls far short of a brotherly hug. Already consolidating power and having previously planned for every detail of any coup that might ensue, Warren smiles in relief. Though he had personally invited Rodger to the service, he secretly feared that his succession to the throne might be threatened or challenged in some manner by his presence. Their brief parting words, though, assure Warren that Rodger will not be competing for any authority.

Rodger looks back at his father's lifeless body one last time as Warren seals the casket. He has a measure of respect for his father but is unsure whether Warren can be trusted with the same responsibility. He has even heard rumors of Warren's plans to marry his father's wives; Rodger would rather stay out of the matter than cast judgment, but the notion does not sit easy with him. He has a premonition that this chain of events will not end well for Warren or for his followers.

After attending the graveside service, the Hicksons climb into their minivan and leave the twin towns of Hildale and Colorado City in their rear-view mirror. It has been a strangely awkward gathering, and they aren't sure where to begin a conversation to try to make sense of it. As they make their way back to the Interstate in silence, they pass an occasional state trooper targeting speeding motorists. None of the troopers give a second thought to the fundamentalist gathering that has just transpired a few miles down the road; the services

had been handled entirely by local law enforcement in a strange marriage of church and state.

The FBI and other federal officials are fully engaged in the new war on terror and have likewise taken no notice of the day's proceedings. The hunt for Bin Laden is in full gear half a world away, and no law enforcement agencies wish to concern themselves in the least about a group of polygamists in the desert. *Just let them be* is the prevailing attitude. *Don't ask, don't tell...*

The hands-off approach changes over the next few months, however, as allegations of teen marriage, child abuse and other charges begin to circulate in the wake of Rulon's death. Warren claims these rumors are being propagated by his opponents in order to oust him from power; he promptly seizes control of Rulon's former posse and appoints them as his new bodyguards. The detachment also includes a few expert forgers who prepare false identities for Warren and make other plans to put him into hiding if it becomes necessary.

As the charges materialize and Osama Bin Laden continues to elude every U.S.-led effort, a cop-killer is arrested in Mexico, leaving a vacancy on the FBI's ten-most-wanted list. Much to the surprise of Warren and his followers, his mug shot is placed right next to the notorious terrorist on the infamous list, effectively bringing his days of publicly leading the fold to an end.

The \$100,000 price on his head is far short of Bin Laden's \$50 million bounty, but Warren knows he has accumulated plenty of enemies who would turn him in for far less, so he steps up his evasive tactics. With a 95% capture rate for list members, he is fighting the FBI's

odds; the man he replaced had spent just two days on the list.

Despite the newfangled notoriety, Warren manages to elude law enforcement for almost four months. After an anonymous tip and an uneventful roadside arrest near Hoover Dam, the ex-fugitive is ultimately arrested and imprisoned. After the manhunt he seems to almost relish his arrest; like his father before him, in being imprisoned for his beliefs and facing the fiery furnace, he feels like he has joined the ranks of Shadrack's trio and even Joseph Smith himself. As news reports around the country flash images of the apprehended leader in handcuffs and a blue jumpsuit, another cop-killer is immediately added to the FBI's list; he is apprehended less than a day later.

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While Bin Laden continued to elude the authorities and taunt the West with his calls for jihad, I entered the newly constructed Conference Center in Salt Lake City – adorned with seasonal decorations – for a Christmas program that was about to be burned onto DVD and distributed to LDS wards, branches, and districts around the globe. My sister was in the orchestra, so I got to sit in the reserved seats at the very front of the auditorium. When President Hinckley entered the hall, the entire audience spontaneously stood up.

The massive auditorium was dead silent as 20,000 people stood in unison for their prophet. In that instant, I had an overwhelming sensation that this was a man to revere and respect. I would, perhaps, have to stop myself short of granting him my adulation – for fear of poisoning

him – but I was distinctly impressed that I was in the presence of God's cardinal instrument on this earth.

As this feeling in my heart transformed into a thought that sought to lodge itself in my brain, it was met by alarm bells signaling an ensuing, inner argument. Having stood on the parade grounds at Nuremberg and inside the gas chambers at Auschwitz, from a very early age I have been armed with a clear knowledge of the atrocities that have been committed by those who felt the calling to follow a leader absolutely. The recent publicity surrounding Warren's crimes made this sort of adherence an even harder sell; although these hardwired warning signs triggered a measure of hesitation, I remained on my feet with the rest of the crowd.

President Hinckley seemed almost amused and perhaps even mildly annoyed by the gesture; after all, this was just a concert he wanted to enjoy, not some solemn assembly of the Church. He quickly raised his cane – the same one with which he had famously knighted *Sir* Henry Eyring – to motion everyone to sit again. The cane was merely a prop rather than a walking aid; his doctor had ordered him to carry it, so that's just what he did: he carried it with him as he pushed Marjorie along the corridor in her wheelchair, smiling and occasionally stopping to shake a few hands on his way toward the stand. The audience members obediently but reluctantly took their seats, and the white noise of a thousand conversations resumed.

I let my thoughts wander as the orchestra tuned their instruments in preparation for the opening number. I have never been one to pump my fist and scream

raucously with a crowd, but standing silently in unison really relays the same measure of acceptance. Am I simply a conformist? Non-Mormon friends have asked me how I can justify subjecting myself to the whim of a single person – in this case an old man who in their eyes might lose his mind or his physical abilities at any moment.

It is not a question I can easily respond to; I have to admit that I have more questions than answers when it comes to religion, and I am by no means confident in my ability to discern truth from deception. I am a skeptic by nature and a devil's advocate by my father's own training; and I fully acknowledge the inherent dangers that a feeling of unity can invoke upon those who stand at attention.

For better or worse, I recognize that truth and travesty can be bolstered by the same confidence and conveyed through the same conduit, and that the fine line between absolute faith, strict adherence, and blind obedience can muster every extreme end result – from saving grace to suicide bombs. The unity of the masses sparks emotions – whether in a rock concert, a political rally, or a large group meeting at the MTC – that can be harnessed for good or for evil...and certainly for profit.

I also realize that following a man whose word trumps the existing dogma of his adherents is especially dangerous, particularly when that man claims to speak for God. Warren Jeffs' crimes – some of the most treacherous and sacrilegious acts ever committed under the banner of heaven – demonstrate the tragic turn that path can take. History's cemeteries and today's terrorist

camps are full of countless warnings to avoid the pitfall of pledging unconditional allegiance. Wouldn't any reasonable person shy away from such a preposterous trap?

These conflicted thoughts bounced around in my head while I took in the Tabernacle Choir's numbers, interspersed with Christmas messages. At the concert's conclusion, President Hinckley stood to exit the venue; the crowd spontaneously stood with him again. He passed directly in front of me on his way out – again pushing his wife in her wheelchair. He stopped for a moment and waved to the crowd. I thought about shouting out a quick introduction, but in the time it would have taken me to say, "Hi, I'm Hamp's grandson," I'm sure a few bodyguards would have quickly prompted him to keep walking. His celebrity status demonstrates how much the times have changed since the days when anyone could knock on Heber J. Grant's office door and get an audience with him; yet here he was within an arm's reach – a simple man who used to pal around with my grandpa back in high school.

As I stood with an army of fellow believers behind me, I was suddenly hit with an indescribable feeling of peace and surety that I have to believe is sent from above. Armed with that assurance, I felt no qualms about committing myself to sustain Gordon B. Hinckley as God's agent and – illogical as it may seem – vowing my loyalty to any direction he may provide in the future. This was one of those few times in my life when I've experienced a sublime feeling that doesn't necessarily

answer my many questions, but merely makes them superfluously redundant. *All is well*, as they say.

I wish I could hang onto such moments for later recollection, but I tend to forget them just as quickly as they come; I've tried putting these sorts of experiences to paper, for example, and even later the same day I can't seem to do them justice. When I'm asked how I can justify the apparently absurd pledge to follow a living prophet, I can't possibly convey any sensible reason; if only there were some way to put that feeling into a jar and bottle it up... *Open it for yourself*, I'd say, *and you'll see why*. That's just how it is; I can offer no other words of explanation.

This sweet, elderly couple – with almost 70 years of marriage under their belts – exited the auditorium, having demonstrated in true practice a partnership that we thousands of well wishers would be wise to emulate. As I left the building myself and marched back out through the snow, my heart and my mind – at least for the moment – had managed to reach a unison voice.~~~~~

A few weeks after the Christmas concert, Gordon and Marjorie made their way to Ghana for the dedication of the Accra Temple. Marjorie's health was frail, and Gordon promised her this would be the last trip he would ask her to go on; unfortunately, that statement proved prophetic in a way he hadn't imagined. She developed complications that were enhanced by her weakened state after the trip. She was hospitalized on her return, and Gordon soon came to realize that she would not recover. He was absolutely heartbroken and guilt-ridden; he realized that the trip had been too much for her, and he

knew he had pushed her to accompany him – perhaps against her will and his better judgement. After so many years together, he was unprepared to face each day alone.

President Hinckley had spoken at literally thousands of functions over the previous decade; perhaps to distinguish the funeral service as a special, solemn occasion, or perhaps because he was grieving too deeply to speak, he refrained from addressing the large audience that had gathered to honor Marjorie. The only words he spoke at the funeral service were private words that he expressed directly to his wife while touching the flowers on her casket.

You might think that a man hailed as the mouthpiece of God on earth would simply accept death as a necessary ingredient in God's great recipe for us; but although six months had passed, the look in his eyes during his General Conference tribute to Marjorie revealed his sincere sorrow; he was completely overwhelmed and expressed his deepest wish to be able to rewind time. The eternal perspective at his disposal did not quell his need to mourn nor make it any easier to accept God's will in the matter.

During that General Conference, the Church Broadcasting System carried a special documentary about the Accra Temple dedication between sessions. Gordon and Marjorie looked happy and energetic as they shook hands and hugged the Church members who had gathered for the occasion. A regional choir, formed especially to commemorate the occasion, provided the music for the setting. As the cameras panned through the choir, I thought I recognized several Ghanan members of the

Church who had been baptized in Germany many years before when I was a missionary. For years I had wondered what had become of them. I wrote to the mission president in Ghana and soon confirmed that many of them had indeed joined the Church in Germany.

I was able to re-establish contact with a few of them and learn about their struggles to establish the Church and keep their faith alive over the years. Although there had been no Church infrastructure, no existing organization, and no channel of communication to Salt Lake City when they initially returned from Germany to Ghana, they had formed their own branches and kept the fires burning until the Church began sending missionaries to their part of the world over a decade later. Some of the traditions that had crept in without central leadership had to be dropped or changed once the Church was officially organized, but these West African members of the Church had astonishingly formed the foundation for a temple to be constructed in their own country. It was no less a pioneering effort than the construction of a temple behind the iron curtain two decades before.

I thought back to my time in Germany and wondered again whether I might have done more. As a missionary I had thought I understood the purpose behind our counsel to refrain from specifically seeking out refugees and asylum seekers. I had deliberately avoided the foreign worker housing projects – particularly after getting my passport stolen – but after seeing these Church members in the temple choir, I questioned my own motives; had I missed potentially life-changing

opportunities as a result of my own pride or through my unwillingness to stand up to the overworked German ward clerks? Whatever the case, a few souls that crossed our path had set out as pioneers, established a latter-day Church in their respective regions, and eventually received the chance to mingle with the prophet and his wife on her last earthly journey. All regrets aside, in these sorts of thought-provoking instances, life seems to make complete sense for a moment...as yet another circle closes on itself.

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President Hinckley was still actively at the helm of the Church when my *Grandma Hosenose* passed away two years later and I commenced my treasure hunt. His former classmates had long since passed away as well, but Gordon managed to cling stubbornly to that tree. He was still traveling the world and meeting young souls who would usher in the 22nd century; yet in his youth he knew people who had known Joseph Smith. To me he symbolized a connection to a whole other age – a living bridge between the church of today and the church known to James E. Talmage, Heber J. Grant, and other fellow icons of the day.

As I embarked on my research project and discovered Hamp's connections to President Hinckley, I thought I might ask him a few questions before it was too late. I had kept notes on their previous correspondence and lined them up with the dates and events in President Hinckley's published biographies. Finally – though I knew it was a long shot – I drafted a letter outlining a few questions about Hamp, L.D.S. High, his mission travels,

and other topics that had been occupying my mind. I mailed the letter to the secretary to the First Presidency, Elder F. Michael Watson. In his reply to me, Elder Watson said that President Hinckley's time and energy were limited, and that his strength was needed for weightier matters.

I thought it was just a standard smokescreen to deter star-struck curiosity seekers; after all, Elder Watson intercepts countless letters asking for prophetic wisdom in choosing a mate, explaining obscure doctrines, or predicting the future. But just a few days after receiving the reply about President Hinckley's weakening state, the story was confirmed: news reports flashed the headline that the Mormon Prophet had passed away at the age of 97. The news came as a complete shock to me; for some reason, I had expected him to live to see the milestone of his 100th birthday and had hoped that I would someday have the chance to meet him in person – and possibly ask him some questions about the past. That chance had evaporated now that the last of the foursome was gone; I never even got to shake his hand.

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A few weeks later, I received a phone call with more somber news; Geoff Ledger, a friend of mine, had lost his brief battle with brain cancer, and his widowed wife had asked if I could arrange a specific musical number for the funeral service. I contacted a few friends, and we put together a quartet. The song she had requested was unfamiliar to me at first, but as I plunked out the tune on the piano to decipher the harmonies, I vaguely

remembered having heard it during the broadcast of President Hinckley's funeral service.

As we stood to sing at Geoff's service, it was an excruciating challenge to force the words out. A single glance at his young children, who couldn't imagine a life without him but were still too young to fathom the magnitude of the loss, stifled the words. I had to look away to keep my voice from cracking. I stared at the ceiling in the back of the chapel while trying to let the message of the lyrics sink in:

What is this thing that men call death,  
this quiet passing in the night?  
'Tis not the end but genesis,  
of better worlds and greater light.

Among his very last acts in mortality, and certainly as his last official act, President Hinckley had approved Janice Kapp Perry's music to accompany the lyrics, effectively canonizing the song with the Church's stamp of approval. The lyrics, written by Gordon B. Hinckley himself, attempt to convince us that the separation period forced upon us by the death of a loved one is a fleeting moment on an eternal time scale, and that death isn't necessarily such a horrible thing. After all, we must have infinitely more friends, connections, and relationships in that world than in this one. Consoling as that message might be in the long run, during the funeral service – as was the case with Gordon at his wife's funeral – that message seemed particularly difficult to absorb. The melody of the song stayed with me as

Geoff's fellow elders wheeled the casket out of the chapel. The audience rose to their feet in respect, and we moved to the graveside.

His children played obliviously in the grass as the casket was lowered into the ground. We sang "God Be with You Till We Meet Again," but with a contrasting tone to the earlier mission reunion rendition. The gravity of it all seemed overwhelming. Just a few weeks earlier, our young daughters had been playing together while Geoff and I chased them around in the back of our elders quorum meeting. Now he's in a casket and I'm singing his requiem...if the dice were to be rolled again, it might have been me in that box; or it might have been my son, my father, or anybody else in my circle of connections. Why Geoff? Why had he drawn the short straw this time around?

Geoff's untimely death was certainly a reminder that anyone, anytime, could be among those forced – or blessed, depending on your perspective – to be an onlooker from the other side. While I get to kiss my children good night, he joins the throngs who have gone before. It does not seem fair, but I have to believe some of these souls are ministering angels, helping to guide our steps and initiate interactions that are surely more than coincidental. Will Geoff be able to help steer future generations of descendants along the paths of their destiny? I certainly don't know the answer to questions that deep, but perhaps he will watch his children grow up with the same pride as a mortal father, sometimes cringing at their choices, and sometimes helping to bring things full circle so they can learn what they still need to

learn before they join him. One thing is for sure: Life is short, and we will all join him soon enough.

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With President Hinckley's passing, I lost the sense of urgency in compiling my research. As I boxed up my notes and folded up the accompanying maps and timelines, Jaedin came into my office to plunder the copier paper. I asked him what he was working on, and he showed me the latest comic book series he had drawn up in his sketch pad. This one was called *Leo, the Shin-kicking Leprechaun*. I laughed at his caricatures.

"You're going to make a great author," I told him.

"But I can't always find the right words," he countered.

"That's what editors are for."

"Can an editor fix my spelling too?"

"If you let me be your editor, I'll run spell check for free," I offered him.

"Deal!" he said.

He started out the door to dive back into his drawings.

"You know what?" I asked, trying to make a fatherly point while I still had the chance, "You've got your whole life ahead of you." I tried to think of another way to say it, but settled on the cliché: "You can be anything you want to be!"

"So what did you want to be when you were my age?" he asked me curiously.

"Funny enough," I answered, "when my sixth-grade teacher asked me that same question, I told him I wanted to be an author."

“So why are you an engineer?”

He had stumped me with that question.

With a child’s unwavering confidence and naïvety, he asked me again, “Well, why aren’t you an author?”

“Yes,” I answered quietly with a question of my own, “Why am I not an author?”

He ran out the door and I stared at my box. Why had I been doing the research anyway? Had it only been to fulfill my own curiosity – to connect somehow with my own grandfather? Or might there be another purpose? Who else would ever be crazy enough to sort through the endless journal entries, logbooks, and itineraries? My notes would be completely indecipherable to anyone else, and the only other thing I had to show for the effort was a massive computer spreadsheet with cross-referenced cells – who in tarnation would ever wish to scroll through that to get to know Hamp better? I wondered if perhaps writing a book might be a good way to sum it all up and share the experience with others.

Armed with Jaedin’s vote of confidence, I pulled my notes back out, opened my laptop, and wrote a book. Well actually, it took a few more months of commuting time on the train and a whole lot of interviews with old people; but eventually I put a draft together. And if you’re reading it right now – even if you’re the only one who ever picks up these pages or opens the computer file, I guess that makes me an author. Perhaps it’s in my blood; Hamp, after all, wrote a book, too. Unfortunately he tends to ramble, though, and reading his book feels like an endurance test; perhaps that’s in my blood, too.

In any case, thanks to the advice of my oldest son Jaedin – to whom Chick’s birthright would pass to if we adhered to the patriarchal order of things – I have now become an *author*. That’s right, published or not, I wrote a book! Never mind that I had to engineer a few things in the meantime to pay the bills; at least I can check that goal off my bucket list. If I ever run into my sixth-grade teacher again, and he asks me, “So, did you ever become an author?” I can now answer, “Yep, I sure did!”

In the process of compiling the book, I wanted to replace dry facts and dates with personal stories, connections, and conversations; I knew that I would need more than just journals and photo albums. Even though the leaves of the Class of 1928 had blown from the now-bare branches, I discovered, there were still plenty of personal, living connections to that age. I resolved to contact as many as I could. In the process I interviewed my great-aunt Margaret, who had picked up Hamp in New York and accompanied him home from his mission. I interrogated my adopted grandmother, Frau Geissinger, about her childhood in the forgotten German state of Silesia, where Hamp had spent much of his ministry. I sat down with my maternal grandmother, Muriel Krey, who had been Homer’s babysitter in the 1930’s, and asked her what he was like. Each of their stories took me away on entirely new tangents. What was intended to be at most a booklet ended up morphing into hundreds of pages as the stories came to life and I encountered fascinating characters – living treasures – along the way.

I found that one of these living legends, Eldred G. Smith – the fourth Nephite himself – was still going

strong at 104 years of age. He walked the halls of L.D.S. High, sat in his graduation robes during the commencement ceremony, and felt the sting when they closed the school's doors. Eight decades later, he drives his red Cadillac to church every Sunday, helps his wife out of the car, and goes about his daily life. Do we recognize the value in learning about history from eye witnesses such as Elder Smith? Or is he just another old guy we curse on the road? How many more like him are anonymously going about their daily lives, confined to the four walls of their care center's room, with nothing but a few framed photographs reminding them of their ancestry, their posterity, and their heritage? Time may be short, but we have no excuse for ignoring the living legacies in our midst. They are still among us today.

2011 marks the 70th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor; while it was a universal question not too long ago, now only the oldest senior citizens among us remember where they were on that infamous day. One of those is Louis Zamperini, whom I happened to run across in my search. Louis is an iconic American hero if there ever was one. You can look him up on Google, read his bestselling book, see pictures of him being personally congratulated by Adolf Hitler at the Berlin Olympics, or watch the original footage of his rescue from a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. You can stand idly by as Hollywood turns his life into a movie and then buy a ticket to watch his story on the big screen. Or – might I suggest – you can make a pilgrimage to Los Angeles and meet him yourself, look him in the eye, shake his hand, and ask him what it was like.

If you meet him in person, history will hit home in a whole new way. I can state this with confidence because I managed to contact him myself; when he told me what it was like to join Jesse Owens and cross the Atlantic on the *Manhattan* – the same ship that Homer and Gordon sailed on – it brought the missionaries' stories to life for me. His answers to my many questions have fueled further curiosity for the past. He is still alert and keen and willing to share his life with those who wish to know more. How much longer will that chance exist?

We live our vanilla lives with the potential to – through our own naïvety – isolate ourselves from suffering; but we also have the ability to embed ourselves into the colorful world of the past not just through journals, films, and photographs, but by touching that world directly. After hearing from heroes like Louis, I long to connect with previous generations in real-time in order to lend a measure of reality to their history – to shed some color on those black and white photographs.

Louis endured things we can hardly imagine; hopefully we will only experience these sorts of things in proxy. If we allow it, though, we can enter his world as a visitor and imagine ourselves being deprived of freedom, tortured and starved, forced to fight for survival by enduring all the things that he and our other predecessors have had to face to get us here – without having to actually experience these trials in person. If we become fully engaged, we can learn the same lessons and become the better for it; or we can choose to shelter ourselves and get caught up in a daily routine of shopping and chit-chat

and small talk that never will bring us to an understanding of the human condition on its own.

You can receive an inheritance and perhaps acquire a sum of money from your parents; but the lessons your forefathers have learned and the attributes they developed in overcoming unique challenges do not get passed along automatically – I’m convinced that they can only be acquired with expended effort. If we do not take the initiative upon ourselves, any lessons we might have otherwise learned from our ancestors will pass us by, and we’ll be forced to relearn them the hard way – by ourselves. Recording and sharing our stories from the past can effectively combat this fate.

The German poet, Goethe, who lived through an incredibly turbulent time of his own, told the next generation that they can only possess an inheritance that they have earned outright. Our forefathers have left us benefits such as constitutional freedoms, but we may forget that freedom has to be remade and re-earned by every passing generation. I’ve inherited a history, a heritage, a legacy. Though it has been dropped straight into my lap without much effort on my part, its benefits are far from free; but by right it is still mine to earn if I choose to dive into the task of letting it seep into my soul.

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Now that he’s gone and I’ve come to know him through the records that he left, I ask myself what I have learned from Hamp, the tall, tattooed stake patriarch, the lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force who doubled as the Berlin Peacemaker. What can we all learn from

Homer, the expert organizer and historian, from Rulon, the conflicted accountant, or from Gordon, the hard-working and witty clergyman? What can be gathered from the intertwined lives of those who stood to face all that the world could throw at them? The *Greatest Generation* may be leaving us, but they can remain our teachers. Believers in continuing revelation are promised by the Lord, “Mine angels will bear you up.” Well who are these angels if not those who have gone before us? I, for one, believe that’s who they are – and that we’ll be better off if we get to know them personally.

The lessons that I have learned during this adventure are unique to me, but the underlying concepts are universal. We know full well that we are just simply people; but when our own descendants look at our journals – if they turn out to be anything like me, that is – they will somehow be astounded that we were just like them: no more righteous or evil, no more wise or foolish; we were all just people, everyone in this thing together, just the same.

The obvious fact we all share similar, conflicted thoughts shouldn’t be all that astonishing a revelation, but in the process of conducting personal interviews and reading intimate thoughts in the diaries of others, I have identified with specific examples that have helped drill that point into my head and into my heart. As a result I feel like I have begun to see things with more perspective – though perhaps with less clarity.

In my youth I saw the world in absolutes; now that I have reluctantly outgrown my youth, it seems much less so. I’m sure there is a place for young idealists who

see everything in black and white, but unfortunately they are all too often taken advantage of; the front-line charges of unquestioning youths are typically directed behind the scenes by protected, middle-aged opportunists willing to delve into gray areas and capitalize on the young soldiers' polarity to promote and protect their own purposes. Open any history book to a random page, and there is bound to be an example.

This journey into the past has helped me break down stereotypes and assumptions I've carried with me since childhood. I feel better able to recognize both the seeds and the fruits of indoctrination and bias, and I have come to realize that I tend to view the world through media-fed filters that polarize good and evil and every other human attribute. The personal accounts at our disposal can add perspective to those attributes, bringing us closer to seeing the world how God sees it. When we recognize the universal love of God – that you can't just draw a line between His people and the rest – we realize that we're all His people. We're all in this thing together – every one of us equally in need of forgiveness and redemption, and all equally inept at comprehending the mysteries of God.

This pilgrimage has also prompted a look inside; in serving as a counselor at an annual camp for Jaedin and other children with heart defects, I have become painfully aware that the kids who complained the most about being teased and bullied in school often engaged in similar behavior toward their own camp-mates. We are no different as adults. As a Latter-day Saint, for example, I share in the complicit guilt for treating the members of

the FLDS Church and other polygamist groups much in the same way that mainstream Christians tend to treat members of the LDS faith.

“Call us Christians!” we demand of the mainstream Christians, “After all, we are rooted in Christ.”

“You practice a different form of Christianity,” they say, “therefore you are not Christian like us.”

We call them ignorant or deviously bigoted when they refuse.

“Call us Mormons!” the FLDS demand of the LDS, “after all, we are rooted in Mormon's Book and in its translator, Joseph Smith.”

“You practice a different form of Mormonism,” we say, “therefore you are not Mormon like us.”

We find it perfectly justifiable to refuse.

Armed with our own pioneer stories of persecution, we feel like the historical victims when we are surrounded by those of other faiths, but then we unwittingly direct the same criticism and ostracization toward non-conformists once we have gathered enough critical mass around them. Why is it, for example, that the personal accounts of Elder Gordon B. Hinckley in Liverpool and Parley P. Pratt in Arkansas echo the journals of Rulon Jeffs in Sandy and Msg. Duane Hunt in Vernal? Shouldn't it be otherwise – especially in Utah?

I have seen Jehovah's Witnesses who tract the BYU campus get treated by returned LDS missionaries in much the same manner in which the missionaries had themselves been treated abroad – instead of how we *wish* we had been treated. I have seen content confidence in

one's faith quickly change to prideful arrogance in the face of an attack, breeding further resentment and retaliation that spirals into the depths, leaving charity and brotherly love gasping for breath.

I have seen countless apologist articles by Mormon authors ascribing evil intentions, underhanded slights, and one-sided tactics to anti-Mormon authors. Msgr. Hunt, for instance, was thrown into the same pool as truth-skewing apostates and antichrists in light of the rebuttals he wrote to Hamp – rebuttals that were primarily intended to retain his own congregation. He and other non-Mormon authors are condemned one and all for generalizing and stereotyping Mormons – while at the same time the condemnations are themselves often generalizations and stereotypes, as are my condemnations of the condemners...no wonder we all have trouble understanding each other!

Connecting with the past is a remedy that can allow us to think for ourselves and – as far as possible – to avoid mistakes that shouldn't have to be relearned through personal experience. As we study our own history, we can become less judgmental, more tolerant, more understanding, more motivated, and more human. The world will come to life, and we will find ourselves better armed to fully appreciate each passing day.

Though a rhyme seems a bit out of place here, Hamp wrote a few poems himself – and shares a birthday with Dr. Seuss to boot – so I'll give it a shot in honor of that fact. I hope there is some truth to be found in the following verse that sums up a recent epiphany about how this search has helped to widen my perspective:

With passing time, I start to find,  
on each approaching day,  
The world appears less black and white,  
and more as scales of gray,  
In coming to this point of view,  
the gray-scale then gives way,  
To vibrant colors, vividly,  
adorning life's array.

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We write our own history every day, choosing the legacy we'll leave. When our own children and grandchildren look up the details of our lives long after we're gone, they'll imagine what it might have been like with the destiny of the 21st century yet unwritten. It will seem to them like anything would have been possible from where we now stand. We'll stare back at them from some frame on the wall or the page of an album, offering them our lives as examples to learn from and to build upon.

The basic framework of our lives may be set for us by some random regime, but the picture that lies within that frame is entirely our creation; each pixel is a seemingly insignificant decision that, once cumulatively assembled, defines us. In looking through the window of the past, I've come to realize that every little thing we do makes a big difference, adding to or detracting from the quality of the image, for better or for worse. As Gordon B. Hinckley said:

It is not so much the major events as the small day-to-day decisions that map the course of our living...our lives are, in reality, the sum total of our seemingly unimportant decisions and of our capacity to live by those decisions...fulfill your responsibilities as if everything in life depends on it...if you do your best it will all work out.

Zoom in on your soul, and you'll find its composite image to be nothing more than the sum total of your interconnected decisions, relationships, and experiences. In tracing endless paths through Hamp's connections and following them around the world, for example, I have recognized myriad minute decisions on his part that ended up having a profound effect on his life – and by default upon every one of his descendants as well. The effects propagate through each of his connections to each of their descendants as well. It is an unending cascade of dominoes. If I may quote another Gordon out of context:

Every breath you take, every move you make,
Every bond you break, every step you take,
Every smile you fake, every claim you stake,
Every cake you bake, every leg you break...

Gordon Sumner's lyrics recite seemingly insignificant doldrums that are, in fact, catalysts for our very existence if we care to trace the path back far enough. My father and I both found a broken leg, for instance, forming one link in the chain reaction that led us

to our soul mates. Coincidentally? Perhaps... But no matter how insignificant our daily struggles and choices may seem, every little thing – from a fleeting glance to a broken leg – becomes eternally consequential to future generations. It is an intimidating thought as we face decisions that by all appearances are purely personal but in the end affect everyone who follows us on this earth.

After prying into the details of my late grandfather's life, I fear that some future descendant of mine may be crazy enough to someday try to do the same with my life. It definitely makes me realize that I had better watch myself. Along those lines – while I'm quoting Gordons – I'll round out the trio and let Gordon Gano sum it all up with his eighties admonition: "I hope you know that this will go down on your permanent record!" We certainly write our own legacy in permanent ink every day, and we have a tremendous opportunity to make that record meaningful...or embarrassing, as the case may be.

I thought the *permanent records* I ran across were worth researching and that the stories they contained were worth writing down, even though the only so-called *free time* in my schedule came when I probably should have been asleep. Ultimately I guess it's up to each reader to decide if these stories are worth the reading time. You could alternatively choose to spend your own precious free time tuned into an inane television program depicting the detailed life of some socialite with whom you share no connection; or you could – much more meaningfully – go find a scrap of paper in your grandmother's diary and head out on your own treasure hunt. I would be willing to

bet that in the latter case you would find your own reality show that is directly, personally connected to you in ways that no television program could ever touch. How many have wasted their time and effort with their hearts turned to Hollywood? As a more promising investment, turn your own heart to your fathers and mothers, and pass that gift along to your children. Now that's a real reality show!

~~~~~

Armed with lessons learned through generations of time, we have the opportunity to start where our ancestors left off, eternally progressing. The pricks against which our ancestors stubbed their toes can help us to avoid the same pitfalls, learning from their mistakes as well as from their successes, ideas and insights. Why else are Latter-Day Saints instructed by modern revelation to study the “perplexities of the nations.”

With the perspective gained from the personal histories of our forefathers, we ought to be better able to interpret and filter the daily propaganda that comes our way through so many different sources. By studying Hamp's history, I have found it easier to recognize the vehicles of propaganda much more clearly – vehicles that remain essentially identical through the ages, whether the inherent message is positive or negative, or whether the source is religious or political. During the Cold War, for instance, we Westerners were fed an avulsion to communism just as the Soviets were fed an avulsion to our western ways. The game has been refined over the years from Vietnam to Abu Ghraib, but the

Helter Skelter ride keeps right on repeating itself every day on the evening news.

Are we capable of extracting the bits of actual truth from within those messages? Perhaps much of today's propaganda comes from multinational corporations rather than nationalistic interests, but the messages are no less blatantly biased. Do we recognize them for what they are? Do we swallow the messages whole, allowing media filters and political spin to interpret reality for us? Or do we apply our own filters and think things through for ourselves?

If you were to walk through the Leipzig Hauptbahnhof atrium today, you would find yourself in a glamorous shopping mall, surrounded by well-dressed consumers. The stores' shelves are replete with the latest products; the station has undergone an unbelievable transformation since Hamp, Herbie, Homer and Gordon last walked its halls. The only signs of the violence that left it in its earlier state of ruin are the teenagers in the electronics shops test driving Mortal Kombat for the PS3, armed with their parents' credit cards and oblivious to elements on their mobile devices that even the Hitler Youth would have banned.

Though the terror threat hasn't been raised in years, closed circuit television cameras point toward every corner, and security agents in a buried bunker scan the images for suspicious packages or characters. Plasma-screen billboards throw Lady Gaga at passersby from every angle, while expensive perfumes and colognes entice the other senses from the department store displays. We hail the progress, but having stood through

contrasting phases of imperialism, socialism, anarchism, fascism, communism, capitalism, terrorism, and consumerism, one might wonder how long the present state will continue and what “-ism” the great Bahnhof may face next.

Future generations may traverse the station’s platforms and shake their heads at how we were, once again, unwittingly duped by our own wants. It is easy to assume that the current system’s engines will keep right on running without seizing up or requiring an overhaul, just as a quarter century ago we thought the Cold War and the polarizing balance of superpowers were permanent facets of life. Under today’s corporate banners, we have inextricably linked every economy on this planet to promote profit and efficiency, but perhaps the house of cards has just become that much more susceptible to collapsing in the wake of a single, concentrated threat.

The Global Financial Crisis showed us that our international economy in its present state is vulnerable to isolated triggers, but who can tell whether the GFC was merely a tremor leading up to a larger, all-consuming crash? Drowning in debt, will we continue our drowsy drive right over the drop-off toward default, ultimately finding ourselves bankrupt and unable to repay our collective, unsettled obligations as we are enslaved by unforgiving creditors? Will rampant, run-amok consumerism force a whole new degree of militant environmentalism to save the planet? Will bird or swine flu, hoof-and-mouth, AIDS, malaria, or some other epidemic force large-scale lifestyle changes? Will

terrorist threats hamper personal freedom to the point where every move is tracked by a Big Brother purporting to keep us safe? Will a rogue nation’s military take us all by surprise and go on the offensive? Will some other, unforeseen threat arise? Or will the status quo simply continue as we sit on the couch and gradually feed our obesity with mass media and empty calories, giving in to our gluttony with complacency and indifference?

Any one of these scenarios might fill the yet empty pages of our future history books, including the off chance that lambs and lions will forget their differences and that, in contrast to the pre-millennial plagues, an ever-increasing measure of charity and tolerance will lead humanity to a pot full of peace and prosperity at the end of that elusive rainbow. Regardless which ideology happens to headline on any particular day, however, the human connections are certain to continue through the ages; in the end, it is precisely those personal relationships that will keep us human – come what may. My search through Grandpa’s journals has made one thing clear: Whatever may come our way, we can be sure that we will experience the same joys and satisfactions – along with the same challenges, struggles, and fears – as our predecessors and as our posterity.

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Jaedin meets the captain, steers the ship, and goes for a dive in the Caribbean Sea

Chapter 26: In Closing...the Circle

One typically rainy winter evening in Oregon we heard a knock on our front door. Standing on our porch were two drenched, but smiling figures in blue T-shirts silkscreened with the shooting star of the *Make-a-Wish* logo. As it turned out, Jaedin's cardiologist had nominated him to be granted a wish through the Make-a-Wish Foundation.

"If you could have anything you want, do anything you want, go anywhere you want," they began to ask him after taking a seat in our living room, "what would you --"

"I want to go to the Oregon Zoo," Jaedin interrupted.

My wife and I looked at each other, a bit taken aback. We had been to the zoo less than a year before, and frankly I had no idea Jaedin was so anxious to return. I wondered how we might tactfully intervene on his behalf to try to steer his wish in another direction; luckily one of the wish-granters beat me to it.

"You may want to dream just a little bigger," he said encouragingly.

"How about I take you to the zoo this weekend," I whispered to Jaedin, "what would you ask for next?"

He was stumped. He looked at his feet, and then glanced shyly upwards, avoiding each pair of eyes that was anticipating his response. Suddenly his own eyes lit up; he had spotted his *Titanic* model on the mantel.

“I know!” he said excitedly. “I want to go on a ship as big as the *Titanic*.” Then he hesitated for a moment, looking a bit worried.

“Yes?” prompted our guest.

“Only one that doesn’t sink,” Jaedin added resolutely.

The wish-granters jotted down some quick notes and said they’d look into it and be back in touch shortly.

A few weeks later we got a telephone call for Jaedin; we listened in on the call and discovered that his wish had been granted in the form of a Caribbean cruise for the entire family!

None of us had ever set foot on a cruise ship before, so it was quite a treat to leave the Oregon winter for a week-long circle around the Caribbean. Along the way, we went on every shore excursion we could fit in, and Jaedin got VIP treatment at every step.

By the time we got to the last night on the ship, Jaedin was exhausted. I carried him down to the cabin, and he fell asleep in my arms; he was still dressed in his tuxedo after having dined with the captain. During that week he had climbed ruins, rafted rivers, snorkeled reefs, pet dolphins, and even sat in the captain’s chair at the helm of the world’s largest passenger ship – over 200 feet longer than RMS *Titanic* herself!

I helped him out of his bowtie and jacket, laid him into his bunk, and turned off the light. Waves crashed outside the porthole as the ship steadily rode the swells; the sea foam – illuminated by the ship’s lights – followed the drifting wake to be handed over to the dimmer moonlight. On the horizon, thousands of breaking wave

crests could be seen stretching across the vast sea. There was just enough light through the porthole to make the deep, zipper scar on Jaedin’s chest clearly visible; it was a distinct reminder of years that had focused on survival and recovery.

“What a week!” I said to Jaedin as he rolled over, “We’ve got a lot to be thankful for.”

He opened his eyes. “Especially that there are no icebergs in the Caribbean,” he added with a smile, then quickly drifted back to sleep.

Jaedin’s long-term prognosis is still uncertain; the procedures he underwent were only developed a few years before he was born, so those seas remain uncharted for now. He and a handful of others in the same boat are pioneer explorers, forging ahead into an unknown void.

With this in mind, for years we had wanted to play it as safe as we could, keeping him at all times in close proximity to the cardiologists and surgeons who knew every detail about his inner workings. We had limited our travels and scaled our dreams to fit the circumstances. But as we charged across the vast Caribbean Sea, I realized that his own physician had just sent us about as far from a pediatric cardiology unit as we could get. That being the case, who were we to keep him on such a short tether?

With his most crucial surgeries out of the way, perhaps we didn’t have to shield him so closely. We wanted to protect him, but any member of our family could just as easily get struck by a city bus tomorrow or face a number of other unpredictable scenarios that don’t constantly occupy our thoughts. Was there really any

sense fretting about some future possibility of an unknown heart complication that might affect him? In the meantime, why not take in all that life has to offer? The notion was scary but liberating at the same time.

When we returned home we started talking about the possibility of changing our venue. The family consensus: “Why not?” So we kept our eyes open; and when a job opportunity came up in Australia, we jumped at the chance. We’d be taking nothing but our suitcases, so we got a storage unit, stuffed it full, and had to get rid of everything that wouldn’t fit inside...including Hamp’s boxes.

As excited as we were about embarking on this new adventure, I knew it would also mark the end of my little research project. There was still so much that I had left undone, but it was time to cut my losses and give everything back to my father for safekeeping. As I tried to box it all up in chronological order, I ran across the same high school-era items that had launched me into this effort to begin with. I had the yearbook, the graduation program, and one other document that seemed – if it were possible – to bring this rambling piece of work around *full circle*.

That third item was an amusing scrap of paper on which Hamp had written down the qualities he was most looking for in a girl – a top ten list he had made back in 1928. Topping the list in the #1 and #2 positions: *quiet* and *logical*, respectively. Now logically, the combination of these two traits makes no sense to me at all. Perhaps if he were to find himself an illogical girl, he would want to keep her quiet, but if she turns out to be logical, by all

means let her speak! As much as I had learned about Grandpa through my research, this just added to an endless list of questions I’d love to ask him face to face.

Whether or not I can make any sense of it, I know full well that I owe my *roots* to Hamp and Marge’s quirky combination; and if time is a teacher, the lesson here in the meantime is to be careful what you wish for. I have to laugh when I think about it, but I doubt if either of the top two traits on Hamp’s list was ever once ascribed to Marjorie in her 90 years on this planet. *Quiet* and *logical* are the two things that my vibrant, artsy grandmother – bless her soul – definitely was not!

~~~~~

As I wrap up this effort, something keeps taking me back to the *Crossroads of the West* on that graduation night back in 1928. What is it about that time period that draws me in? In our Mormon microcosm, at least, it seems to represent a bridge in time. If you had stood at the pulpit that night and aimed a camera at the audience, right there in one photograph you would see faces that span the entire history of the Church in this dispensation, faces that compress our history as a Church and show us that our origins are not that far distant.

The elderly in the audience that night overlapped with the lives of Joseph Smith and even some of the Founding Fathers. Literally straight out of the Wild West days of cowboys and Indians, these pioneers had marched with the Mormon Battalion, crossed the plains, returned to the rescue of the Martin Hancock Company, dodged the Civil War, and battled locusts with prayer-guided gulls, taking direct part in the stuff of Mormon legend.

The children in the audience would one day race for dominance in space, usher in a new millennium, watch the Twin Towers fall, and help the information age rise, swapping their scriptures for Ipads and wifi streams. Some of them are still with us today; you might see their wrinkled faces as you walk down the street. For now, you can still sit down with them, ask them questions, and learn from their life experience. As I have learned over these last few years, though, if we hesitate for a moment, the opportunity can disintegrate in the blink of an eye.

L.D.S. High was founded as Salt Lake Academy in 1886 and closed its doors 45 years later in 1931. The 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding and the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its hapless closure have now come and gone. The students of the L.D.S. made a pledge, cited as a farewell address, in the last "*S*" *Book* ever printed:

Always our alumni have been able to say proudly, 'I am a graduate of the Latter-day Saints College.' And now – changes occur. For the present, perhaps forever, our High School has come to an end. Our hearts burn. It won't be easy to smile the same old smile. But we have the will to do it. It is going to be done because we will stand true to the L.D.S. traditions of loyalty and integrity – always. But as long as we live, as long as our children live, as long as memories live, the L.D.S. will never die. It shall live as the memory of a thousand voices.

Most tourists wandering through the Church Office Building and the surrounding grounds today have no idea of the block's previous tenants. L.D.S. High is effectively gone from our collective memory; perhaps the memory loss will only be temporary, but it seems for now that their pledge has been broken. Resuscitating the memories would honor the students – our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents – and all they stood and worked for.

The L.D.S. Business College's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration unfortunately proceeded without any former students of L.D.S. High in attendance. While the speeches were delivered and the confetti was dropped, the few remaining alumni likely sat alone in their care center rooms watching television. Perhaps Eldred Smith – who graduated five years before the school closed – is literally the last leaf on the tree, but I suspect there must be others. Let's embrace those fluttering leaves before the tree goes completely bare! A single conversation would prevent the school from fading into the past and out of our memories; instead, that conversation would serve as a reminder and a living testament to its existence.

Take a look through the yearbook photographs; stare into Betty Callister's eyes, for instance, frozen somewhere in time. You'll see her experiences – with all of the accompanying joys and jealousies – come to life. Aren't we all timeless creatures, all in the same boat together? You'll find eyes just like hers in the nursing home down the street. I don't know how else to put this: Let's get our butts over there before it's too late!

You'll still find an occasional high school graduation taking place in Utah's tabernacles today; as President Hinckley noted, the seats are still just as hard as they were a century ago. Those occupying the seats are just as likely – or unlikely – to succeed as any graduate from years past. Look around in that setting at this year's graduating class; can you imagine what the future holds in store for this new generation? Do they show as much promise as the Class of 1928? Is there any less potential among them? By the time this new, young sapling reaches maturity and the last leaf blows from its branches, we can scarcely imagine what these green teenagers will have witnessed in the meantime.

What will we have contributed to help them along the way? A shoebox of photographs? A memory stick? A few dates in a FamilySearch file? Or will we pass along the actual, personally related stories, the insights that make us who we are? Will those insights be worthwhile enough for my children's children to learn something from my own life? Will that leave them with anything remotely resembling a legacy?

If we seek out our ancestors and earn that inheritance, I believe it will; the connections may not hit us right away, but if we dive into it, I am convinced that they will, at some point, hit us right between the eyes. That will, in turn, give us something much more precious to add to our own legacy – a gift to the rising ranks.

Perhaps Nephi summarized it best: "The course of the Lord is one eternal round." Bring it on, and it will always come... *full circle*.

~~~~~



Marjorie Pay Hinckley, followed by her husband and Russell M. Nelson at the 2004 Ghana Temple dedication



Gordon B. Hinckley with his cane, greeting Ghanaian Church members at the Accra Ghana Temple dedication



Grandma's *Roots* sculpture presented to Alex Haley

Epilogue

As I write this endnote from down under, Hamp's 100th birthday is rapidly approaching. I took Jaedin out camping the other night and told him about the upcoming event; he still wasn't impressed.

"But when will the *Titanic* be 100?" he asked, looking for a more meaningful milestone.

"Just a few more months until the century mark," I answered, "Now that's pretty old, don't you think?"

"Well you're almost forty," he countered, "that's pretty old, too!"

I nodded and cringed. "Yep," I admitted under my breath. Dodging the subject, I added, "Did you know I have the same birthday as the Berlin Wall?"

The fact that I share a birthday with a defunct piece of masonry meant nothing to him, and he changed the subject right back again. "What's the big deal about forty, anyway?" he asked, "Is that when they say you're *over the hill*?"

"Oh I don't know," I said, "it's a joke I guess."

"But why do they call it --"

He wasn't going to let it rest, so I interrupted him. "I guess life expectancy is around eighty," I explained starkly, "so when you hit forty you're half-way there."

"So you're half dead?" he asked, matter-of-factly.

"I guess that's right," I said with a nervous laugh and then tried again to change the subject before the truth's sting could penetrate any deeper. "So do you still want to be an author when you grow up?" I asked him.

He nodded. “How about you?” he asked, throwing the question back into my court, “Did you ever finish your book?”

“No, I haven’t touched it since we moved; I’ll wrap it up when we get back to the States.”

“When will that be?”

“I don’t know...a couple of years, maybe.”

“So by that time you’ll be mostly dead?”

“Well technically...”

I stopped in my tracks before digging the hole any deeper. His curt comment made me laugh out loud, but he didn’t see why it was funny – a fact’s a fact, after all. Pediatric psychiatrists have been inconclusive about where Jaedin falls on the autistic spectrum, but the bluntness represented by this particularly Aspergian remark is something they would all wish to cure him of. At times like this, though, I wouldn’t change a thing about him.

He’s right, after all; if I go by the statistics, I guess the curtains are closing on Act I of my life. I’m certainly curious to find out how Act II might play out, but while the orchestra plays a brief overture, maybe I should take an introspective intermission, fine-tune things for the finale, write out my manifesto, and revisit my bucket list. Or perhaps I should just dig this book off my hard drive, post it online, and call it good.

I put my arm around Jaedin. “You know what?” I promised him with a smile, “I’ll just go ahead and post it as it is...before I’m mostly dead.”

As we searched for familiar constellations in the night sky, the Big Dipper, the North Star, and other

recognizable features were nowhere to be found. Instead, we found the Southern Cross and other new shapes – the same stars that the ancient Polynesian voyagers used to guide them as they traversed the South Seas. Though I haven’t had much luck instilling in Jaedin an appreciation for the classic harmonies of the early eighties, I handed him my iPod and played him the lines that Jimmy Buffet stole from Steven Stills:

When you see the Southern Cross for the first time,
You understand now why you came this way.

As I listened to the chorus myself – “*I have been around the world*” – I could distinctly remember being Jaedin’s age, mapping out my future path around the planet with a string and some pieces of tape. What a long, strange trip it’s been... Though the cells in my body have all been replaced since that day, I still feel like that same, naïve kid. *Michigan seems like a dream to me now*, but I don’t feel any wiser, any older, or any more mature than I felt back in 1985 as I spun the globe around in my bedroom – a full generation ago. I still can’t break dance – I guess I’ll have to leave Jaedin to break that curse for me – and I’ve only managed to knock a handful of items off of my bucket list. Now that the underwriters tell me I’m half-way through my earthly sojourn, though, I happen to find myself half-way around the world; so perhaps next time I’ll return to the U.S. from the east to complete that circle around the planet and at least cross that goal off my list. In the meantime, with the

conspicuous crux overhead, all I can do at this juncture is to try to appreciate what life has offered me so far.

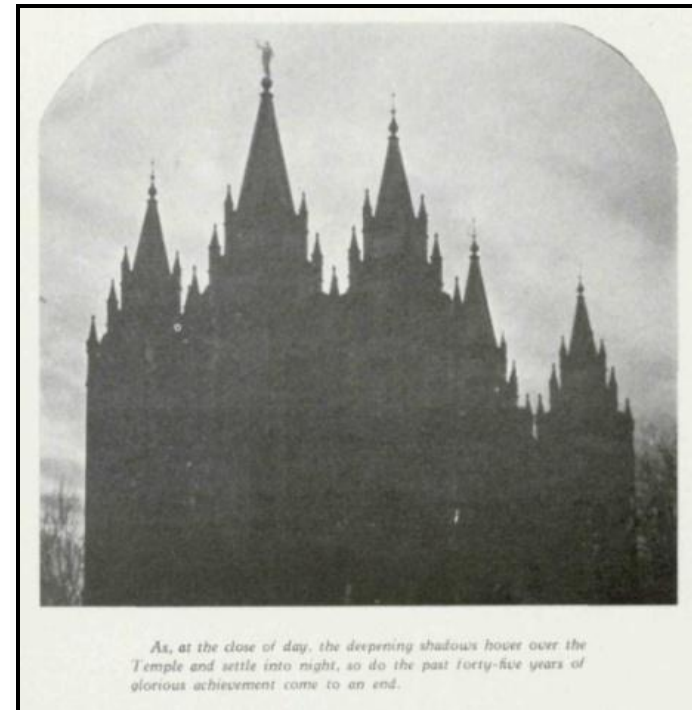
In the midst of life's many confusing facets, sometimes signs in the heavens that have remained unchanged for – in this case – thousands of years, suddenly take on a new meaning. Whether it's the Southern Cross, the North Star, or anything that lies between, these signs make everything feel meaningful and right...*all is well, all is well.*

~~~~~

So there you have it; while some things in life seem to have come around full circle, I certainly haven't closed the loop on my initial requests for copyright permissions and access to journal entries, photographs, and archived documents related to Hamp's more prominent connections. As such, I have left this book undocumented, unedited, unabridged, and entirely unfinished. But as I promised Jaedin, rather than let the results of the effort fade away on my computer and disappear with my next hard drive crash, I'll go ahead and send this draft around to my fellow descendants of Hamp and Marge as a way to commemorate the occasion of the century mark. To my immediate and extended family: I hope you enjoy Hamp's story with all of its tangled tangents and that it helps bring his world to life for you as it did for me.

~~~~~

Happy 100th Birthday, Grandpa!
from your grandson, Krey
March 2, 2011

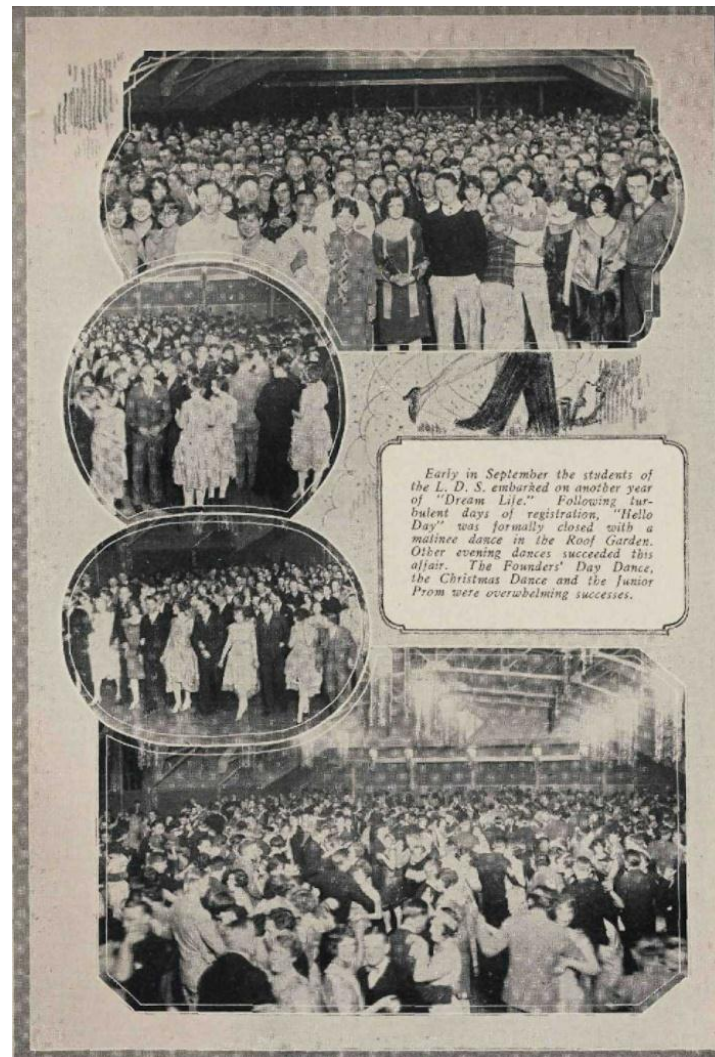


Last page of the last "S" Book: A final epitaph

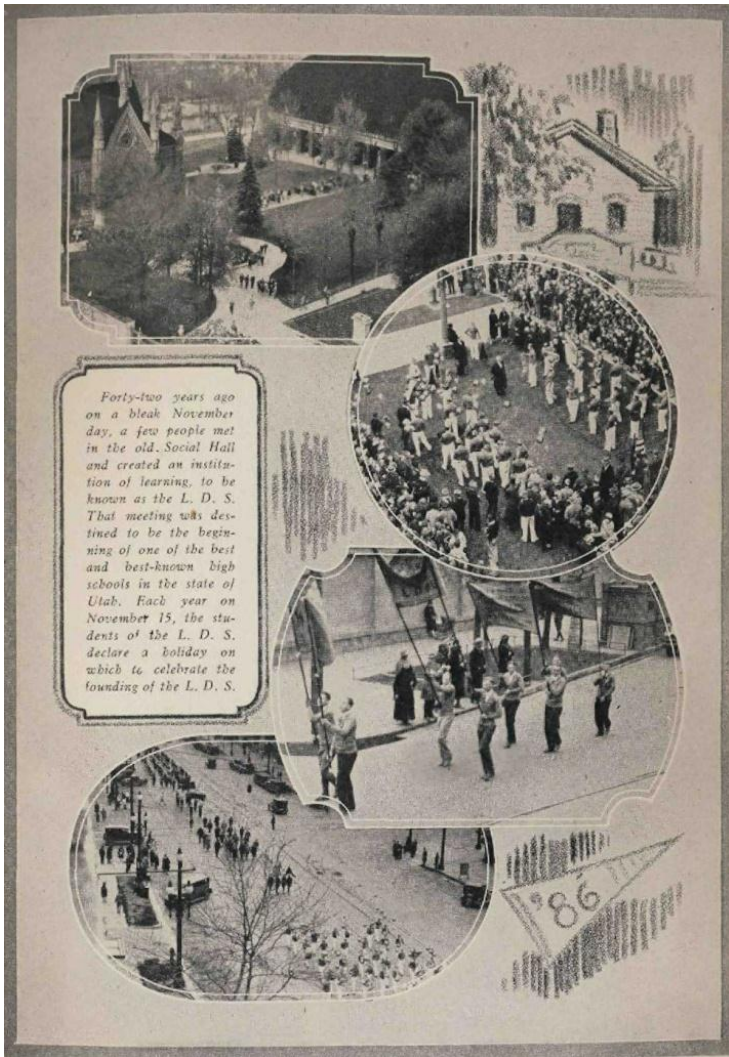
Supplemental Photographs



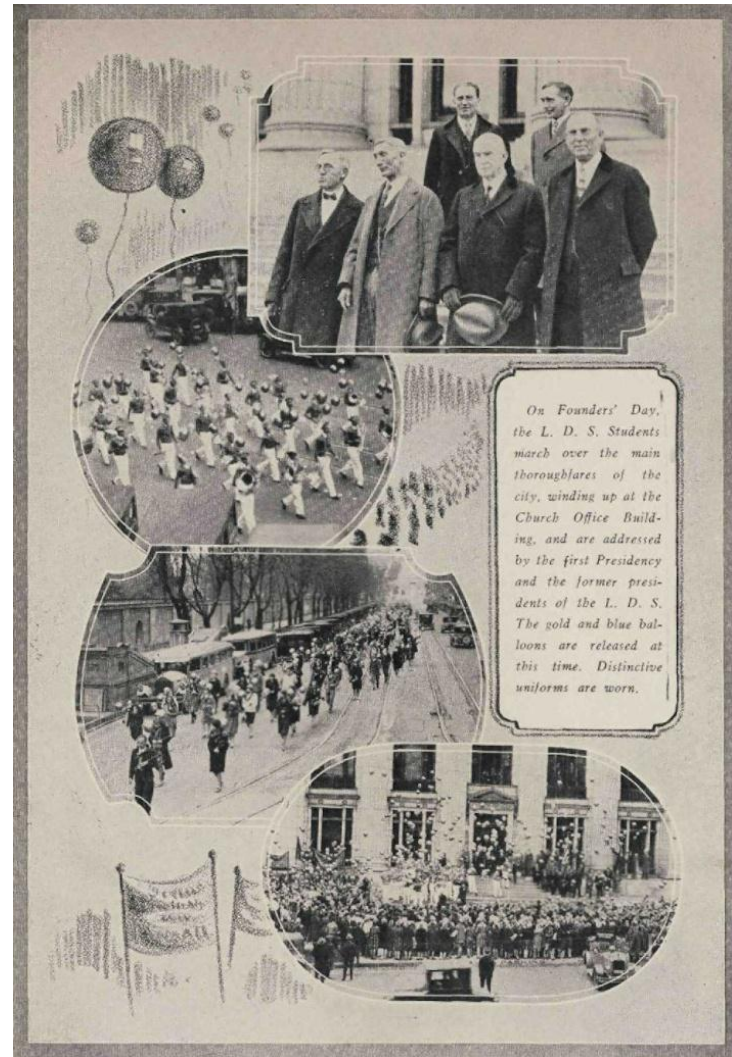
Hamp's namesake and ancestry through Brigham Young Hampton – SLC constable and Brigham Young's stepson



1928 "S" Book: Welcome Dance, Founders' Day Dance, Christmas Dance, and Junior Prom



1928 "S" Book: Celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the L.D.S.



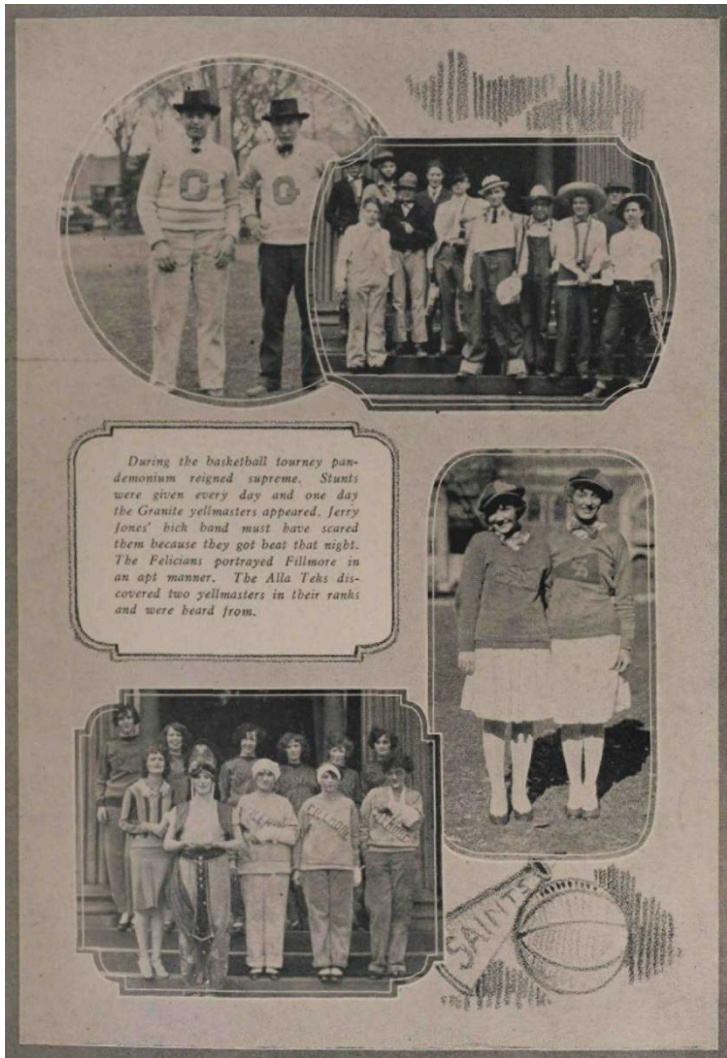
1928 "S" Book: Founders' Day Parade



1928 "S" Book: After-school activities



1928 "S" Book: Lunchtime activities



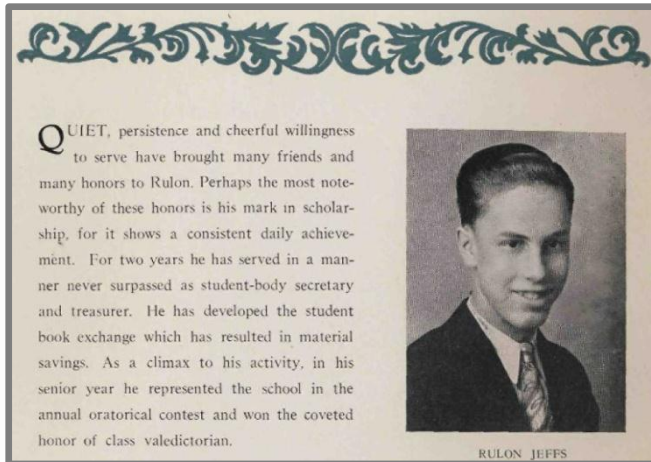
1928 "S" Book: Yellmasters



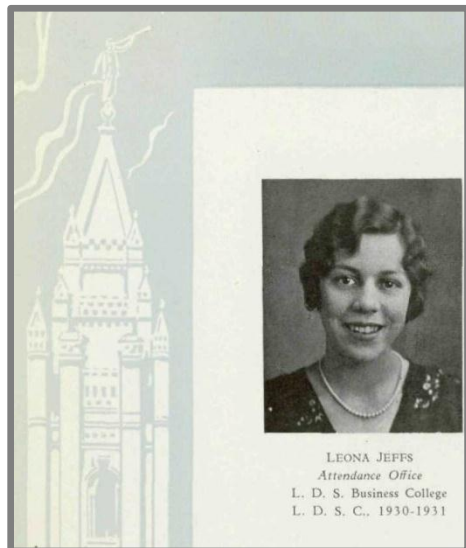
Golden Eagle Aero Club members



Souvenir postcard from Charles Lindbergh's visit to Woodward Field and the "Utah Hotel"



1928 "S" Book: Blurb for Rulon Jeffs' *Grant Award* win



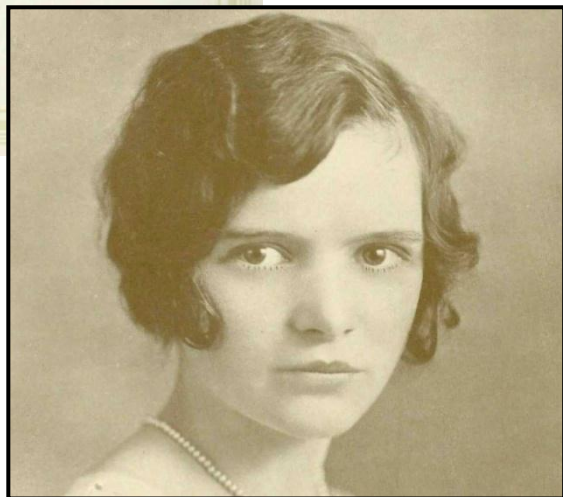
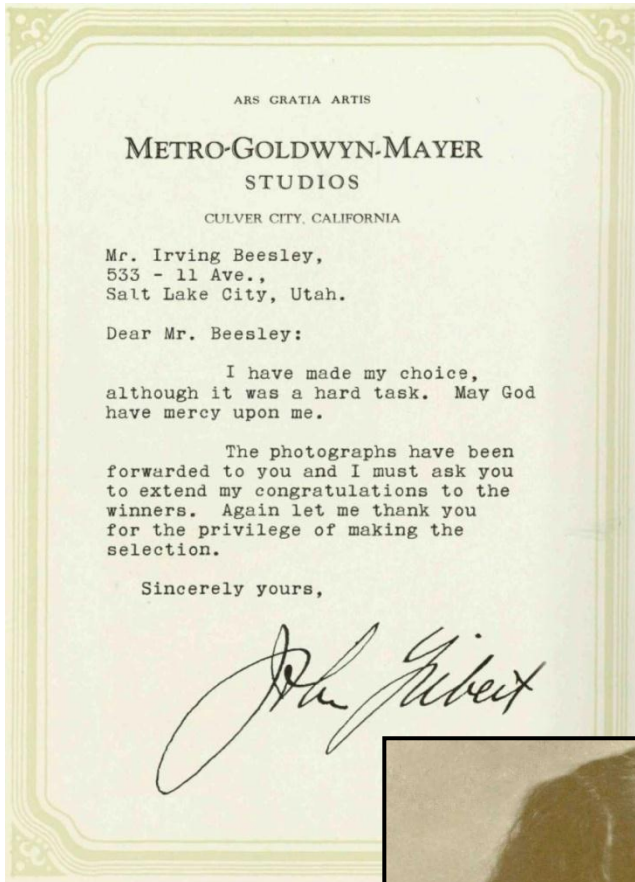
Rulon's sister, L.D.S. College staff member Leona Jeffs



L.D.S. High Student Body President George Romney



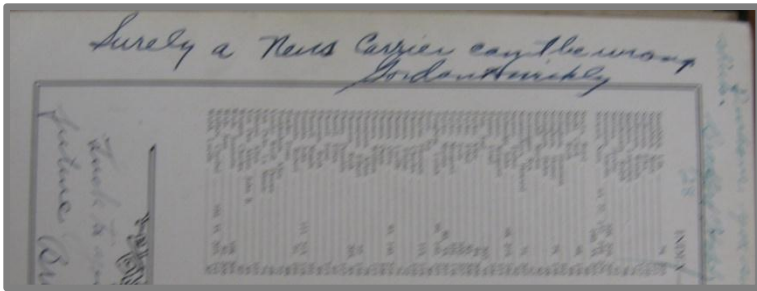
Class President Wallace Toronto, pictured in the "S" Book with his Vice-President, future First Lady of Michigan Lenore La Fount Romney



Beauty contest winner Betty Callister, with judge John Gilbert's letter



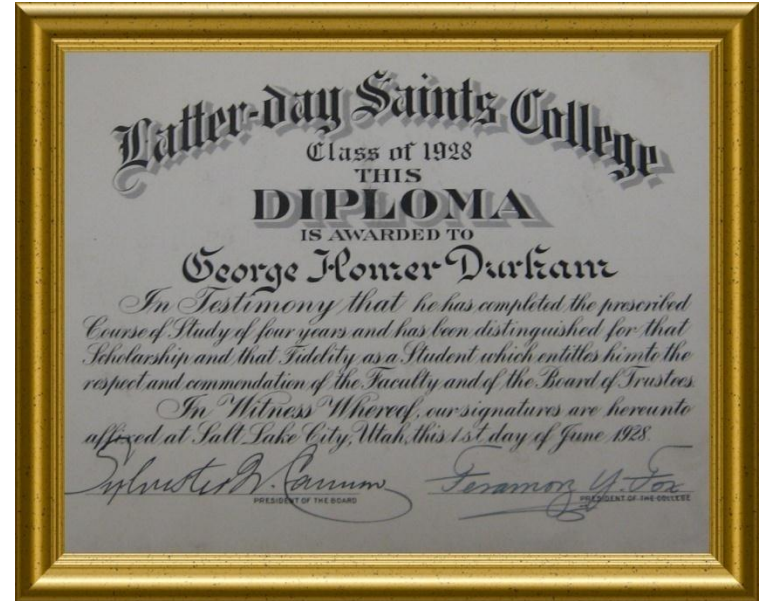
Rex McKean, Betty Callister, Jerry Jones
Yearbook portrait sketches for popularity contest winners



no girls in the bargain. success
 and fun for you next year with
 horseshoes and four leaf clovers. Always
 remember the "Lanky Athlete" of the "gang"
 Bob Toronto '28
 (preferred by women).

Dear Homer, god how I love the
 very ground you walk on. I sure think
 you're nearly perfect. You only look about
 1 foot. If you grow that much this summer:
 Yours all the boys would
 Homer Durham.

Homer Durham's Yearbook signatures from Gordon Hinckley, Bob Toronto, and himself



Homer Durham's L.D.S. High Diploma, signed June 1, 1928



Union Pacific Station in 1930



Macy's Day Parade, 1930



Empire State Building and Chrysler Building, 1930

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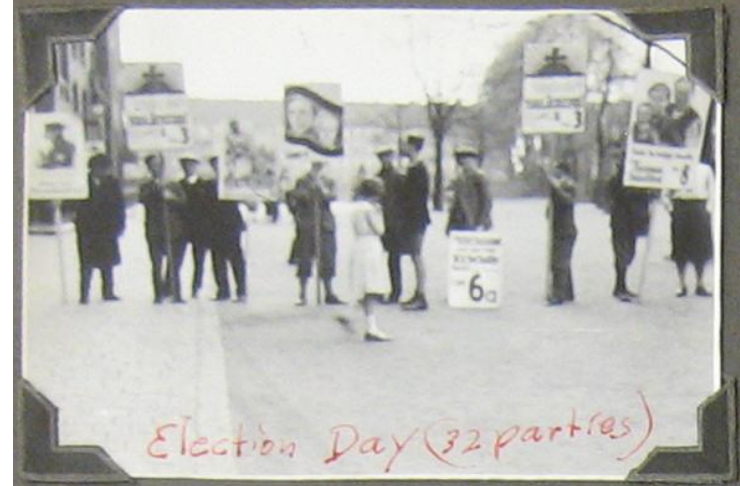
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Hamp's mission photos of the Jewish Boycott



Election Day (32 parties)

Hamp's mission photos of German election options – with the Nazis campaign organized by Goebbels



Silesian dress and caps, from a 1926 National Geographic article on Silesia



George Durham (at left) and sons (Homer 2nd from left)



Elder Durham and Elder Hinckley
with Mission District on Lake Trip, 1934



Gordon B. Hinckley in Church media dept., ca. 1935



Newspaper articles regarding Hamp's meetings with Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt and other reconciliation efforts



Russian tanks heading east from Freiberg, Spring 1991



Stagelight Trabants now hanging in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, courtesy of U2



Mission reunion commemorating 20 years since the creation of the Dresden Mission



German Democratic Republic memorabilia on display at the Dresden Mission reunion

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