

human weaknesses and failings can be positive traits that may prove useful as mortals progress toward godhood.

—Michael J. Preece

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*Keepers of the Flame: Presidents of the Young Women*, by Janet S. Peterson and LaRene Gaunt (Deseret Book, 1993)

Anyone who has read *Elect Ladies: Presidents of Relief Society* (1990) by Janet Peterson and LaRene Gaunt will experience a strong sense of déjà vu upon reading their new book, *Keepers of the Flame*. Here the authors sketch the lives of the Young Women general presidents, whose purpose has been “to kindle the flame of testimony” in young LDS women.

Peterson and Gaunt write for general readers, and they do it very well. In this second volume, they illuminate in their familiar formulaic style the lives of ten talented Mormon women. Five of these presidents, still very much alive, were interviewed several times by the authors, some providing in addition a written statement. Although Peterson and Gaunt drew from interviews in the James H. Moyle Oral History Program in the LDS Church Archives for the chapters on Bertha Stone Reeder, Ruth Hardy Funk, Elaine Cannon, and Ardeth Greene Kapp, the prevailing sources for these four and three other chapters (Lucy Grant Cannon, Florence Smith Jacobsen, and Janette Callister Hales) are the authors’ personal and telephone interviews. Over one hundred endnote citations identify untaped interviews with presidents, and

their husbands, children, counselors, and friends. Consequently, *Keepers of the Flame* is a simpler book than its predecessor: more anecdotal, more conversational, and somewhat protective. There is spontaneity here, but where is the complexity, the struggle, or the reflective insight?

Peterson and Gaunt are not trained historians. Sources for the book are more journalistic than historical. Paragraphs fly by without adequate citation; there is lack of scrupulous care in endnoting and no attempt to provide context for the women or the organization. In fact, the book is somewhat short on organizational history (only about 65 pages out of a total of 176). However, the authors have provided in the appendix a time line of YWMIA developments and general historical events.

Peterson and Gaunt’s new book offers choice snippets of living history and pithy statements which will appeal to the general audience. We must thank them for adding biographical notes to preceding histories of YLMIA and YWMIA (1911, 1955, 1969) and look to scholars to bring more depth of understanding to the richly textured lives of these important Church leaders and more detail to the sweep of the Young Women programs.

—Shirley Anderson Cazier