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Editors' Introduction

"Great men are like mountains, better seen from afar." Andrew Bonar Law's dictum about biography does not hold true of Spencer W. Kimball. We have seen and studied him as family man, businessman, civic leader, churchman, and prophet. While unquestionably an imperfect human, he had a consistency about him that most of us can only wonder at. The public and private man were one. He looks the same up close and from afar.

When Brigham Young University Studies proposed a special issue devoted to President Kimball, who died 5 November 1985, we happily accepted the responsibility for editing the issue. It provided us an opportunity to show our great personal regard for a remarkable man.

In this issue are gathered commentaries about his administration as President, his unique speaking style, a relative's reminiscence, the observations of journalists who watched him both on- and offstage as he traveled the world as a Church leader, several poets' responses to what he did and what he was, a chronicling of his childhood as he described it in his sermons, an acknowledgment of his commitment to the cause of the Lamanites, and a gathering of anecdotes and quotations showing his genial sense of humor.

But much of the content of this issue is provided by Spencer W. Kimball himself—some previously unpublished poems, a collection of photographs that illustrate his life, a large portion of his missionary journal, his college experiences, an extemporaneous stake conference address from the middle of his Apostle years to show the speaking style and the subject matter typical of so much of his work as a General Authority.

As this issue goes to press a year after President Kimball's death, we still sense his presence. Of his life we can say, quoting a line from one of his poems, "nothing's lost that fits into the great eternal Plan."

—Ronald W. Walker
—Edward L. Kimball

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This line drawing of Spencer W. Kimball, by Rhon Solomon, was printed in the *Daily Universe*, the Brigham Young University campus newspaper, 7 November 1985.
Lengthening Our Stride: The Remarkable Administration of Spencer W. Kimball

Dennis L. Lythgoe

When Spencer W. Kimball became President of the Church in December 1974, many people wondered whether he would be adequate to the task. The charismatic, forceful Harold B. Lee had seemed indomitable, and the brevity of his tenure as President was difficult to accept. President Kimball seemed physically frail. He had undergone open heart surgery only twenty months before assuming the mantle of prophet. Earlier he had lost one vocal cord and part of the other to cancer of the throat. Since then, he spoke with great difficulty. Little wonder, then, that some foresaw a stalled period in Church history under a caretaker administration.

In an October 1977 conference address, Elder William Grant Bangerter of the First Quorum of the Seventy looked back on those difficult days. He described an uncomfortable period among the Saints as they mourned the loss of President Lee and struggled to accept the new prophet: "We knew, of course, that he would manage somehow, until the next great leader arose, but it would not be easy for him, and things would not be the same. 'O Lord,' we prayed, 'please bless President Kimball. He needs all the help you can give him.'"

According to Elder Bangerter, all of that changed miraculously on 4 April 1974, when "a new awareness" fell on the General Authorities and Regional Representatives as they listened to an address by President Kimball:

We became alert to an astonishing spiritual presence, and we realized that we were listening to something unusual, powerful, different from any of our previous meetings. It was as if, spiritually speaking, our hair began to stand on end. Our minds were suddenly vibrant and marveling at the transcendent message that was coming to our ears. With a new perceptiveness we realized that President Kimball was opening spiritual windows and beckoning to us to come and gaze with him on the plans of eternity. It was as if he were drawing back the curtains which covered the purpose of the Almighty and inviting us to view with him the destiny of the gospel and the vision of its ministry.

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Dennis L. Lythgoe is professor and chair of the history department at Bridgewater State College, Massachusetts.
I doubt that any person present that day will ever forget the occasion. . . .

The Spirit of the Lord was upon President Kimball and it proceeded from him to us as a tangible presence, which was at once both moving and shocking. He unrolled to our view a glorious vision. He told us of the ministry performed by the apostles in the day of the Savior, and how the same mission was conferred on the apostles under Joseph Smith. He demonstrated how these men had gone forth in faith and devotion and were clothed with great power, by which they had carried the gospel to the ends of the earth, reaching further, in some ways, than we with the strength of this modern church are doing at the present time. He showed us how the Church was not fully living in the faithfulness that the Lord expects of His people, and that, to a certain degree, we had settled into a spirit of complacency and satisfaction with things as they were. It was at that moment that he sounded the now famous slogan, “We must lengthen our stride.”

Elder Gordon B. Hinckley told President Kimball, “That was the greatest talk ever given in these seminars. . . . None of us can ever be quite the same after that.” Elder Bangerter remembered the sermon as totally unlike any other in my experience. I realized that it was similar to the occasion on the 8th day of August, 1844, when Brigham Young spoke to the Saints in Nauvoo following the death of the Prophet Joseph. . . . Many people testified that as Brigham Young arose, the power of the Lord rested upon him to the extent that he was transfigured before them, with the appearance and the voice of Joseph Smith. That moment was decisive in the history of the Church, and the occasion of April 4, 1974, is parallel.

In Elder Bangerter’s view, the Church from that moment took giant strides, and “no one has worried the least little bit about who is the Lord’s prophet.”

Speaking with great force on that occasion, President Kimball outlined his conception of an expanded missionary program: “My brethren, I wonder if we are doing all we can. Are we complacent in our approach to teaching all the world? We have been proselyting now 144 years. Are we prepared to lengthen our stride? To enlarge our vision?” He called for more missionaries:

I am not asking for more testimony-barren or unworthy missionaries. I am asking that we start earlier and train our missionaries better in every branch and every ward in the world. . . . The question is frequently asked: Should every young man fill a mission? And the answer has been given by the Lord. It is “Yes.” Every young man should fill a mission.

President Kimball’s tenure saw the fruition of his challenge. The number of full-time missionaries grew from 17,258 in 1973 to
approximately 29,265 at the end of 1985, an increase of 70 percent. The number of missions increased by 74 percent, from 108 to 188. The annual number of convert baptisms increased 148 percent, from 79,603 in 1973 to an estimated 197,640 in 1985.

In his sermon, the President also expressed a desire to “enlarge our field of operation” and teach the gospel in every nation. Speaking of King Benjamin’s causing a tower to be erected so he could speak to his people, President Kimball said, “Our Father in Heaven has now provided us mighty towers—radio and television towers with possibilities beyond comprehension—to help fulfill the words of the Lord that ‘the sound must go forth from this place unto all the world.’” He called attention to “Early Bird satellites... stationed high in the heavens, relaying broadcast signals back to almost every corner of the earth’s surface.” Quoting D&C 58:64, he declared that “the gospel must be preached unto every creature.”

Indeed, with the prolific use of satellites the gospel has been preached around the world as never before. Every stake center in the United States has a satellite receiver, making it possible for great numbers of people to see and hear the general conferences of the Church as well as other special broadcasts emanating from Salt Lake City. The “mighty towers” President Kimball so eloquently described have become major communications tools for the Church.

Always known for his humility, Spencer W. Kimball insisted that there were “many, many men greater than I who could have done a better job.” He once commented that he thought the Lord had made a mistake in calling him to be President—“unless He knew that I didn’t have any sense and would just keep on working.” As President of the Church, he established a vigorous work schedule, beginning his days at 6:45 A.M., usually skipping lunch, and ending at five or six P.M. Then he took two to four briefcases of material home and often spent the evening working at his desk until 9:30 or 10:00. In spite of the operation on his throat, he spoke often throughout the Church with the help of a special miniature microphone attached to his eyeglasses which amplified his voice. Harold B. Lee was correct when he told a surgeon about to operate on Spencer Kimball to proceed with care because this was “no ordinary man.”

It was soon evident that President Kimball had become personally very popular, known for his personal warmth and genuine interest in people. He was also respected for his book The Miracle of Forgiveness, published in 1973, a Church best-seller that called the people to repentance and described the process.

In 1977, Bookcraft published Spencer W. Kimball, a biography written by President Kimball’s youngest son, Edward, and his grandson Andrew. The book received immediate critical praise and sold nearly
150,000 copies in its first year, becoming another Church best-seller. It was unprecedented in Church history for a biography to be written about a President while he was still living. The book's warm reception indicated the special niche President Kimball had carved out in the minds and hearts of thousands of Latter-day Saints. Prior to the publication of this book, publishers to the LDS market held the view that biographies did not sell well among Church members.

As often happens, many anecdotes spread about President Kimball, some true, some false. One of these concerned a man who stepped into an elevator, noticed Spencer Kinard, who delivers the "Spoken Word" during Tabernacle Choir broadcasts, and said casually, "Push three for me, will you, Spence?" At this, President Kimball, who was also in the elevator, said, "Surely," and pushed the button. Allegedly the man was mortified at having appeared to call the prophet "Spence," but President Kimball was not offended. Such a true story illustrates the down-to-earth qualities of the man and seems more in character with the image of "Brother Joseph" or "Brother Brigham" than with the more formal image of twentieth-century Church leaders.

In one of the apocryphal stories, a non-Mormon waitress, not recognizing President Kimball, asked, "Would you like some Pabst Blue Ribbon?" Supposedly, he replied teasingly, "No, Bud!" before he declined. The person telling the story was delighted that the prophet would engage in such repartee and that he would know the nickname for Budweiser beer. When Edward Kimball recounted the anecdote to his father, President Kimball said, "What's Bud?" Obviously, the story was inaccurate. Another widely circulated rumor claimed that President Kimball, while speaking in a sacrament meeting in 1976, asked for a show of hands of those who had stored a year's supply of food. When he saw relatively few hands, he supposedly said, "If you have not listened to what I said before, there is no point in saying more now," and then sat down. According to Edward Kimball, this event never happened. Although it might have been a "telling sermon," it was definitely "out of character" for his father.

Almost immediately after assuming the Presidency, Spencer W. Kimball began to decentralize the leadership of the Church and make other changes to cope with burgeoning growth. In 1974, he established a new policy of allowing stake presidents by delegation from the General Authorities to ordain seventies and set apart seventies quorum presidents. In 1975, stake presidents were authorized to ordain and set apart bishops, and in 1976 their authority was extended to the calling of seventies and seventies presidencies. General conferences were reduced to two days instead of three and no longer necessarily met on 6 April, the birthday of the Church. In 1978, stake conferences became semiannual instead of quarterly, the frequency of leadership
meetings was reduced, and local Church leaders were encouraged to be more flexible about holding interviews. In 1979, sacrament meetings were discontinued on the Sunday of stake conference. In 1980, in a major change of policy, the prophet announced the new consolidated meeting schedule, in which all Sunday meetings would be shortened and combined into one three-hour block. The major motivation was to allow Church members more time with their families as well as more time to study scriptures and engage in service to others on the Sabbath while reducing travel time and cost. In 1981, stake presidents were authorized to call and ordain patriarchs. In 1982, it was announced that Church buildings would be constructed from general Church funds. Local members would no longer have to sacrifice so much in a short period in order to “qualify” for a building in their area of the world. The ultimate effect of these procedural changes was to extend more authority to the local officers of the Church, lessening the burden on General Authorities and simplifying Church administration for the benefit of the members.

One of the most important administrative developments came at the October 1975 general conference when President Kimball announced the reorganization of the First Quorum of the Seventy. The quorum had not been filled since the Nauvoo period. The First Council of the Seventy was originally detailed to preside over the First Quorum, but since the days of Joseph Smith Church leaders had not felt the need to organize the quorum. Now the organization was to take its place among the governing bodies of the Church. Three men were called at the October 1975 conference as new members of the quorum, in addition to the seven Presidents, and it was announced that more would be added until the number reached seventy. One year later, the Assistants to the Twelve were officially called into the First Quorum of the Seventy, raising the membership of the quorum to thirty-nine. President Kimball said that this development would “make it possible to handle efficiently the present heavy workload and prepare for the increasing expansion and acceleration of the work.”

In an effort to bring the Church closer to the people, President Kimball inaugurated a plan of holding area conferences throughout the world. He called it “a great new adventure in taking the whole program of the Church out to the people of the whole world.” In 1974, he presided over an area conference in Stockholm, Sweden, in company with other General Authorities. In 1975, he presided over similar conferences in Argentina, Brazil, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. In 1976, there were conferences in Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Tahiti, England, Scotland, France, Finland, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. In each conference, President Kimball and several other General Authorities spoke, and
cultural programs were presented by the people in the regions involved. In a memorable visit to Poland in 1977, President Kimball dedicated the country for future Church work in the first visit of an LDS church President behind the Iron Curtain.

From 1977 through 1980, area conferences were held in Central and South America, South Africa, Canada, the South Pacific, the Far East, and Hawaii and other regions of the United States. As he traveled the world, President Kimball frequently called on heads of state in an effort to acquaint them with principles and practices of the Church. In his first five years as President, he traveled some 347,864 miles. When the prophet’s health became delicate, the frequency of area conferences declined.

In November 1974, President Kimball dedicated the Washington Temple, the largest yet completed, at ten dedicatory services. He announced plans to renovate two older temples in St. George, Utah, and Mesa, Arizona. Both temples were rededicated in 1975. President Kimball also announced plans for a temple in São Paulo as well as others in Tokyo, Mexico City, and Seattle. He said, “We will continue to build temples, and there will be hundreds, possibly thousands, of temples built to the Lord our God. We expect the Lord is just beginning.” From the sixteen operating temples after Spencer W. Kimball dedicated the one in Washington, D.C., the number of temples increased to forty-seven at the end of his tenure, including several in various stages of planning and construction.

One of the most dramatic changes in the Church’s approach to genealogy and temple work concerned the process of extracting names from old records. People were called, set apart, and trained in extraction procedures, old record-keeping practices and handwriting styles, and, where necessary, foreign languages. Then they extracted names from the records and sent them to the Genealogical Department, where the names were processed so that vicarious temple ordinances could be performed. This program was conceived in 1976 in response to President Kimball’s plea that the Genealogical Department strive for simplification. Department officials prayerfully devised the extraction program and presented it to him. He reviewed it, received spiritual confirmation that it was right, and at the April 1978 general conference announced a two-fold emphasis in genealogy work: “We want to emphasize again and place squarely upon the shoulders of these individuals and families the obligation to complete the four generation program. Families may extend their pedigree beyond the four generations if desired. Secondly, we are introducing a Churchwide program of extracting names from genealogical records. Church members may now render second-mile service through participating in this regard in extracting these names in this program supervised by the priesthood leaders at the local level.”
Lengthening Our Stride

As part of his emphasis on a world-wide church, President Kimball began calling General Authorities from outside the United States. Beginning in 1975, General Authorities were called from Belgium, Holland, Japan, Germany, England, Canada, and Argentina, as well as the United States.

As an Apostle, Spencer W. Kimball had been known for the unusual literary quality of his sermons. When he became President, his sermons changed character and took on a machine-gun rapidity, as if he did not have enough time to give all the advice that was necessary. “Lengthen your stride.” “Do it.” “Plant gardens.” “Clean up your yards.” “Live clean, moral lives.” “Fight pornography.” “Strengthen your families.” These specific instructions are typical of his sermons as President. He warned against polygamy, cults, gambling, and profanity, and urged parents to teach children honesty and integrity. He criticized the prevalence of sex and violence on television and asked parents to be selective about the shows their children watched.

Besides more common themes such as marriage, family life, and keeping the Sabbath day holy, President Kimball chose to speak about such practical needs as food storage. Some of his more memorable addresses were about kindness to animals, as in “Don’t Kill the Little Birds,” in 1978.

Often President Kimball would present ten or twelve topics one after another in a single general conference address, like a loving father giving advice to his children. He constantly called for more missionaries and stressed the importance of getting an education, receiving patriarchal blessings, living frugally and avoiding debt, and keeping journals and writing personal and family histories. At the October 1978 conference, he said:

Any Latter-day Saint family that has searched genealogical and historical records has fervently wished their ancestors had kept better and more complete records. On the other hand, some families possess some spiritual treasures, because ancestors have recorded the events surrounding their conversion to the gospel and other happenings of interest, including many miraculous blessings and spiritual experiences. People often use the excuse that their lives are uneventful and nobody would be interested in what they have done. But I promise you that if you will keep your journals and records they will indeed be a source of great inspiration to your families, to your children, your grandchildren, and others, on through the generations.

At the October 1980 conference, he reported of his own journal-keeping, “There have been times when I have been so tired at the end of a day that the effort could hardly be managed, but I am so grateful that I have not let slip away from me and my posterity those
things which needed to be recorded.’’ Indeed, the strength of the biography *Spencer W. Kimball* is directly attributable to his extensive journals.

Under President Kimball’s direction, two revelations given to earlier prophets were officially added to modern scripture at the April 1976 general conference: Joseph Smith’s vision of the celestial kingdom and of the salvation of those who died without hearing the gospel, given to him in the Kirtland Temple in 1836; and Joseph F. Smith’s vision of the redemption of the dead. It was the first time in nearly seventy years that a revelation had been added to the existing body of scripture comprising the standard works of the Church.

Certainly, the most dramatic change instituted under President Kimball’s leadership was the revelation to ordain blacks to the priesthood. On 9 June 1978, the First Presidency addressed a letter to the general and local officers of the Church throughout the world. In it, they said that they had been pleading ‘‘long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.’’ The letter went on to declare that the Lord had ‘‘heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color.’’

The *New York Times* called it ‘‘without question the most important shift by the church since it outlawed polygamy.’’ Later, President Kimball recalled that he had prayed over the matter for many days in the temple. ‘‘I was very humble. . . . I was searching for this. I wanted to be sure.’’ After his many visits to the temple to meditate and pray, President Kimball called a special meeting of the Quorum of the Twelve and asked them to remain following their meeting.

We considered this very seriously and thoughtfully and prayerfully. . . . I offered the final prayer and I told the Lord if it wasn’t right, if He didn’t want this change to come in the Church, that I would be true to it all the rest of my life. . . . We had this special prayer circle, then I knew that the time had come. I had a great deal to fight . . . myself, largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood. . . . But this revelation and assurance came to me so clearly that there was no question about it.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie of the Quorum of the Twelve said that President Kimball ‘‘prayed with great faith and great fervor’’ and when he finished his prayer the ‘‘Lord gave a revelation by the power of
the Holy Ghost.’’ Elder McConkie noted that the revelation came to
the ‘‘President of the Church and to each individual present.’’ The
result, he said, ‘‘was that President Kimball knew, and each one of
us knew, independent of any other person, by direct and personal
revelation to us, that the time had now come to extend the gospel and
all its blessings and all its obligations, including the priesthood . . . to
those of every nation, culture, and race, including the black race.’’

One of the most controversial chapters of President Kimball’s
administration was the Church’s stand against the proposed Equal
Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution. The First
Presidency decided to take a stand on the ERA because they interpreted
it as a moral issue. In a statement issued in October 1976, they noted
that Utah Territory had been one of the first places to give women
the right to vote and that the Church regarded women in an ‘‘exalted
role.’’ They admitted there were ‘‘additional rights’’ to which
women were entitled, but they firmly believed that the Equal Rights
Amendment ‘‘was not the answer.’’ They asserted that it was ‘‘a blanket
attempt to help women’’ which would instead bring ‘‘far more
restraints and repressions. We fear it will even stifle many God-given
feminine instincts. It would strike at the family, humankind’s basic
institution. ERA would bring ambiguity and possibly invite extensive
litigation.’’ They further warned that passage of the amendment might
nullify ‘‘many accumulated benefits to women in present statutes’’
and concluded, ‘‘We recognize men and women as equally important
before the Lord, but with differences biologically, emotionally, and
in other ways. ERA, we believe, does not recognize these differences.
There are better means for giving women, and men, the rights they
deserve.’’

As the ERA debate continued, the First Presidency felt constrained
to issue a follow-up statement in August 1978, warning that the ERA’s
‘‘deceptively simple language deals with practically every aspect of
American life, without considering the possible train of unnatural
consequences which could result because of its very vagueness—
encouragement of those who seek a unisex society, an increase in the
practice of homosexual and lesbian activities, and other concepts which
could alter the natural, God-given relationship of men and women.’’

Great publicity surrounded the 1979 excommunication in Virginia
of Sonia Johnson, the head of ‘‘Mormons for ERA.’’ Local Church
leaders emphasized that she was excommunicated, not for her
support of the ERA, but because her activities on behalf of ERA
were blatantly anti-Church. Ironically, the excommunication made
Sonia Johnson a national public figure because of the extensive press
coverage of her trial and its connection to the ERA. The resulting
publicity was embarrassing to the Church because it created the
impression that the Church was antiwomen. In one significant effort to indicate his sensitivity to women, President Kimball had already initiated the first all-Church women’s fireside in 1978 to correspond to the general priesthood meeting for men. Women were also authorized to offer prayers in sacrament meetings, after many years during which this privilege had been reserved for men.

Another issue with political and moral overtones was the proposed basing of the MX missile system in Utah and Nevada. In May 1981, “after the most careful and prayerful consideration,” the First Presidency spoke out against the proposal. Consistent with previous prophetic statements renouncing war and proclaiming peace, this statement deplored the “terrifying arms race” and the “building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry.” President Kimball and his counselors, N. Eldon Tanner and Marion G. Romney, expressed their grave concern at the plan, which would have involved the construction of thousands of miles of heavy-duty roads and more than four thousand shelters to house two hundred missiles, each armed with ten powerful warheads. They were worried about the adverse impact on water resources and about sociological and ecological factors. They expressed concern about the effects of placing such a weapons system in their own region, but they affirmed that they would have felt the same about building it anywhere else in the nation: “With such concentration, one segment of the population would bear a highly disproportionate share of the burden.”

Recalling that the Mormon pioneers came to the West “to establish a base from which to carry the gospel of peace to the peoples of the earth,” they found it ironic that in this same region “there should be constructed a mammoth weapons system potentially capable of destroying much of civilization.” Concerned with “the pressing moral question of possible nuclear conflict,” they pleaded with national leaders “to marshal the genius of the nation to find viable alternatives” in order to “secure at an earlier date and with fewer hazards the protection from possible enemy aggression which is our common concern.”

This statement was criticized by some portions of the press for the apparent tendency of a church to involve itself in political matters. Some critics apparently misunderstood the statement and accused the Presidency of arguing against the basing system for “parochial reasons,” whereas in fact they had condemned nuclear war in general. There is some evidence that the Church’s position had a significant impact on the Reagan administration’s decision to withdraw the MX basing system proposed at that time.

Beginning in the early 1970s, there was an increasing desire in the Church for a unified Latter-day Saint edition of the King James Bible as well as improved reference material for the other standard
works. In 1972, as Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve, Spencer W. Kimball had called several specialists to work on a committee headed by General Authorities and given the charge to prepare unified editions of the scriptures. The committee recommended that the LDS edition of the Bible contain cross references to all standard works, have chapter headings emphasizing doctrinal content, and make use of the Joseph Smith translation. When Spencer W. Kimball became Church President, he provided great impetus for the completion of this work. The LDS edition of the Bible was issued in May 1979 and the triple combination in August 1981.

In the fall of 1974, the Church announced it would divest itself of the fifteen hospitals it had been operating in Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming, turning them over to a nonprofit corporation called Intermountain Health Care. It was felt that an international church should spend its money on the health needs of members throughout the world, not just the needs of members in a few states. Under President Kimball's direction, additional health missionaries were called to augment the 120 already serving on Indian reservations in the United States and in twenty foreign countries.

In 1976, President Kimball announced that he no longer had time to act as chairman of the board of various businesses in which the Church had an interest. While his lengthening stride was applied to more vigorous Church activity, he relegated the business world to others. Other General Authorities assumed positions as board chairman or board member of such corporations as ZCMI, Hotel Utah, Utah–Idaho Sugar, Beneficial Life Insurance, Zion's Securities, Deseret Book, Deseret Press, and the Deseret News.

In 1979, President Kimball began suffering health problems, beginning with surgery to correct a subdural hematoma. Because of his advanced age, the latter condition took a heavy toll on the prophet, and after recurrence of the problem in 1981 his activity was drastically curtailed. In July 1981, he called Elder Gordon B. Hinckley of the Quorum of the Twelve to be an additional counselor along with Presidents Tanner and Romney. When N. Eldon Tanner died in December 1982, Marion G. Romney was made First Counselor and Gordon B. Hinckley Second Counselor in the First Presidency. Because President Romney's health was also failing, President Hinckley had to carry the whole burden of the First Presidency in directing the administrative affairs of the Church.

In retrospect, it is obvious that President Kimball's leadership had a dramatic impact on the Church. The membership grew by more than two-thirds, and the number of stakes more than doubled. President Kimball was responsible for literally internationalizing the Church. This was fitting for the man who had for many years been a leader
in the Church’s work with American Indians, and who as President received the revelation extending the priesthood to black people. Although he will undoubtedly be remembered for the growth he spurred and for the administrative changes he made to streamline the Church and simplify its operation, he will be most fondly remembered for his compassion, which infused his religion with an authentic universalism. He succeeded in striking a balance between creative—even adventurous—growth and change on the one hand and the protection of cherished values and a love of humanity on the other.

Always genial and friendly to both members and nonmembers of the Church, President Kimball became more expressive of that love in his later years. First-time visitors as well as old friends often received an embrace and sometimes a kiss on the cheek. One person termed this an experience that “melts the marrow in your bones.” President Hinckley declared:

President Kimball’s love for the people and their love for him as the prophet of the Lord and as President of the Church have been as a catalyst in building a great spirit of unity among the membership of the Church. Love for others is of the very essence of his nature, and his outreach has touched Latter-day Saints far and near. He has embraced the whole membership in that spirit of brotherhood and mutual concern which are the very heart of the Gospel of the Master.

I came to know President Kimball’s love for others in a personal way. Several years ago, my mother developed a sore on her lip which did not heal. The family worried about it and urged her to seek medical attention, but she refused. She wanted to treat it in her own way, and she had doubts about the efficacy of medical science. Her own treatment did not work, and the sore grew larger. Members of the family spoke with one voice in urging her to see a physician, and we had the support of local Church leaders, but still she refused. Finally, I got in touch with a General Authority for whom I had special respect and asked for his help. He responded kindly and invited me to bring her to his office, where he told her the story of his own skin cancer and its removal by a physician. He urged my mother to take the same course. Before we left, he gave her a beautiful blessing in which he promised her that if she would seek medical help she would “live long and bless many.” Although she was very impressed with the experience, she still resisted medical treatment.

Three years later, in 1976, I reached a point of incredible frustration. The sore had grown so large that she was embarrassed to go out and had great difficulty eating. In desperation, I wrote a letter to President Kimball in which I recounted the history of my mother’s sore and our unsuccessful efforts to persuade her to seek medical
attention. I asked him if there was any way he could help. Soon afterward, his secretary called my mother and endeavored to make an appointment for her to see President Kimball in his office. She wanted very much to see him, but she was in a weakened condition, had suffered a fainting spell, and was so distressed that she hesitated to go. The next day, President Kimball called her on the phone and talked with her for approximately half an hour. He told her of his own medical history, suggested that his own life had been saved through medical science, and implored her to see a physician. He was gentle, yet firm, and he did it with a touch of humor. He told her that he and the other brethren would pray for her at their regular temple meeting. Immediately afterward, my mother agreed to seek medical help. She entered a hospital, and with the help of a renowned cancer specialist the cancer was arrested through radiation treatments. As a result of the direct intervention of President Kimball, her life was prolonged for an additional eight years before she finally passed away in her late seventies.

The man who asked the members of the Church to lengthen their stride and quicken their pace was always the exemplar. In 1979, he declared, "This impression weighs upon me—that the Church is at a point in its growth and maturity when we are at last ready to move forward in a major way. . . . Now the basic decisions needed for us to move forward, as a people, must be made by the individual members of the Church." The people have responded to his impressive leadership, and President Kimball’s remarkable administration will be remembered as an historic period marked by great change; by stirring missionary energy; and by deep, unconditional love.
The Mark of the Lamb

The mark of the Lamb
was on his countenance;
his tender voice
bade us feed on the fruits
of salvation and clothe
in the robes
of righteousness.

His meekness and mildness
called us to him
as his children.
We knew him;

And God knew him.
And God knew him.

—Sally T. Taylor

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Mesquite and Sage: Spencer W. Kimball’s Early Years

Ronald W. Walker

For many of us the public image of President Spencer W. Kimball remains a fond memory: his diminutive five-foot six-inch form standing behind the massive Tabernacle podium; his cancer-stricken, gravelly voice, struggling to be heard; his earnestness; his unquestioned gentleness and well-wishing. We also remember his occasional reveries. During these times, the cadence of his delivery might perceptibly change and his features soften. Usually, he would begin with a simple “I remember.” What followed would be a memory of youth, when young Spencer was growing up in Thatcher, a turn-of-the-century, rural Mormon village situated in the Gila River valley in southeastern Arizona.

Such moments were not infrequent. During his forty-two-year ministry, Spencer W. Kimball spoke of his beginnings in many of his talks and sometimes in letters or published articles. When taken together, his statements provide something of an autobiography, a task that the indefatigable diarist never quite managed. While they do not provide a full and probing view of his youth, they give a glimpse into his early life and times. They also give us some insights into his preaching. While he was sometimes content simply to tell of a shaping event or describe a youthful scene, his purpose on other occasions was more serious. He believed his sermons should “get people to doing things,” and as a result his reminiscences were often designed, if only implicitly, to “deliver a message and teach a lesson.”

But the warm and sober character of his memories also owed a great deal to President Kimball’s own personality and to his early, cradling Mormon village. Here was a classic case of a dutiful son relishing and reflecting the values of his upbringing. He was, after all, very much a product of Thatcher, that frontier, firm-valued Mormon village planted amidst the desert lands of Arizona.

“Now and then, when the moment is right, some particular scent—perhaps only the green grass, or the smell of sage brought from a distance by a breeze—will take me back to the days of my youth in Arizona,” President Kimball recalled in life’s twilight.

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There were evenings those many years ago, at about sunset, when I would walk in with the cows. Stopping by a tired old fence post, I would sometimes just stand silently in the mellow light and the fragrance of sunflowers and ask myself, "If you were going to create a world, what would it be like?" Now with a little thought the answer seems so natural: "Just like this one." 2

Arizona was "earth and heaven to me." 3 Of course he had not forgotten how demanding its soil was. The land was "arid" and "dry," but, withal, it was his beloved homeland, filled with memories of "happy days." 4

With perhaps one exception, his earliest recollections began there. He vaguely recalled the trauma of vacating in 1898 the family's small red brick home on Salt Lake City's Fourth North and Third West streets. 5 It was a drizzly April day, but the sky was not the only source of precipitation. "It was raining tears—great welling tears, that morning when my Pa and Ma and their six children left the sophisticated urban community of Salt Lake City for the great new land of the south." 6 The First Presidency had called Andrew Kimball, Spencer's father, to preside over the St. Joseph stake, and dutifully the Kimball family started the long journey at the Denver and Rio Grande depot. It was a three-day trip across the Rockies to Pueblo, Colorado, then south to Albuquerque and Deming, New Mexico, and finally west again to Thatcher. Three-year-old Spencer faintly remembered the excitement of their arrival. It seemed that the entire town had turned out to view its new stake president. To highlight their esteem, many Saints carried flowers in their hands. "Roses," President Kimball later recalled, were in "great abundance." 7

Less than twenty years old, Thatcher still bore a frontier aspect. It was one of a string of Mormon communities founded along the banks of the Gila River during the 1880s, and upon the Kimball family's arrival near the turn of the century, the settlement maintained its religious homogeneity. 8 Named in honor of LDS Apostle Moses Thatcher, it was "almost entirely" Mormon. 9 The widely diffused LDS ward had about a thousand members, or about 160 families, but the village proper had a population of less than 650. 10 There were several small stores scattered throughout the village, wherever, as one local citizen remembered, "the owner decided was convenient." If one emporium were closed, a shopper might follow Thatcher's "footpaths through tangled mesquite, Johnson grass, tall weeds and corn to the other store-keeper's house." In addition to its several mercantile houses, the town had "a blacksmith shop, flour mill, saloon, and a school house." 11

Two community buildings loomed large in Spencer's later memories. The first was Robinson Hall. "I can remember going to
the old Robinson Hall in Thatcher, Arizona, almost as early as I could walk," he reminisced.

It was only two blocks from our home, and we could walk to and from it, and we crossed the Union Canal time and again. This big Robinson Hall was a brick building of rectangular shape, and an all-purpose building for the community dances, for the Sunday School and Primary, for all Church services, for the funerals, for celebrations, and for everything that went on in our little rural town. There was also the multipurpose Allred Hall, located two blocks north of Robinson Hall on Main Street. This frame structure was also used for church meetings such as Sunday School and Primary. In addition it housed the Gila Academy, the meetings of the local Polysophical Society, and various community gatherings. It was here that Spencer was confirmed a member of the Church.

No doubt Andrew Kimball and his "citified" family at first found their new Arizona homeland spare and taxing. During their first several months in Thatcher, the eight Kimballs rented a single-room house. Later they exchanged these lodgings for a small three-room adobe home whose roof often failed during an Arizona downpour. Outside their new residence, the family pitched a white tent (ironically christened "The White House") to provide expanded living space. Spencer recalled many times sleeping in the auxiliary quarters, though once the frightened youngster was awakened by the tent's collapse in a windstorm.

In order to sustain themselves, the family secured shortly after their arrival a ten-acre plot situated on the outskirts of the community. The land was untamed desert covered with mesquite bushes and chaparral. "How to get rid of them, how to clear the land—that was the question." Fortunately the seasoned settlers understood the newcomers' difficulty.

The first thing we knew, the brethren from Central Ward had come those several miles with their picks and shovels, their axes, and they began to help us clear our ten acres. They came from Layton Ward, and then they came from Pima Ward. They came before we knew it, almost. With the help of my father, who was a very excellent worker, and two sons who were older than I was, we soon had the place ready to plant.

Eventually the family built and occupied yet another home on the southern edge of the village. From their new homesite, the family could view an expanse of farmland to the south and east; the family garden was positioned to the west. The little acreage had a typical configuration. Immediately behind the house, there was a well and a big wooden tank that stored water. A tool building was located there, too. Farther back, retreating successively to the south, were the
woodpile, pigpens, corrals, haystacks, and the granary.\textsuperscript{13} A row of neatly planted cottonwoods provided shade, wood, and a shielding border from the rest of the community.\textsuperscript{16} The site became \textit{home}:

It was the same red brick house through the days of security and the days of desolation, the same shelf-filled pantry, the same wood stove and water tank, the same parlor with its rag carpet and the same old clock ticking away the hours and days and years, but stability and sureness and peace were there, for Mother was there, and security was there, and the house breathed belongingness.\textsuperscript{17}

Spencer's nostalgic memories provide no evidence that the home housed human foible and tension. The nearest thing to a breach of the Mormons' Word of Wisdom health code lay in his mother's "crust coffee" brew, which amounted to nothing more grave than burned bread scrapings added to a mixture of hot water and cream.\textsuperscript{18} The Kimballs framed and hung throughout their house inspirational mottoes, which might be either painted or embroidered.\textsuperscript{19} Such Victorian uplift was not simply cant. The family frequently had evening worship devotions,\textsuperscript{20} eschewed negative comment toward LDS General Authorities, and met each morning and evening for prayer.

We always had a big table for the breakfast meal because we had thirteen in our family, eleven children. They weren't all there at the same time, but we generally had a large group. At the table the chairs would all be placed with their backs to the table, and then we would all kneel down around and have our family prayer. And our parents always let us participate by taking turns so that we all knew how to pray.\textsuperscript{21}

(While eleven children were born to Olive and Andrew, there were probably never more than nine children in the home at one time. One child was left buried in Salt Lake City, and the tenth died before the eleventh was born.)

The family hearth bespoke basic values. Living was parsimonious and communal, to be secured by godly labor. "There was little money and seldom enough to go around," Spencer recollected.

Going without and making do was our way of life. We learned to share: we shared the work; we shared joys and sorrows; we shared our food and our means. We had genuine concern for one another. Our daily prayers reminded us how dependent we are upon the Lord. We prayed and worked continually for our daily bread.\textsuperscript{22}

These rural, frontier values were a bequest of Spencer's devout parents, both of whom were a single generation removed from Mormonism's founding era. Olive was the daughter of Salt Lake City's Thirteenth Ward bishop, Edwin D. Woolley, while Andrew maintained the tradition of church service begun by his father, Heber C. Kimball,
President Brigham Young’s counselor. Together, the two exerted enormous influence on their son, who in later years spoke of them in glowing terms. His red-haired mother was a “wonderful” and “beautiful, little woman.”23 Spencer sensed that her domestic energy and ability helped make “ends meet,” as her well-filled larder attested.24 Musically gifted, she played the organ, sang for church gatherings,25 and indelibly left her mark on the boy by sometimes humming such Church hymns as “Improve the Shining Moments” while she worked in the house.26 Clearly, hers was a supportive and nurturing home. “From my infancy, every time I entered the house, I called, ‘Mama,’ over and over until I found her,” Spencer recalled. “Totally satisfied in the security her presence afforded, I ran again to play. Just to know she was there! That was all.”27

Olive Kimball served as a counselor and later as president of the Thatcher Relief Society. Her duties often took her outside her home. She attended the usual array of early twentieth-century Relief Society meetings, sewed clothes for ailing neighbors, and consoled friends whose children had been taken in death.28 “That’s the kind of home I was born in,” Spencer related, “one conducted by a woman who breathed service in all her actions.”29

He etched his father in equally favorable terms, calling him “a handsome person; tall, with dark piercing eyes and a commanding appearance.” He carried a “radiant smile” that warmed those around him.30 Spencer remembered him as fastidious, insisting that the Kimball home and yard must be clean and neat. “It just had to be that way.”31 His father also believed firmly in the virtues of resolution and independence. “He didn’t just tell others to be self-reliant,” Spencer remembered, “we were taught to exemplify it as a family. We raised almost all of our own food. He always wanted a garden—he wanted a garden to eat from and a garden to smell.”32

Andrew Kimball presided over the St. Joseph stake for more than twenty-six years and, in the role of stake president, was Thatcher’s leading citizen. Spencer thought his father’s service exemplary.

I believe that father so ministered to his people that he fulfilled a blessing given him by President Joseph F. Smith, who promised that the people of the Gila Valley would “seek unto him as children to a parent.” Although I am sure I did not then fully appreciate his example, the standard he set was one worthy of any stake president.33

Young Spencer was especially struck by his father’s charity and diligence.

There was also an informal side to Andrew Kimball. Previous to his Arizona appointment, he had served as missionary and later as president of the LDS Indian Territory Mission in Oklahoma. In the
process, he had acquired the nickname among his close friends of “Cherokee Kimball.” He had also accrued a considerable collection of Indian souvenirs, pictures, and stories. “My first recollection was when we children used to gather around our father and implore him to sing us Indian songs and tell us Indian stories.”

Spencer Kimball’s universe was filled by myriad other people and events that shaped the perceptions of the sober-minded youth. Life’s lessons seemed everywhere present. There was, for instance, the neighbor who moved about the town for several days on crutches. “He was evasive when asked the cause of his misfortune,” Spencer reported, “but an eye witness told me, as he chuckled: ‘John stubbed his toe on a chair in the night and in his quick, fierce anger, he kicked the chair and broke his toe.’”

Nature was often a tutor. Little Spencer once noticed a hatching chick.

I picked up the cracked egg and thought I would help the little one. It must be very difficult for a tiny, weak little bird to work its own way out into the world. Perhaps it needed help. So I carefully picked off the shell, piece by piece and soon there lay in my hand a little chick, but its struggles ceased and it died in my hand.

The boy sensed he had learned something valuable.

Why should . . . [the chick] die when the others which had no help were moving about with increased strength? Then I came to realize that I had not helped but had harmed the little one by pushing nature. I came to realize that the Lord knew what he was doing when he worked out his program for the birds and fish and animals and men.

The discovery of a town kleptomaniac was another incident that left an impression. For some time buggy whips, buggy robes, and an assortment of other articles had strangely disappeared. At last they were found cached beneath the floorboards of a neighbor’s porch, which eventually elicited a young man’s confession. “I remember how shocked we fellows were—how we pitied him because he had developed this terrible weakness.”

The itinerant patent medicine salesman who periodically visited the village with his one-horse enclosed hack embodied a different and perhaps less malevolent kind of human weakness. “He generally had special bottles of medicine, maybe a dollar a bottle, which would cure everything: constipation, liver disorders, headache, backache, stomach ulcers, appendicitis, ingrown toenails, summer complaints, heart failure, and all the other things.” Spencer failed to indicate if the Kimballs were paying customers.

The boy quickly learned that the annual Fourth of July horse races brought out the unseemly in some of his neighbors. “I noted that
many of them had cigarettes in their lips and bottles in their pockets and some were ugly drunk . . . with bleary eyes and coarse talk and cursing.' As the ponies were matched and sometimes even after the races began, someone might shout, "‘Fight! Fight! Fight!’" Soon "‘all the men and boys would gravitate to the fight area which was attended with blows and blood and curses and hatred.’" Spencer was nauseated by the repeated spectacle. "‘I made up my mind that I would drink the pink lemonade on the Fourth of July and watch the horses run, [but] that I never would drink liquor or swear or curse as did many of these fellows of this little town.’"

He was equally put off by the "‘great deal of drinking’" that sometimes occurred at Church dances. In later years, he told the story, which may have been lifted from village lore, of a drunken young man who asked a popular girl to dance.

"‘No sir, I don’t know you,’ " she declined.

"‘Go to Hell then,’ " was his reply.

"She told her three big brothers who were there that night,” Spencer recounted, "and so they had called him outside and took off their coats and rolled up their sleeves and said, ‘Now you apologize to that girl.’

"‘He came back to her and said, ‘I came back to tell you you don’t have to go where I told you to; I have made other arrangements with your brothers.’ ‘"

The excitement and spectacle of the burning of Robinson Hall must have been one of the most dramatic memories of his youth. "‘We had no fire department,” he recalled, "‘but all men and their sons rushed across the town at the earliest call of ‘fire.’ ‘" Soon the fire fighters were organized into a frantically energized line, scooping buckets of water from the Union Canal and passing them quickly to the fire several city blocks away. "‘Many buckets of water were thrown on the fire, but the fire was gaining and finally the walls stood out as blackened sentinels, and we returned to our homes saddened and defeated.’" Even in defeat, the incident taught a lesson about togetherness in shared turmoil.

The citizens of Thatcher learned firsthand of the fragility of their environment and the exploitative nature of some "‘special interests.’" The mines upriver in Clifton and Morenci for a period dumped their tailings in the San Francisco River, a tributary to the Gila. "‘The hard clay came in our irrigation water . . . and coated our farmlands, our productive acres, with a hard layer . . . almost like cement and crops could not push their blades out through it.’" Spencer and his family were not taken in by the laissez-faire slogans of the mine owners. "‘Freedom for whom?’ he asked in disgust. "Eventually the controversy was settled favorably to the settlers by litigation.
The Arizona setting was harsh enough without such systematic and intentional despoliation. Drinking water had to be raised from wells that might descend fifty feet into the ground. As one empty bucket went down, another, filled by the circular motion of a long rope, ascended. Spencer thought the water "cool and pleasant," but in fact it was potentially dangerous. The wells were left open and therefore were easily susceptible to falling animals and other contamination. Seepage from nearby corrals and latrines posed a further danger. Moreover, the settlers unknowingly shared their germs. On a hot day, customers visiting one of Thatcher's retail stores could step to the rear and drink water from a universally used dipper, a practice that was even more common during community-wide celebrations such as the Fourth of July. The cost of such unsanitary practices was terrifyingly high. "I remember when I was little," President Kimball later noted, "that there were many funerals."43

Unhealthy water was not the only bane. During the summer, flies were "so thick you could hardly see out of the screen door in the evening." Typhoid fever was particularly rampant. Local medical services were woefully inadequate to meet these challenges. "There were no hospitals, no nurses, and no trained people except the country doctor who had more than he could ever do."44 With little other recourse, settlers learned when an epidemic struck to flee with their ill children to the mountains around Thatcher. There, "there were no flies, no sour milk, no heat and many babies' lives were saved."45 Gradually, as Spencer assumed manhood, conditions greatly improved. "From gunnysack-covered outdoor coolers on which water was poured frequently to iceboxes where a dime's or quarter's worth of ice would keep sweet the milk and some of the food. . . . Later came a windmill to pump the water into a closed tank from a closed well. . . . Then glory be, a public water program piped from a protected spring or deep well right into our home, and lifesaving trips to the mountain were more rare, burials farther separated, sick beds reduced and pollution stopped."46

At times the settlers must have thought the elements unrelenting and without scruple. Subjected to southern Arizona's blistering heat, crops might fail in two weeks without water. And there never seemed enough water. "Around the table, we talked of water, irrigation, crops, floods, hot, dry weeks, and cloudless skies," Spencer recalled. "We used to look for clouds somewhat as did Elijah and his people after the three-year drought. . . . We learned to pray for rain—we always prayed for rain."47 But the heavens were capricious. The late summer rains were often cloudbursts that filled the dry washes and roared against the settlers' precarious brush and rock dams, sundering them, and leaving the canals empty and the land dry. "It seemed that nearly every
time there was a storm, instead of getting the benefit of the storm, we got drier country because the dam was broken.'"\textsuperscript{48}

But the men and women of the community were not passive in their extremity. After the collapse of the diversion system, the cry would be raised: "'Everybody to the upper part of the valley to rebuild the dam!'" The water had to be captured before it roared past them to the sea. While Spencer himself was too young to join the older boys and men, the able-bodied men of the village rushed to the headwaters, where they worked in the flood, "'hauling brush and trees, rocks and dirt.'" "'Horses floundered and were sometimes drowned and men had narrow escapes.'" In later years, the community learned to build more substantial "'sausage dams,'" with wire mesh enclosures to hold the rocks in place. Still later, they made concrete dams complete with spillover aprons that prevented washouts.\textsuperscript{49}

Work was as inherent a part of everyday life as the natural movement of the sun overhead. At the age of five or six, Spencer was deputized to gather eggs shortly before sundown. "'It was no small job for a boy to find the hidden nests of eggs,'" he reminisced. Lugging his "'rather large bucket,'" he scoured the premises each evening. Eggs might be found in the barn, the granary, the buggy shed, woodpile, or even hidden among the uncut shoots of grass.\textsuperscript{50} While still a youngster, he was also assigned to work the family "'lizard.'" This homemade contraption was fashioned from a Y-shaped tree limb and, when hitched to the mare, was used to ferry a barrel of water. Spencer's job was to harness the horse to the lizard and walk her to the "'big ditch'"—the Union Canal which ran a block below the Kimball home. Using a bucket he would scoop water from the canal and pour it into the barrel. Then he would take his precious bounty back home to water the roses and violets and small shrubs. The task helped give him a reverence for the life-giving fluid. "'Water was like liquid gold,'" he came to believe, "'so reservoirs became the warp and woof of the fabric of my life.'"\textsuperscript{51}

There were odd jobs around town, too. When the family made an improvised icebox to store its perishables, Spencer was given the ongoing assignment to transport a dime's or quarter's worth of ice from the creamery home in his red wagon. He was also frequently dispatched to the Claridge and Hunt store to fetch mail or buy coal oil. The latter he carried in a gallon can with a potato jammed on the spout to prevent spillage. In order to hasten his errands, at times he took a shortcut down through an excavation that was destined to house the new church building. But when weeds began to grow large and thick and he saw several skunks lurking about, he learned to bypass the spot entirely. "'I had no interest in skunks as pets or as companions,'" he recalled.\textsuperscript{52}
In addition to fueling the family's coal oil lamps, Spencer also had the responsibility, along with his sisters, of cleaning soot from the lamp chimneys with newspapers and cleaning, cutting, and trimming the wicks. "Then we would fill the lamps with the new oil, and when darkness came and the chores were done and the supper was out of the way, we gathered around the table to get our lessons. The lamps were lighted, [and] we had sufficient light for every use."\(^{53}\)

As he grew older, there were more arduous tasks. He was commissioned to slop the hogs, which at one time numbered as many as fifty, "some big, some little, all sizes." The animals repeatedly tried the boy's patience. "They kept getting out of the pen," he remembered. They "always knew where the holes were in the fence." Worse, the hogs often breached community decorum and social position by wandering into the bishop's yard. Spencer had to retrieve them, apologize, and then find and fix the fence holes. In a few days the ritual would begin anew.\(^{54}\)

The growing boy also served as the family drover, herding the cows to and from the pasture each day. "It was quite a job, but I found it interesting to drive those cows down this long lane. When we would walk in the soft dirt the cool dust would work up through my toes and I always enjoyed that sensation." But there were perils to the task. Occasionally the animals fed too heartily on the alfalfa and became bloated, which caused Spencer's two older brothers to accuse him of malfeasance. To save the cows, a knife was stuck through the stomach wall to relieve pressure. The resulting odor, both during the operation and in the days that followed, was "very bad." "We had all these and many more experiences all of which were very normal to a farm."\(^{55}\)

He took part in the family's haying, assuming ever-larger tasks as he grew. First his father secured for him a bantam pitchfork, probably more to introduce him to the ritual of haying than as a device for actual production.\(^{56}\) Next he helped sharpen the mowing machine's numerous knives. While his older brothers held the blades to the grindstone, Spencer stood and turned the wheel. Often he worked until his back and legs ached and his hands were blistered. "I was glad when I was older and could sit on the seat and hold the knives against the stone while someone else turned the stone."\(^{57}\) He also hitched the horses to the machine and occasionally helped "drop" the hay as others lifted it onto the wagon.

He was not above using religious compliance to avoid labor. Once he and his brothers harvested hay on the day scheduled for Primary.

When it got about 2 o'clock and the bell rang way off in the country nearly a mile or two miles away, I said to the boys, "I have got to go to Primary." They said, "You aren't going to any Primary today." I knew that their thoughts were very definite so I watched my opportunity
Spencer had "much to do" with an orchard planted on their ten-acre tract. For one thing, he aided in the spacing and planting of the seedlings. "I found that ... I could sight those trees so that they were in total and perfect alignment. I was proud of the praise that I got from my father for being able to do that." As the trees matured, he found the peaches and other fruit to be "large and luscious," but also requiring "much hard work for little boys." The orchard provided an opportunity for Spencer to show his pluck. Once while they were irrigating the orchard, Andrew Kimball jokingly asked his eager and sober-minded son to dam the stream with manure. Not understanding his father's intended humor, or for that matter the difficulty of the task, Spencer immediately tried to comply.

I began to vigorously shovel the manure to dam off the water but soon found that the pulverized manure was all floating down through the orchard, which is, of course, exactly what my father wanted to happen. Soon I saw that I could never get a dam across the flood with just the pulverized manure, so I acted upon the thought to drive down a few pegs across the stream and get some boards to hold the manure and hold back the flow. I had no trouble then completing a dam across the stream.

There were moments of crisis. Once the boy returned from school to find one of the horses tangled in the wire fence. Its shoulder was badly torn; a six-inch piece of flesh and hide hung exposed from the wound.

I shall never forget that day ... What could I do? There was no veterinary in the town, my father was away, the neighbor men were at work, and perhaps none of the boys in the area could do any better than I could do and time was of the essence ... With the help of my sister ... I washed the wound with hot soapy water, spread over the gash some of the common liniment we always had for our animals and with a large needle and common thread, I began to sew it together. When I pushed the needle through his sensitive flesh and skin, he jumped back and struck at me with his front feet and bit me on the arm. ... I [then] put a noose on his lower lip with a stick in it and twisted his lip so that his attention was turned to his lip agony while I could sew up the gash and get the wound fixed. ... In and out, I pushed the needle through the quivering flesh until the edges of the wound were tied tight together.

The wound healed and the horse lived, though Spencer wondered if the animal saw him as his tormentor rather than his savior. Rural life in Thatcher required care and parsimony. The boy labored tirelessly straightening old nails and fence staples, uncoiling used wire, and recycling old posts. "Nothing was wasted or thrown away."
We milked the cows and drank and sold the milk. We ate the clabber, churned the cream and fed to our pigs the sour milk and the clabber left over. The horses and cows and pigs accumulated what seemed to me an exorbitant amount of droppings. This was not wasted. With a large square scraper and a well-trained team, I cleaned corrals and piled up the manure which seasoned and finally we scraped it out into the orchard where it was spread near the roots of the orchard trees.  

Spencer could not always understand his father’s standards. Andrew required that the surrey be washed. “Why wash the buggy?” the boy inquired. “It’ll just get dirty and dusty again after the first mile or two.” But the youngster’s questions had no effect. And when the surrey was repainted, there could be no smudges or crooked lines. At his father’s urging, he whitewashed the fence and covered the rose trellis with a coat of green paint. He also painted the barn, the granary, and the harness shed. “He insisted that everything be neat and clean and in good repair around the house and around the farm.”

There is evidence that during his boyhood Spencer did not entirely relish his arduous routines. Many years later he wondered, perhaps with intended irony, whether his older brothers hadn’t taken the easy jobs, leaving the more difficult ones to their younger sibling. Still, as an adult he had no regrets. I “worked hard and I am very proud of it,” he declared. “It made me strong.” And upon reaching maturity, he understood the wisdom of even his father’s rigor.

Little did I know as a boy that daily chores in the garden, feeding the cattle, carrying the water, chopping the wood, mending fences, and all the labor of a small farm was an important part of sending down roots, before being called on to send out branches. I’m so grateful that my parents understood the relationship between roots and branches.

There were other perspectives on the value of his labor. “We knew we were taming the Arizona desert,” he later acknowledged. “But had I been wiser then, I would have realized that we were taming ourselves, too. Honest toil in subduing sagebrush, taming deserts, channeling rivers, helps to take the wildness out of man’s environment but also out of him.”

Growing up in Thatcher was not all work. Between jobs during the hot summer afternoons, the boys frequently took a “dip” in a nearby swimming hole in the canal. With few other available community attractions, Spencer and his young friends found the daily arrival of the railroad train exciting. As they waited for the engine to come “around the bend,” the boys balanced themselves on the tracks, seeing how far they might walk before losing their equilibrium. Sometimes the sport was expanded to include fence beams. The daily train gained added allure from traveling Indians, who in exchange for allowing the railroad company transit across their reservation, rode carte
blanche on the train’s flatcars and boxcars. “Whole families were there,” Spencer recalled,

the women with their long, full, bright colored calico skirts, their long hair and their sack waists very full . . . [draping] over their hips and full enough that they could project their infants up under the sack for the feeding. The men, too, were interesting. They generally wore their hair long, near their shoulders, and . . . [had] bright colored bands around their foreheads and no hats.72

Like other boys in the village, Spencer learned to make his own whistles, flippers, balls, and slings. Slings were crafted from an elliptical, two-inch piece of leather to which a long thong was attached on each end. Spencer learned to swing the device around his head with great momentum. When the desired speed was reached, he would turn loose one of the thongs and the rock which had been lodged in the leather pouch would sail to its destination. “I was a pretty good shot,” he bragged. “I could hit a post at fifty yards’ distance or . . . hit the trunk of a tree.”73

There was time for team sports. When the boys began to play baseball, they pooled resources and purchased a bat, ball, and a catcher’s mitt. Other paraphernalia were sparse, with the players using rocks for base markers.74 At first the boys’ basketball games were equally primitive, played on dirt courts during twenty-minute recesses or after school. Later the Thatcher young men formally organized themselves into a community basketball team. Spencer and his comrades purchased their own equipment, traveled in privately furnished two-horse, white-top buggies, and paid for their meals and when necessary their lodging. Subsequently an instructor was appointed to accompany them.75 These makeshift conditions occasionally worked to their advantage. Playing their local games in the basement of the church meeting hall, the team used the arena’s low ceiling and several on-the-floor obstructions to advantage. High school opponents and even a visiting team from the University of Arizona fell to the talent of the Thatcher team and to its home field handicap.76

The boy also had a quieter side. From earliest childhood, he enjoyed music. “I was always interested in the singing of . . . songs,” he recalled, “and I generally raised my voice and sang lustily.”77 Church hymns such as “O Galilee! Sweet Galilee!”78 and “What Shall the Harvest Be?” were particular favorites. The latter he especially liked because it provided an opportunity to sing in parts. He also took to the piano, but not solely for reasons of melody. His father excused him from chores when practicing, and Spencer found the arrangement much to his benefit. When the southern Arizona sun became too unmerciful and his tasks too burdensome, he retreated to the relatively
cool family parlor where the piano was positioned. "I was glad to practice the piano," he said without guile.79

He also took to books. He read Black Beauty, Beautiful Joe, and other stories that inspired him with "a desire to be kind to animals." He reread many times Ben Hur and called it a "great story." Robinson Crusoe "stirred" his imagination, while he felt "perfect empathy" for Chief Tamenund, the forlorn survivor of James Fenimore Cooper's Last of the Mohicans. The Last Days of Pompeii had such an enduring effect that the book provided the text for several apostolic sermons pronounced a half century later. Spencer Kimball was clearly drawn to didacticism. He read from the Youth's Companion and his father's bound Juvenile Instructor volumes, finding "much pleasure" in the articles and serialized stories.80 Spencer's reading stood him in good stead as he went to school. Thatcher's elementary and middle grades were housed in "a 'T' shaped building, one room added to the other without a common door." The oddly configured building sat "in the center of a large dry lot, which was either muddy or dusty. . . . The [school's] old unpainted wood toilets were at the end of the playground," while a hand-pump well could be reached by walking a few steps outside the building. Usually, however, the Thatcher "marms" maintained a more convenient water supply, a partially filled bucket with a common dipper hanging at its side.81

Attendance was irregular, often spaced between the frequent demands of the Thatcher farms. Many students "dropped out"; those who remained might be rough-boned and barely manageable teenagers occupying a position in the third or fourth grade. Spencer attested that efforts to maintain discipline could be colorful. "Our lady teacher had come to the end of her patience and had notified the principal some blocks away. My blood curdled and my breath stopped as the tall man came in with the leather strap, pulled the surly youth from his two-seater wood desk and 'laid it on' with vengeance."82 Normally, decorum could be maintained by less violent means. Vexing students might be compelled to stand in a corner with their faces toward the wall, sit on a dunce chair in the front of the class, or remain after school to write phrases like "I WILL BE GOOD" or "I WILL NOT MAKE NOISE AGAIN" a hundred times on the blackboard. Spencer was not immune to such penalties. "I have a vague memory of having suffered some of these milder punishments myself," he admitted.83

Nor was he free from another endemic problem afflicting schoolboys. He found himself attracted to his teacher, Ettie Lee, who later secured fortune and fame as a California real estate investor and benefactress. "My memory goes back and I seem to remember this lovely young woman at the desk, waiting for us at the door or watching us on the playground. She was always immaculately dressed
and groomed. She was impressive. I secretly wished I were older or she younger.'"84

Some evidence remains of Spencer’s school achievements. He received recognition for his Arbor Day essay, and Miss Ettie granted him a certificate of award for punctuality and attendance covering a five-month span. But of far greater significance was his eighth grade diploma.

Well do I remember the days and weeks of preparation. Our clothes were mended and pressed, our shoes shined and the girls had new dresses and we were thrilled beyond expression. I think perhaps that no school honor has ever meant so much to me as that 8th grade diploma. In those days conditions were different. . . . [Students] entered school later, made less progress and naturally completed their work at a later age. In fact some of the 8th grade graduates were 18 and 19 and 20 and some were immediately married as soon as they completed the grades . . . Eighth Grade exercises were truly Commencement exercises.85

Spencer set himself apart by continuing his education at the LDS church-operated Gila Academy, which provided a secondary or high school curriculum. Each September, Church leaders vigorously campaigned to persuade students to enroll at Gila, but usually with limited success. "Very few could be induced to go on into High School and college," Spencer remembered. "The few of us who continued . . . were considered quite ambitious."86

At the time, Gila Academy may have been the largest educational institution in Arizona Territory,87 and its advanced classes brought "the thrill that comes from new truths learned." There was time also for youthful pranks. Spencer recalled the stuffing of the piano on April Fools’ Day and the surreptitious mixing of hydrogen sulfide and then "sitting innocently in class while its nauseating fumes filtered up through the rooms."88 The four-year educational experience was capped by the Academy’s commencement exercises, which were "tremendously important to us." They meant "the fulfillment of some of our dreams, the completion of a four year project, the conclusion of an epoch in our lives in which were joy and sorrow, disappointments and crowning achievements."89

It was not, however, an academic career that would distinguish the young man. From Spencer’s youth, his father sensed an unusual spiritual dimension in his son. He once told a neighbor, "Spencer is an exceptional boy. He always [has] tried to mind me, whatever I ask him to do. I have dedicated him to be one of the mouthpieces of the Lord—the Lord willing. . . . I have dedicated him to the service of God, and he will become a mighty man in the Church."90 From his earliest youth, he seemed drawn to church activity. At first church
attendance was simply a family routine that bestowed security. "Mother always took me with her," he explained. "Those warm afternoons I soon became drowsy and leaned over on her lap to sleep. I may not have learned much from the sermons, but I learned the habit of ‘going to meeting.’" As he grew older, he remembered himself "distressed" at critics who questioned the validity of testimonies expressed at the monthly fast and testimony meeting ("‘Why does Brother Doe declare with such definiteness that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God and that this is the Church and kingdom of God? I doubt if they know any more about it than I do.’".) He, himself, seemed to enjoy these meetings as well as the regimen of others. On the Sabbath there were Sunday School and sacrament meeting. On Monday he attended Primary exercises and, when he had reached twelve years of age, priesthood meeting. Wednesday afternoon brought "Religion Classes," when "some good, sweet sister came in [to our school] to give us a little spiritual training." In 1902, when Spencer was seven years old, the Saints of Thatcher broke ground for their new ward and stake building. He remembered donating a child's trove: nickels and dimes totaling two dollars. When the concrete building was completed, it had two large rectangular rooms, one for worship and a basement for recreation and classes. "I remember we had wires strung across the building and cloth curtains between the classes. We could hear something of nearly every class that was going on and even sometimes see, if the lights were just right." He especially recalled gathering around the building's potbellied stove to hear the lessons of two deacons' instructors, Orville Allen and LeRoi C. Snow. The latter intrigued the boys with "stories of the Red Sea, and the crossing of the Red Sea by the children of Israel, and Jerusalem where he had been." One of the boy's priesthood duties was the collection of in-kind fast offerings to aid the needy. Andrew afforded him the family buggy. "My responsibility included that part of the town in which I lived," he reported, "but it was quite a long walk to the homes, and a sack of flour or a bottle of fruit or vegetables or bread became quite heavy as it accumulated. So the buggy was very comfortable and functional." Sometimes Spencer traveled with his father across the expansive St. Joseph Stake to attend meetings. "No one needed to tell me what a stake was," he said.

I learned about it as I rode with my father in the buggy to the far-flung wards which extended [three-hundred and fifty miles] from Globe and St. David, Arizona, to the border of Mexico at Douglas and Bisbee, and a little later at Virden, New Mexico, and El Paso, Texas—two nations, three states, and seven counties.
When he was ten years old, Spencer was accorded a much longer excursion by his father. As a director of the Arizona Eastern Railroad, Andrew had at his disposal passes that permitted the father and son to travel to California en route to Utah to attend the LDS general conference. The boy was "thrilled" by the conference discourses of his uncle, President Joseph F. Smith, and by the other General Authorities. I "took their warnings seriously, even as a young man." 98 While in Salt Lake City, Andrew ushered the boy into President Smith’s office. Though undoubtedly impressed by the opportunity of shaking hands with the President of the Church, Spencer appeared more struck by his father’s obvious pleasure in the company of his son. "He introduced me to all of his family as though he were the proudest man in the world. And yet I was just one of the children. . . . It gave me a lift such as few things would ever do." 99

The boy slowly internalized the things that make men and women Mormons. As mother and son walked the dusty road to the bishop’s house, she patiently told of the need to take tithing eggs to the bishop. "The bishop receives the tithing for Heavenly Father," she explained. "You remember every evening when you bring in the eggs, I have you count them out. The first one goes in the small basket and the next nine go in the large basket." 100 His father taught the same principle by providing Spencer surplus potatoes, which he and his sister cleaned and sold for two dollars to the Brinkerhoff Hotel.

As we showed the money to Pa, he asked, "What are you going to do with it?" We indicated we would divide it before buying some ice cream, popcorn, and candy. Then he questioned, "What about your tithing?" We had earned so little money that we had quite forgotten our lesson with eggs, but he outlined it for us again. Afterward, we went through the orchard and climbed through a hole in our wire fence to take our ten cents each to the bishop, and he gave us a receipt. 101

In contrast, his decision to maintain the health standards of the Word of Wisdom came without direct parental counsel.

As I was out alone, milking the cows, or putting up the hay, I had time to think. I mulled it over in my mind and made this decision: "I, Spencer Kimball, will never taste any form of liquor. I, Spencer Kimball, will never touch tobacco. I will never drink coffee, nor will I ever touch tea—not because I can explain why I shouldn’t, except that the Lord said not to.

The boy’s vows remained sacrosanct. "There were many temptations that came along," he conceded, "but I did not even analyze it. . . . I [had] made up my mind that I would not." 102

He buttressed his outward religious observance by scripture reading. Attending a Sunday evening stake conference session where
Susa Young Gates, President Young’s daughter, spoke on the virtues of Bible reading, the fourteen-year-old young man was both troubled and impressed. Sister Gates concluded her remarks by asking the congregation of a thousand Saints how many had read the book from cover to cover. Only five or six timid hands went up. “It seemed that some of them were trying to explain: ‘We haven’t read it through but we have done much studying of parts of it.’ I was shocked.”

Sister Gates’ remarks (and the paltry response of the local Saints) galvanized him. He had, of course, read simplified, picture-laden Bible stories from his youth. But until now the actual Old and New Testaments had seemed too intimidating.

From that meeting I went to my home a block away, took the Bible from the shelf and climbed the stairs to my room in the attic of the house. I struck a match and lighted the coal oil lamp and began my intriguing exploratory journey into this great adventure through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and on and on, night after night, by the flickering light of a glass lamp.

He confessed there were some “reading nights” when “I was thought to be asleep.” However his family knew enough of his activity for some to be critical. His older brothers asked why he didn’t read something that he could understand. Still, he continued. “I found that there were certain parts that were hard for a 14-year-old boy to understand. There were some pages that were not especially interesting to me, but when I had read the 66 books and 1,189 chapters and 1,519 pages, I had a glowing satisfaction that I had made a goal.” His prodigious reading had required about a year.

There were other signs of his serious-mindedness. He was distressed when some of his comrades tried to kill birds with their “flippers.” Nor could he understand the destructiveness of the Thatcher boys who wantonly slashed watermelons in a neighbor’s patch. “I could never understand setting fire to things or breaking windows or tearing rugs or any of the mean tricks that were destructive in nature.” Sometimes he walked several blocks to school with William, a boy who apparently had been stricken with poliomyelitis. “How I ached for him when I had such strong straight legs and he with bent and crippled ones, gave such great exertion to cover the distance.”

At an unusually early age he embarked on “adult” things. He logged some of his “experiences” in an occasional diary when ten years old. At about the same time, he embarked on a multiyear memorization program. Thinking the long hours spent on a three-legged milking stool personally unproductive, he at first used his milking time to memorize familiar hymns. Then during the next several years, he worked on the LDS Articles of Faith and the Ten Commandments.
"I typed them up on cards and took them out with me where I milked and repeated them over and over until I knew them by heart." Later, as his proselyting mission approached, he followed the same procedure to memorize scriptural texts.111

Perhaps some of his early maturity came from experiencing early and poignant sorrow. He vividly recalled being called out of school because Bishop Moody wished to talk with the Kimball children at the family home. We "all came wonder-eyed out of [our] class rooms and converged and ran home fearing the worst. It was the worst. Gathering us all in his big loving arms, our bishop whispered softly, 'Children, your mama is dead.'"112 She and Andrew had gone to Salt Lake City in the hopes of a successful corrective surgery. "It was a great shock and a great sorrow to us. I remember very well going up to the side of the street and weeping my little heart out. I was eleven, weeping and saying, 'Mother, Mother, Mother.'"113 For some time thereafter, whenever Spencer entered the home, he remembered silently crying out for his mother, but "there were only mocking echoes of emptiness."114

After Olive's death, the family again on other occasions experienced "anguish, terror, fear, hopelessness." Andrew was away when two-year-old Rachel became ill and began literally to choke for breath. Gordon, an elder brother, helplessly held her in a chair, while Spencer and the other children stood nearby, "frightened and praying and weeping."

In terror, we watched the little body fight valiantly for air and life, then suddenly relax completely. The hard-fought battle was over. She had lost. Our older brother seemed to be reluctant to admit it was over. He held her for awhile, hoping hopelessly. And while we children convulsively held to each other in this traumatic experience, he tenderly carried the little lifeless body to the bed and covered it with a sheet and there welled up in our hearts an almost uncontrollable anguish and a dark void and deep emptiness.115

Spencer himself was not immune to severe illness. When ten years old, he recalled that he had "difficulty with my face and was healed."116 The problem was later diagnosed as Bell's palsy. More serious, four years later he experienced a high fever and debilitating dizziness that sent him to bed holding both sides of his head. It was typhoid, the scourge that took so many frontier lives. For a while the boy struggled for life.117 "My country doctor was devoted and attentive," he recollected, "but he had few and limited facilities and possibly too little knowledge. Well do I remember the long starvation period, the pain, the agonies and distresses of those many weeks which would seemingly never end. But, I was one of the fortunate ones—I lived."118
He lived, in fact, to venture to Missouri for his proselyting mission and then briefly to college before his further education was interrupted by World War I. He married and after several years settled in nearby Safford, the main non-Mormon town on the Gila strip. There he served in church callings and pursued a business career until his call to the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1943. This Churchwide ministry occupied the rest of his life, but rural, Arizona Mormonism never left him. For one thing, in later years he wondered about the adequacy of his formative experiences. "No one would ever have thought that some day I would be ... the President of the Church," he once offered candidly. "When they saw me pitching hay as a little fellow with a small fork ... or when I was digging ditches or planting trees, or any other thing, no one would ever have dreamed that someday I would be in this position."119 At other times, he thought there might be an explanation for his call. "The intellectuals did not dominate the Church in numbers," he concluded. "The great men were few. There were many, many common people in the Church, untrained unschooled. ... Maybe the Lord in getting this group needed one that was extremely common [to lead them]."120

Self-deprecation and modesty were traits of the man, but his self-assessment was accurate in at least one thing. He maintained a warm rapport with his fellow Saints, in part because, no matter where he traveled, Thatcher was near at hand. If his memories were a gauge, it stood for such human universals as cooperation and neighborliness, frugality and order, sacrifice and self-mastery, learning and growth, and struggle and joy. In short, it embodied for him the virtues and rewards of right living. No wonder in later years he kept alive that boyhood memory of resting on a Thatcher fence post, catching the hint of sage in the air, and averring that his world, if he should create one, might be "just like this one."121

NOTES

1Spencer W. Kimball to Frank C. Kimball, 15 March 1963, and Spencer W. Kimball to Guy Anderson, 19 March 1968, photocopies in Edward Kimball Collection, Archives and Manuscripts, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah (hereafter cited as Kimball Collection). This material, generously made available to me by Edward L. Kimball, gathers together many full and partial transcripts of President Kimball’s sermons and addresses. In addition, the Library–Archives of the Historical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City (hereafter cited as LDS Church Archives) has an extensive and chronologically arranged collection of Kimball material.


5The present-day address of the dwelling, which still stands, is 365 West 500 North, Salt Lake City.
Mesquite and Sage

Kimball, "This Great Lady," 4.


Kimball, "This Great Lady," 4–5.

Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 46.

Ibid.


Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, October 1963, 35.

Kimball, address delivered at Beneficial Life Convention, 3.

Kimball, in Conference Report, October 1963, 34.

Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 47; Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Houston Texas Area Conference 1979, 2; Spencer W. Kimball, in Quarterly Meeting of the Twelve, 8 March 1967, 1. Kimball Collection.


Kimball, in Conference Report, Houston Texas Area Conference 1979, 1.

Kimball, "Loving One Another," 127.

Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 47.


Spencer W. Kimball, in Quarterly Meeting of the Council of the Twelve, 10 April 1957, 1, Kimball Collection.


Ibid., 99.

Ibid.

Spencer W. Kimball, Lamanite Prophecies Fulfilled, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (Provo, 13 April 1965), 2.

Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, April 1955, 94.


Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, April 1974, 128.

Spencer W. Kimball, address delivered at BYU Ten Stake Fireside, 26 September 1971, typescript, 9. LDS Church Archives.


Spencer W. Kimball, address delivered at Brigham Young University Student Leadership Conference, Sun Valley, Idaho, September 1938. transcript, 10. Kimball Collection.

Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 46.

Spencer W. Kimball, "Stand by Your Guns," address delivered at Utah State University Institute of Religion, 14 October 1966, 8. Kimball Collection.


Kimball, "Stand by Your Guns," 12.

Ibid., 13.


Kimball, "Timing," 1; Kimball, "I Learned the Law of Tithing," 34.


Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 46.

Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 46; Spencer W. Kimball, "The Oils of Righteousness," address delivered at BYU Stake Conference, 13 January 1957, typescript, 3, LDS Church Archives.
Kimball, address delivered at Beneficial Life Convention, 3.

Ibid., 3–4.

Ibid., 3.

Kimball, excerpt from untitled sermon, n.p., Kimball Collection.
Kimball, address delivered at Beneficial Life Convention, 4.

Ibid., 3.

Kimball, "I Learned the Law of Tithing," 35.

The anecdote is told in an otherwise untitled Kimball letter to "My dear John," n.d., Kimball Collection.
Kimball, "Stand by Your Guns," 6–7; Kimball, address delivered at Beneficial Life Convention, 3.


Kimball, address delivered at Beneficial Life Convention, 4.

Spencer W. Kimball, "Integrity in Insurance," address delivered at Beneficial Life Conference, Mexico City, 9 July 1970. 1, Kimball Collection.


Kimball, excerpt from untitled sermon, Kimball Collection.

Ibid.

Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 47.

Ibid.


Kimball, an address delivered at Beneficial Life Convention, 5.


Kimball, "This Great Lady," 8.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Spencer W. Kimball, Commencement Address (Eden, Arizona, Eighth Grade and Ft. Thomas, Arizona, High School), 1935. 1, Kimball Collection.

Spencer W. Kimball, "Honor," an address delivered at Ricks College, 27 September 1965. 35; Kimball Collection; Kimball, Commencement Address, 1.

Kimball, "This Great Lady," 4.

Spencer W. Kimball, Commencement Address (Virden, New Mexico, High School). 20 May 1932, 1, Kimball Collection.

Ibid.

Kimball, in Conference Report, October 1943, 17.

Kimball, in Conference Report, October 1944. 43.

Ibid.

Spencer W. Kimball, "Circle of Exaltation," an address delivered at Brigham Young University, 28 June 1968. 1, LDS Church Archives.

Kimball, "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church," 46.

Ibid., 46–47.


Spencer W. Kimball, "The Image of a Stake," an address delivered at Regional Representatives Seminar, 4 October 1973. 1, Kimball Collection.

Kimball, "Listen to the Prophets," 76.

Kimball, in Conference Report, Houston Texas Area Conference 1979, 2.


Kimball, "I Learned the Law of Tithing," 35.


Kimball, "What I Read as a Boy," 508.

Mesquite and Sage

10Kimball, "What I Read as a Boy," 508.
10Kimball, in Conference Report, October 1974, 118.
10Spencer W. Kimball, "No Greater Call," an address delivered at Sunday School Conference, 1 October 1967, 2. Kimball Collection.
10Kimball, an address delivered at Beneficial Life Convention, 6.
10Kimball, in Conference Report, October 1963, 35.
10Kimball, "Hope and Encouragement for Cancer Cure," 244–45.
10Kimball, in Conference Report, Houston Texas Area Conference 1979, 2.
10Kimball, "Stand by Your Guns," 11–12.
10Kimball, "Hope and Encouragement for Cancer Cure," 245.
10Spencer W. Kimball, Remarks at Quarterly Meeting of the Council of the Twelve, 8 March 1967, transcript, 1. Kimball Collection.
Prophet

Irony

That a man holding keys
Of the highest power
Still watched night
Crawl to his feet,
Alone on his knees.

Reassurance

That with the half voice
Of a small wind,
He spoke words that moved
Through flesh and bone
Into the Holiest of Holies.

— Cara Bullinger
"'Uncle Spencer': 1944–1985

Stanley B. Kimball

By the summer of 1944, I was seventeen years old, living in Denver, owned a car, and had literally and figuratively taken over the running of my life. I was also cornering into the wrong turn at the crossroads of maturing puberty.

The preceding October, Spencer W. Kimball, from Arizona, had been called as an Apostle by President Heber J. Grant. During that same summer of 1944, I visited relatives in my native state of Utah, where my grandmother informed me that she was a one-half first cousin to the new General Authority, making me a one-half first cousin twice removed. That was all the excuse I needed to try to secure an appointment with Elder Kimball.

In his office that July, I noticed he was deep into family genealogy. Fortunately for me, he mentioned a little problem he had with the line of one of his uncles, Abraham Alonzo Kimball, who just happened to be my great-grandfather—and, more to the point, the father of the grandmother who had raised me. Sensing an opportunity, I exuberantly announced that my grandmother knew all about that line and promptly called her on the phone and obtained the needed data.

During my appointment that day, I felt very awkward in addressing my distant cousin. I tried "Elder," "Brother," even "Apostle." Noting my confusion, Elder Kimball said, "Stan, you really should not call me by the sacred title of Apostle. How would you like to call me Uncle?" Since I had never known my father, and since my mother's brothers were very dear to me, I was overjoyed to be permitted to use this very special term, to even approximate such a relationship. And so this wonderful man immediately became "'Uncle Spencer.'" In subsequent years he more than lived up to this title, generously and kindly giving me counsel and help at many important crossways.

When I visited him in his office again later that summer, he asked me—offhandedly, it seemed—if I would like to take a walk. Surprised that he could spare that kind of time in a busy day, I quickly accepted. We walked up to the east wall of the temple, so close I could

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have touched it had I felt worthy to do so. Next we visited the grave of Heber C. Kimball, his grandfather and my great-great-grandfather, behind the Kimball Apartments on North Main Street. Back in his office, I felt impelled to tell him my problems. I vaguely realized he had sensed something was wrong and had taken me on this little walk to try to get me to confide in him. When I left him, he had relieved me of my personal burden. I experienced the miracle of forgiveness long before he wrote the book. I have spent forty years trying to honor what he did for me that day.

During the summer of 1946, my mother and I sailed to Hawaii on the Matsonia and discovered that the Kimballs and Elder and Sister Matthew Cowley were aboard on assignment to the islands. As we separated to our hotels in Honolulu, "Uncle Spencer" noted our phone number. Thereafter, my mother and I were graciously invited to every special occasion the Hawaiian Saints provided for the visiting General Authorities, one of which was a singular luau the like of which tourists never see. One day the phone rang, and I found myself invited to join Elders Kimball and Cowley and the Hawaiian mission president on a charter flight to the leper settlement on the nearly inaccessible Makanalua Peninsula of the island of Molokai. This experience was intensely emotional for me, and while I remember most of it only as a blur, one thing I will never forget. We had come to hold a conference with the Saints from various South Pacific islands who were confined there. Partway through the services, a choir sang "We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet" in Hawaiian. During the hymn, the mission president asked me to look closely at the necks of the choir members. I did so and observed in many cases tubes sticking out of scarves. Leprosy had destroyed their throats to such an extent that they could only breathe through these tubes. Somehow they had learned to sing in that fashion just for this special event. In trying to hold back tears, I got a blinding headache and, when called upon to say a few words, could only mumble briefly and sit down.

When I returned from my mission in 1951, "Uncle Spencer" gave me counsel about a career ("Go East and amount to something before returning to Utah") and about marriage ("There is no 'one and only'; there are no matches 'made in heaven'").

In 1963 I was again in Utah, this time with a family, visiting my mother. At this time, "Uncle Spencer" perceived I was having trouble in the role of the married only child of a divorced and possessive mother. He cared enough to take the time and effort to tell me what I had to do and to give me the courage to bring this three-way relationship into proper balance—a painful task I could never have attempted without his imperative, "You must do it."
"Uncle Spencer" was supportive for the more than ten years it took me to complete my biography of Heber C. Kimball. One day in July 1973, while I was in Utah on a research trip, he mentioned that he had collected many original family papers which I might find useful in my research. About midmorning on the Fourth, a few days before I had to return to St. Louis, the phone rang. "Stan, I am free for a short while; can you come right up?" I said, "Of course," and quickly left my apartment on Third East Street near Fourth South. On Fourth South, my Buick sputtered to a halt, and my limited knowledge of mechanics proved inadequate to the crisis. As I bent under the upraised hood—no buses, no taxis, hardly anyone around, and my valuable appointment time running out—I may have half-thought a prayer. I don't remember. What I do recall is the squeal of tires right behind me. A man stepped out and voiced the usual trite, but quite appropriate question, "Having trouble?" "Yes, damn it," I growled and explained my predicament. He took a look, freed my carburetor float, and the engine roared back to life.

I took a moment to thank him and jokingly asked if he were one of the Three Nephites. He was not. He operated his own garage. I asked what led him to stop and help me in the middle of a deserted downtown on a holiday and was rewarded with a nice story. He had been stationed at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, during World War II and was treated so well by some Mormons when he came into St. Louis on leave that he had promised himself to return the favor if he ever had an opportunity to help someone from Missouri. (He had noticed my license plate.) I thanked him again, shook his hand, and hurried off, just a little late for my appointment.

An hour or so later, "Uncle Spencer" had transferred to me a pile of Kimball family documents about ten inches high which eventually helped fill in many lacunae in the life of our mutual ancestor. With his permission, I secured photocopies of the documents, and the originals were then turned over to the Historical Department of the Church.

The research for the biography continued, and on 11 December 1975 President Kimball wrote me the following advice:

I hope sincerely that you will not be influenced unduly by those who claim to be true historians and in order to become true historians must tell all of the questionable and improper things in a person's life. . . .

I sincerely hope, Stan, that before the larger work goes to press that you analyze it very carefully to be sure there is no good work prostituted to pay tribute to the god of what is thought to be true historian ethics or standards. . . .
Please rest assured that I have great confidence in you in not only your ability but your integrity, and I hope you will take no offense at this suggestion.

Faithfully yours,
Uncle Spencer

"Uncle Spencer" visited our stake in St. Louis in 1961, 1970, 1977, 1978, and 1980. On one of these occasions, I was able to make a token repayment for his many kindnesses to me. When he came on 1–2 July 1978 to dedicate our stake center, we made much of the visit, for we discovered that this was the first time a President of the Church had returned to his former mission field to dedicate a chapel built by the Saints. We located, through an old-time member of the stake, a 1915 photograph of the missionaries in the East Missouri Conference of the Central States Mission, of which Elder Kimball had been conference president. We had previously determined that President Kimball no longer had this photograph, so we presented him with a framed copy. We also arranged a brief reunion with three sisters who still remembered President Kimball as a missionary in St. Louis sixty-two years previously, and we took him on a tour of some of his old mission haunts. First we went to 4260 Easton Avenue, where the Saints held their services in a converted meat market in 1915. Then we took him to 5195 Maple Avenue, where, as one of his last duties as a missionary, he had arranged the purchase, for $6,500, of a vacant building for the Church's use. Finally, we presented him with a framed map of St. Louis on which we had marked as many sites connected with his mission as we could determine. He was very pleased with all of this.

Three years later, on Friday afternoon, 12 June 1981, I was able to present him with the first copy off the press of Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer and to thank him again for his support, for the use of his personal collection of documents, and for what he had meant to me for nearly forty years.

Although I saw "Uncle Spencer" only irregularly and was certainly never "family," we corresponded fairly steadily between 19 March 1947 and 20 May 1982. In rereading these communications, I see that we discussed all sorts of personal, professional, and doctrinal matters. I note with surprise that he actually read and commented on all of my publications which I rather presumptuously sent him. Occasionally he even made corrections in my manuscripts. Bless his heart, once he even apologized to me for having been late in responding!

Out of all these letters, two passages mean the most to me. On 8 May 1953 he wrote:
It is most distressing to me to be under the necessity of advising you that special assignments given to me will have me in Central Montana through the week of June 22nd to June 28th, inclusive. I have tried in every way I can to shift and adjust, but it seems impossible. And so it looks as though it would be impossible for me to take care of your marriage on Thursday, June 25th. This is surely disappointing to me, not only to be unable to favor you, but also it might mean that I would miss you.

The other passage comes from a letter of 14 February 1948: ‘‘Though I placed your picture with those of my sons on my desk, where I could be quite near you, it has occurred to me that I may have failed to express in my last letter my thanks for it.’’

How does one say how much one loves such a man and how much one will miss him?
Entitlement

For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.
2 Cor. 4:11

Christ is entitled to Gethsemane;
Paul, to his super-Corinthian tribulations;
Joseph, to his fusillade;
Spencer, to bereavement, hardship, surgery.
Those who seek martyrdom
reward themselves with self-glory;
those who do not seek it,
but face it when presented,
are graciously given title;
and the more Christian they become,
the more able they will be
to profit from sickness,
persecution,
or death.

It is not suggested
that we pray to obtain adversity
(the Lord asked for the cup to be removed);
but that we should find virtue in it,
and feel gratitude for it.

Gazing at the ceiling from a hospital bed,
looking in vain from an asylum window,
under interrogation, on the rack,
tied to the stake, to a graveside,
we receive no badge, no medal,
except a bruised body,
a submissive mind,
and a contrite spirit.

The distinction's unsought,
but accepted as a mark of worthiness:
to be numbered with the Lord
as his retainer in the ranks of suffering—
an entitlement.

—Arthur Henry King
March 1976

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A Prophet for All the World: Glimpses into the Life of President Spencer W. Kimball

Dell Van Orden and J Melan Heslop, with Lance E. Larsen

As editors of the Church News, we had the opportunity of traveling widely with President Spencer W. Kimball. From 30 December 1973, when he became the prophet, we followed him through forty countries on six continents. During his twelve years as President of the Church, he traveled well over half-a-million miles. From what we saw of him both in public and private, we testify that he was truly a prophet for all the world.

The most notable thing about President Kimball was his love for others. No matter where he traveled, he reached out. At the end of conferences, he would often look at the congregation and say, "I want to shake hands with everyone." This was his way of saying, "I love you; you are important to me." He did this in La Paz, Bolivia, with a congregation of over fourteen hundred members. Mothers carried their babies in their arms and on their backs as they passed by him. Old people, young people, the lame, the crippled, and the blind, as well as the healthy—they all came to shake hands with the prophet. It was a touching sight. For forty minutes they filed past President Kimball and other brethren. Some left crying; others left with exuberant smiles.

After a conference in Samoa, President Kimball announced that he wanted to meet the members. He stood at the pulpit shaking hands with the men and kissing the sisters. The people approached from one side, greeted the prophet, then walked down the other. At least that was the arrangement. But soon we began noticing the same people back again, to greet him over and over. If someone hadn't caught on, that could have gone on all day.

In Tokyo, when President Kimball announced that he wanted to meet the members, a number of people stood waiting by the roped-off area. Off to the side a blind man was ushered up to the rope. He couldn't see President Kimball, but it was clear by the look on his

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face that he could sense the prophet approaching. He waited very, very patiently. When President Kimball drew near, the blind man extended his hand and President Kimball took it. They embraced without saying a word, and tears came to the blind man’s eyes.

In Mexico City twenty-five thousand members gathered. President Kimball told of a dream he had had some thirty years before in which he saw the destiny of the Mexican people. He saw wards and stakes organized by the hundreds, a temple filled with men and women, and thousands of young men and women on missions. He saw the people of Lehi as engineers and builders, as administrators of the land, as heads of cities and nations. He saw their children becoming attorneys, doctors, owners of shops and factories. In his dream he saw them no longer as servants but as employers.

The people were greatly moved. After the meeting, the twenty-five thousand stood and burst into “‘God Be with You Till We Meet Again.’” While they sang, President Kimball reached into his pocket, pulled out a white handkerchief, and started waving it to the Mexican Saints, many of whom were crying openly. Suddenly that vast audience became a sea of white, waving handkerchiefs. After finishing “‘God Be with You Till We Meet Again,’” they were still not satisfied and went on to sing the traditional farewell song of Mexico.

The tradition of waving white handkerchiefs got started in São Paulo, Brazil, when President Kimball announced that the Church would build a temple there. The announcement brought immediate tears of gratitude from the members. At the end of the meeting the choir, seated high in a balcony, sang “‘We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet.’” Somebody pulled out a handkerchief and started to wave it, and next to him a second person, and across the way a third. Soon the whole audience was waving handkerchiefs at the prophet. When the meeting ended, no one left. The emotional high continued for a long time.

President Kimball never took this love for granted. Frequently when people visited him in his office, he would put his arm around them and give them a kiss. He said, “‘When people tell me that they love me, it is music to my ears. That’s what I live on.’”

He was always reaching out to others, touching lives. He understood the gospel’s central theme—that love changes people. Members who met President Kimball could easily see his love in his unself-conscious acts of charity. Once, while he and Sister Kimball were flying from Asunción, Paraguay, to Montevideo, Uruguay, their plane had to turn back when one of the engines stopped. When President and Sister Kimball landed in Asunción, “‘J’” took the opportunity to interview President Kimball in connection with his upcoming eightieth birthday. The room had no air conditioning and was rather warm.
The local mission president, who had been notified of the Kimballs’ return, drove out to the airport to look after them. He entered the room carrying two cold bottles of a fruit drink. He looked a bit perplexed when he saw three people sitting there; he knew he was short a drink. He gave the first bottle to Sister Kimball, who received it gratefully, and the second to President Kimball, who expressed his thanks. The President tipped the bottle up, took a long, cold drink, then handed it to “J.,” who smiled, took a swig, and handed it back. It was natural for President Kimball to share.

On another occasion, a group attending an area conference in La Paz, Bolivia, flew from sea level to 13,600 feet in two hours, which is not enough time to become acclimated to that high altitude. As the plane approached the La Paz airport, the highest in the world, an announcement over the public address system warned that because of the thin air, passengers could expect to get headaches and possibly chest and stomach pains. As soon as the door opened, Dell got a headache. Then when he stood up, his chest and stomach hurt. We rode down a winding road in a bus and checked into a hotel. Dell felt very, very sick. While he was lying on his bed feeling sorry for himself, the doctor came in and asked how he felt. Dell said he was dying, so the doctor sent up an oxygen tank. As long as Dell was breathing oxygen, he felt better, but when he wasn’t, he felt terrible. Half-seriously he felt as if the end were near and his family would never see him again. When he heard a knock at the door, he was impatient—somebody was disturbing his dying. He flung the door open, and there stood President Kimball. “How do you feel?” the prophet asked. Dell did some fast repenting. “President, I feel fine.” The President left and went to the next door, then the next. Everybody was ill, but President Kimball, who must have felt quite ill himself, was out checking on the welfare of others.

Missionaries were special recipients of his love and attention. On his way from Johannesburg, South Africa, to South America, President Kimball had a layover of several hours in Capetown, a city rich with history. This is where the Indian and Atlantic oceans meet and where early British ships stopped on their way to the Far East. President Kimball could have done interesting sight-seeing there, but instead he chose to meet with the missionaries. Word quickly went out to the twelve missionaries in Capetown to meet in one of the church houses. Nearly as many General Authorities attended that meeting as missionaries, but President Kimball treated those twelve missionaries the same way he would have treated three hundred.

At other times we have seen him walk down a corridor in a chapel with his arm around a missionary so that they could be alone to talk. He had equal concern for twelve hundred, or twelve, or one.
His loving concern for others caused him to be direct in sharing the gospel. Instead of merely making friends among nonmembers, he taught. While staying at a hotel in Germany, President Kimball learned that the desk clerk wanted to meet him, so he put on his coat and went down to the lobby. He could have merely said, "You have a lovely hotel here; the accommodations are very nice." But he didn't. After introducing himself, President Kimball asked, "What do you know about the Mormons?" When the man answered that he didn't know very much, the President said, "Would you like to know more?" The man said that he would. President Kimball wrote down his name and address, then said, "I'll see to it personally that missionaries contact you."

In Denmark, President Kimball expressed a desire to visit the Cathedral of Copenhagen to see the original of Thorvaldsen's famous statue of Christ, a copy of which stands in the visitors' center in Salt Lake City. The cathedral was closed for repairs, but a knock on the front door brought the caretaker. After the visitors explained who they were, he graciously let them in. Along the sides of the dimly-lit cathedral were statues of the original Twelve Apostles—Peter, James, John, Andrew, and the others. At one end was the Christ statue and, above that, the words, "Behold, this is my beloved Son; hear ye Him." The sculptor, who had finished the sculpture in 1821, had no idea that these were almost the words the Father had said to Joseph Smith the year before, when Joseph knelt to pray in the Sacred Grove. President Kimball was very moved by this.

As the group prepared to depart, President Kimball could have merely thanked the gracious caretaker and said good-bye, but he didn't. Instead he said, "I've certainly enjoyed this tour. But you know these statues are of dead Apostles." The caretaker, who had spent much of his life involved with the statues, was taken aback and a little offended. But President Kimball went on to say, "Do you know that in the world today there are living Apostles, and four of them are in this room right now?" First he introduced himself, then President N. Eldon Tanner and Elder Thomas S. Monson and Elder Boyd K. Packer. "We are Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you like to know more about a church that has living Apostles?"

Even when the prophet met with national leaders he taught the gospel. When the Church President visits with heads of state, press people usually get about two minutes for pictures before being politely escorted out. But when President Kimball visited the president of Guatemala, Dell was allowed to stay. During those thirty-five minutes, President Kimball taught the president of Guatemala the gospel from A to Z. He talked about family home evening, temple work, genealogy, and eternal families.
President Kimball used the same directness in teaching members their responsibilities. Although many of those attending area conferences had been in the Church only a few weeks or a few months, President Kimball left no room for misunderstanding. He would say, "When your children are eight years old, they will be baptized." He didn't say it would be nice; he didn't say the scriptures say age eight; he didn't soften it. He merely affirmed: "When they're eight, they will be baptized." He also said, "When your sons are nineteen years old, they will go on missions." The members left knowing exactly what was expected of them.

He used a similar tactic to encourage children—especially twelve-year-olds—to go on missions. Instead of merely suggesting they start missionary funds, he gave them their first dollar. "This is to start your missionary fund," he would say. His secretary, D. Arthur Haycock, kept money in his pocket to lend him because sometimes, if there was a crowd, President Kimball ran out.

He even kept the same straightforward manner with the press. The day he became President, a big press conference convened. There must have been dozens of reporters, with their cameras and lights, encircling him, some of them sitting on the floor. He answered some of their inquiries by saying, "We have the answers. We have all the answers to all the problems in this world because the Lord is head of our Church." When they asked what advice he had, it was simple: "Keep the commandments." There was no arrogance about him—he was just direct.

In the press conference at the laying of the cornerstone of the Washington Temple, there were representatives from all the big newspapers and television stations in the country, as well as several foreign correspondents. Someone asked the question, "Why is the Mormon church growing so rapidly?" President Kimball could have answered many ways. He could have said we have a great youth program, we take care of our own, or we emphasize the family, but he answered humbly and directly: "Because the Church is true."

The President always used his time effectively. On a jet plane, when he was tired, he rested. He folded his arms, closed his eyes, and went to sleep; after a while he was refreshed and wide awake. He also used the flying time to read and study and prepare. And he always had a lot of preparing to do. One day Brother Haycock commented, "The President is working on twenty-three speeches right now." He traveled with two briefcases, one that he carried himself and another that Brother Haycock carried. Worried about losing his notes for the next talk he was supposed to give, he was constantly saying, "Arthur, have you got the briefcase?" Travel is wearing, but President Kimball's reaction was the opposite of most; he got stronger as he went on. After
being gone for two or three weeks, he often returned home stronger than when he left.

When asked once why he felt such an urgency about his calling, he answered, “I’ve been to the Mount of Olives where Christ said to the eleven who were with him, ‘Go ye into all the world.’ And I remember that there are nine hundred million people in one country who haven’t heard the gospel. Until we’ve touched them all, I will feel an urgency.”

Everything he did carried with it that sense of urgency. Although President Kimball traveled a lot, he hardly ever took any time for site-seeing. He wasn’t on tour; he was on a work mission. He kept up an incredible pace—flying from country to country, attending conferences, dedicating buildings and temples—but he never lost sight of why he was doing it: to help people, to show them love.

On a plane he would visit others. He would walk down the aisle, lean on a seat, and talk to anyone he knew or anyone he thought he would like to know. Once on a plane from San Francisco to Salt Lake, a clean-cut young man, who looked like a returned missionary, came down the aisle. When he noticed President Kimball, he stopped. President Kimball reached up with his arm and put it around the young man’s neck and brought him very close, six or seven inches away. As they conversed, he kissed the young man on the cheek. The young man’s eyes glistened with tears.

After the plane landed, Dell’s wife, who had observed the incident, saw the young man across the baggage carousel. She approached him and said, “Hi, I saw you talking with the President of the Church. I suppose you’re LDS.”

“No,” he said, “I’m RC—Roman Catholic.”

Surprised, she asked, “What did you talk about?”

“He asked me to join the Church.”

“Are you going to do it?”

“Well, it’s kind of hard to refuse what a prophet of God asks you to do.”

President Kimball reached out in a similar way to a young man he met at the Chicago airport. The young man had long hair and a beard and was wearing ragged clothes. He kept looking at President Kimball, gradually moving closer to him. One of the President’s aides said to the young man, “If you want to go say hello to him, go ahead.” That was all the invitation he needed. The young man and President Kimball talked for a few minutes; then President Kimball reached out, brought this young man close to him in a big hug, and kissed him on the cheek. The young man broke down and cried.

On one occasion, after addressing the missionaries at the Missionary Training Center in Provo, President Kimball said, “As long as we’re
here, we’d better do some visiting.’’ First, he stopped by to visit a
married relative of his, but no one was home. Next, he called on one
of his grandchildren in a basement apartment. Then, on the way back
to Salt Lake, he drove out to a small community and knocked on the
door of a home. The people inside were absolutely startled. ‘‘I heard
there was illness here,’’ President Kimball said, as he walked in to
visit a man he knew from Arizona.

President Kimball was open to all kinds of people and situations.
Having time between conferences, he chose to go by ferry from Sweden
to Finland rather than fly. There were many Church members from
Finland on the ferry, too. Recognizing President Kimball, they slowly
approached him. At first there was a problem in communication, but
a young sister who had been an exchange student in America came
forward and translated. Before long, the President had invited the
members to a fireside meeting later that evening. After dinner, the
group met on deck. It was a lovely setting. They gathered deck chairs
in a semicircle, and someone brought a ship’s lantern and hung it on
the wall so there would be light.

The meeting began with a hymn. Although a blaring band
downstairs ran competition, the singing of the Saints overshadowed
it. Then President Kimball spoke. He talked about the Navajo Indians,
a people he greatly loved and respected. Then he talked about
growing up in Arizona. ‘‘Back then I used to sing. In fact, there was
hardly a funeral I didn’t sing at, either as a soloist or with a quartet.
I sang and sang until they cut my throat.’’ He went ‘‘Kuuuuuuughh’’
and drew his finger across his neck. Mouths dropped open. Then he
recounted the circumstances of his cancer operation and explained that
the doctors had told him he might not have a voice. He had responded
by saying, ‘‘I must have a voice. The reason I’m here is to speak. I
have a message. I must have a voice.’’ When the operation was over,
he had just a little bit of one vocal cord left, and with difficulty he
learned to speak again. His voice was never the same, but it was a voice
the Saints learned to love.

‘‘Tonight,’’ he said, ‘‘I’m going to sing for you.’’ And he called
Sister Kimball to come up. He lifted her handbag from her shoulder
and began to beat out a little Indian rhythm on that bag, and all of
a sudden he began chanting a Navajo song. The people were startled,
spellbound. They saw that a prophet of God need not always be solemn
and straight-faced.

A notable characteristic about President Kimball was his simplicity.
In South America, where most travelers order steak at restaurants,
President Kimball would typically eat a bowl of soup, or bread and
milk. His home was simple, too. When he went home at night, he
always took work with him, and he would stay up working in his study.
It was a small room lined with books and file cabinets and his personal journals in binders. His desk was too small to hold the things he was working on, so papers and books spilled over onto a card table. A card table was good enough for him.

This simplicity was a part of his humility. One morning his party was up early to catch a 2:00 A.M. flight out of Panama. President Kimball asked them to come to his room for prayer. When they had gathered, he explained that he had received word from Salt Lake City of an accident. Some young people driving on a snowy road had collided with a snowplow. Two of them had been killed, three or four injured. President Kimball had been requested to offer a prayer for the afflicted families. He looked over at his counselor and said, "I would rather have President Marion G. Romney pray because he prays so much better than I do, but since the family has requested that I offer the prayer, we'll honor that request." As they all knelt down, President Kimball poured out his heart, seeking comfort for those people who had met tragedy. And yet he had wanted President Romney to pray because he prayed better.

On another occasion, President Kimball invited members of the traveling party into his stateroom for prayer. Everyone knelt and President Kimball said, "'J,' would you give the prayer?" "J" swallowed hard. He had come to hear the prophet pray, but he ended up offering prayer for the prophet.

When President Kimball went to Israel in 1979 to dedicate the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden, he drove around the country before the dedication, looking at various biblical sites. He seemed to be anticipating something. He wanted to visit a particular area, Mount Tabor, one of two likely sites of the Transfiguration. Those who were escorting him assumed they could just point off into the distance and say, "There's Mount Tabor," but that did not satisfy him. He wanted to go to the mountain. Early the next morning they drove up Mount Tabor. At the top was a church. They climbed the exterior stairs and stood on the roof, looking out. President Kimball seemed to be sensing something. "This is why we came to Israel," he said. "This is the highest point in all the world." It was as if he were observing it all over again—how Christ's celestial glory was uncovered before his Apostles. Only after he had visited Mount Tabor did President Kimball's visit to the Holy Land seem complete.

He and Sister Kimball also visited the Garden Tomb outside the walls of the old city, where a small cave carved out of rock is partitioned into two chambers. On one side there is a ledge where a body could have lain. The other side contains a bench where President and Sister Kimball sat down to talk about their feelings. He said, "I feel very sure that this is the right site, that this is where Jesus lay during those
three days.’ Later, when he was walking alone so that the photographers could take pictures of him near the tomb, Brother Haycock told him to be careful because the ground was uneven. ‘Don’t worry,’ he said. ‘I’m used to walking in holy places.’”

Just being near President Kimball, one could sense his power as the Lord’s chosen and anointed. In New Zealand, after the President spoke at a multistake fireside on the importance of the temple, Dell decided to walk around the New Zealand Temple grounds. It was a beautiful, warm night. He struck up a conversation with a Maori woman sitting in front of the temple. She said she had attended the fireside: ‘‘I got there early and got a seat on the aisle, hoping I could shake President Kimball’s hand or reach out and touch him. As the meeting closed, he walked past and I touched him. I couldn’t go right home after that. I had to come here to keep that spirit for a while longer.’’

No man has been more loving and loved, more teachable and capable of teaching, more diligent, more committed, more spiritual, more powerful in his own way. No one has been more able to encompass in his concern the people of all the world.
The Prophet

Spencer W. Kimball

Miles of airlight surround the vale of morning,
And earth as it turns its mountains easterly
Carries sills of dawn into mists of dayspring,
Or is he a text for the day, an explanation
That articulates its edges like menckenesque?
Sun alights like a filament over his hand,
Having floated from celestial aeries somewhere
In memory’s blue above a glossing twilight.
With a shepherd’s diligence he delivers vision
In every conference as the matter of fact it is
And turns it into lamb’s wool for sheltering,
Warm in snow or rain, to be worn unconsciously
As a habit or condition of spirit to mind
Its place, not only as covering, but as comfort
For sensing the will of heavenly wind across
Wavering hedge and heather of eternal Zion.
And not a sound from him but the evocation
Of a tremor of sun in his voice invoicing hues
That sheet and murmur God’s will as it rises
Into song to be a testament through the portals
Of inspiration. Here meadows of warming words
Flourish the sun in them as breezes smooth
To melody. Messianic is he and of pure intent,
Who goes unerringly among mankind, who think
Him godly fine.

—Clinton F. Larson

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Spencer W. Kimball:
A Man of Good Humor

Edward L. Kimball

When Spencer W. Kimball had been President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for five years, he said of his heavy responsibility, "It helps . . . if you can see the fun in things and not take [them] too seriously." Though most would count it only a minor aspect of his character, President Kimball's genial personality and warm sense of humor proved invaluable to him. When he worked, no one worked harder; when it was time to relax, he had the ability to let go. In the midst of heavy stake conference responsibilities, he could find a quiet place to lie on the floor and nap for a few minutes, waking refreshed. And his quick wit, most often turned on himself, helped make the wheels turn more smoothly.

Good spirits were the norm for Spencer Kimball. Though he had a few morose periods in his life, he also had the capacity to will them away. He reports several instances of having made a conscious decision to change. For example, when his beloved sister Ruth died while he was on his mission, he had to make a conscious effort to stop grieving and turn back to his work. During hard times early in marriage, when Camilla was ill, he felt somewhat depressed but again he decided that he needed to take control of his feelings. And during the economic depression of the 1930s, the young businessman wrote to friends, "I'm still trying to be cheerful but it is not so easy." "It is hard to keep optimistic. After a good night's rest I rush down to work all pepped up and ready for anything. . . . And by night time you feel everything is gone to the bad. But while conditions are certainly at a low ebb, and prospects look mighty gloomy and unfavorable, yet so far we have not actually been stinted in food, so we feel mighty thankful for that." "Business is offff, as you know; we are still hanging onnnn."²

Later bouts with illness clouded his view temporarily, but he managed with humor to brush away the clouds.

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Spencer Kimball had no immunity against annoyance or anger, but outbursts were few. His daughter, Olive Beth, recalls his growling at her for walking around the house wearing his hats—on her feet. He once slapped a book out of her hands when she responded to her mother’s request for help in the kitchen with “in a minute.” I saw him kick the cow once when she put her foot in the bucket for the third time, and heard him say “Damn!” when he hit his head on the corner of the cupboard. These occasions were memorable partly because they were so rare.

Spencer Kimball’s even temperament was not a facade put up to meet people’s expectations of a General Authority; he was much the same in public as in private.

As a boy and young man he loved fun and practical jokes, some of which later embarrassed him a bit in light of his serious calling. But his youthful high jinks serve to remind us that prophets are not born to position. Spencer served as president of his high school class each year. When they graduated, instead of something useful, his class had the whimsy to present to the school as the class gift a pillar to stand in front of the building bearing the names of all twenty-one graduates cut in the stone. During his young married years, his group of friends had a repertoire of practical jokes they would play on one another, especially on New Year’s Eve. They would telephone to wake up absent friends, sometimes long distance—always collect! They called one friend, asking, “Is this Mrs. Fuller?” “Yes.” “Do you wash?” (meaning, in those days, “Do you wash clothes for others?”) “No, of course I don’t wash.” “You certainly must be dirty by now.” Or there was their annual call to Lee John: “Is this Mr. John?” “Yes,” “Do you live on the highway to Solomonville?” “Yes.” “Well, you’d better get off because there’s a car coming down the highway like a bat out of hell.”

One New Year’s Eve the group went to the home of a couple who had left the party early, and, when no one would answer the door, the invaders got in through a window. They found the wife in bed hiding under her blanket but discovered that the husband had crawled under the bed to escape them. The men just lifted the whole bed straight up, to the dismay of their friend huddled shivering on the floor in his underwear. Another New Year’s Eve the group of rowdies phoned Jay Green, who owned a clothing store, with the story that a girl needed a wedding dress that night because she was leaving on the next bus. He got out of bed to open the store and be greeted by a raucous “Happy New Year.” It was more like April Fools’ Day with a kind of rural pranksterism.

The joking did not confine itself to New Year’s. At Indian Hot Springs, Spencer and Jesse Udall got out of the pool before college
A Man of Good Humor

president Harvey Taylor did, and they hid Harvey's clothes. All he found when he went to dress was a blanket, a large safety pin, and a note telling him to pin on the blanket and come out for lunch.

After Spencer became an Apostle, he asked his friends not to tell about all the old pranks from his younger years, but they were more reliable in keeping silence than he was. He would later wryly recount to his family stories of youthful mischief and personal misadventures—of making rotten egg gas in high school chemistry, resulting in the school's having to be dismissed for the day; getting expelled from high school briefly when he induced nearly all the boys to skip school on April Fools' Day; accidentally shooting off his rifle at the wrong time in military training; sitting down on his own straw boater at church; or mistaking the Utah state mental hospital for Brigham Young University. While he seemed not to be particularly proud of such events as these, they did represent a little spice in a generally "proper" life.

Spencer tended to be the center of any group. In his Arizona days, his circles of business and Church friends knew him as "the life of the party." They remember his ready laugh, his playing the piano for group singing, his love of games. Said one, "He always kept us laughing. I don't believe I've ever heard a laugh that was so musical." A fellow Rotarian once said Spencer could have a better time sober than others could drunk. When he and Camilla received word of the birth of their first grandchild, the two of them went around to all their friends' homes to announce the event, dressed up with shawls and hobbling with the aid of canes.

His relationship with Camilla was excellent, but not without occasional minor differences. At a golden wedding anniversary party for another couple, when a speaker said that the couple had never raised their voices at one another, Spencer leaned over and whispered to a friend, "It must have been dull."

Even as an Apostle he was willing to inject fun into a usually staid occasion. In 1946 Elder Kimball was chairman of a quarterly social for General Authorities and their wives. He organized a quartet consisting of himself and Elders Benson, Petersen, and Cowley, with Harold B. Lee at the piano. He had them learn a comic song about Herpicide, a sure cure for baldness. At the party, the quartet seated LeGrand Richards and Milton R. Hunter in front of them and rubbed tonic on the two men's bald heads as they sang. Then they put a towel wrapped like a turban on each man. At the end of the song, they unwrapped the towels to disclose a red fright wig on one and a wig of barrister curls on the other.

Spencer had friends among all groups and ages. He loved people. In Arizona, when he called on "Grandma" Craig, an elderly woman, he would always pretend to be the Fuller Brush man. Years later, when
she was on her deathbed and he came to say good-bye, she showed no recognition until he mentioned Fuller brushes. Then she smiled and pressed his hand.

As he traveled to stake conferences, he would help with the milking, play the piano and sing with the children, and shake hands with all comers. As President he attended huge area conferences with crowds impossibly large to greet individually, but he still wanted to. He said, ‘‘I milked cows the first half of my life so that I could shake hands the other half.’’

At home, Spencer was no less good-humored. He claimed that as a suitor he ate at the Eyring table so regularly that ‘‘Father Eyring gave his consent to our marrying just to get rid of me.’’ He could be a tease, seeing things that weren’t there or failing to see things in plain view. He would say to one of his little children, ‘‘I see you are in the newspaper!’’ ‘‘Where? Where?’’ ‘‘It says right here, ‘Crowd of Thousands Watches Parade.’’’ Or he would be unable to see his daughter’s Christmas gift from her boyfriend until everything else had been distributed from under the tree.

In contrast, Spencer’s humor rarely showed through when he spoke in public. His talks and sermons tended to be straightforward, without much evidence of his ready wit. Indeed, many people perceived him as severe because of this and because of his frequent crying of the need for repentance. Only occasionally was there a mild jest in his talks. At one stake conference he arrived for the meetings only to discover that he was wearing brown stockings with a blue suit. The stake president’s wife brought him a pair of her husband’s blue socks. Elder Kimball then announced to the congregation, ‘‘I’m not filling the stake president’s shoes this morning, but I am filling his socks.’’

Spencer Kimball did not joke about the gospel, even in private; that was serious. About as near as he came to making light of Church matters was his urging his friend Jesse Udall to attend general conference when he was first sustained ‘‘so I will be sure to get a few votes.’’

A person in a position of high responsibility needs to distinguish between himself and his position. Many do not; Spencer Kimball always did. He maintained perspective, neither puffing himself up nor belittling his office. After five years as the President of the Church, he said, ‘‘I still wonder what was the Lord thinking about, making a little country boy like me [President of his church], unless he knew that I didn’t have any sense and would just keep on working.’’ Stories he told often bore the message: Don’t try to make me something more than I am. He delighted in telling about the aftermath of his call as an Apostle. He had gone from Arizona, where he lived, to Salt Lake City to confer with the First Presidency. While he was there the news
of his call was released, and when he returned to Arizona to sell his business and home and to move his family to Utah the news had run before him. His friends made it difficult for him to get any work done, for they streamed into his office to offer congratulations and express their view of how right it was that he had been called, and how inevitable. They had "known" that something of that sort was sure to happen. Then Evans Coleman came in, a cowpuncher type who had known Spencer Kimball as a boy. He asked, "Spencer, can I talk with you?" Of course he could. They sat down, and in the conversation Evans said, "So you're going to Salt Lake to be one of the Twelve Apostles, are you?" "Yes, Evans, that's so." "Well, it's clear that the Lord must have called you—because no one else would have thought of you!" The quip is Evans Coleman's, but Spencer Kimball's telling the story with relish says something important about the storyteller.

After his call, he had to take his leave of the stake over which he presided. He found the adulatory treatment awkward and in a letter to his wife wrote: "We went up early yesterday morning to Franklin for Sunday School and testimony meeting, then to Duncan for testimony meeting at 12:30, then up to Virden for 2:30 meeting. All the meetings started out as testimony meetings regular and ended in testimonials for me. I told the boys as we went late to the last two meetings that I was the first corpse I had ever seen that had three funerals in one day and was late for two of them. I needed only pallbearers and an open grave to make it complete."

Elder Kimball found humor in his treatment as a new, and therefore relatively unknown, General Authority and liked to tell what happened. Soon after he began visiting stake conferences, someone came up after a meeting and said, "You know, Elder Lee, I was glad you came to visit our stake, because I keep getting you confused with Brother Richards." One day a Primary teacher brought her class to the Church Office Building, obviously having primed them from photographs of General Authorities to associate faces and names. The children filed into Elder Kimball's office, and the teacher asked expectantly, "Which one of you knows who this man is?" After a long, embarrassing silence, one little fellow, scratching his head, said, "I know I've seen that mug somewhere."

In Arizona, where he was known, his experience was just the opposite. He visited Safford the year after his call as an Apostle and found that so many friends crowded around he could not finish his business. He wrote home, "[Our friend] has already hugged and kissed me so much since I came I do not know if I can go through it again. He came up right in conference before hundreds of people and threw his arms around me and kissed me. I think I blushed. I may have to wear a mask."
Spencer Kimball's awareness of his limitations and foibles produced jests about them. At maximum height he was five feet six, though he grew shorter with age. He said, of his long trunk and stubby legs, "I am a Woolley. I sit tall, but I stand short." Or, "It is my brothers' fault. They made me carry so much swill to the hogs in those five-gallon honey cans that it stunted my growth." In a letter home from a Syracuse hotel he wrote, "Yesterday as we got in the elevator to come down, two little midgets came down with us. I certainly got a lift when I, the scrubbiest of the scrubby, could look far down on grown men so much smaller than I. I frequently find men thinner, but seldom find them shorter."

Returning from an area conference in St. Louis on the same plane as President Kimball, Elder Ronald Poelman got up to stroll in the aisle. The President caught his arm and asked, "Where are you going?" 'I was just stretching my legs," came the explanation. "You don't need to do that; they're long enough already. It's little people like me who need to stretch their legs."

Nicholas Udall, Spencer's nephew, looks a good deal like him. Once in the Church Office Building a stranger mistook Nick for his uncle. When Nick reported that, Spencer asked, "Were you embarrassed?"

A few times in his life President Kimball helped in the kitchen. One day the next-door neighbor came in while he was drying the dishes and President Kimball, acknowledging the novelty of the situation, said, "Saundra, I want you to be sure to write in your journal that I did the dishes for Camilla."

He tried to downplay some incidents which might have been overinterpreted. The story of his slipping off the hay wagon to run to Primary when his older brothers said he couldn't go has been used often as proof of his faithfulness. "I've always gotten lots of credit from people for being a very good Primary boy. . . . I was a great kid to get out of work." He decided against taking up an option on some property on the Las Vegas "Strip" because he did not want to tie himself to the gambling town and also because he did not know the full value of the option until later, but he told the incident with a light touch: "It is good we didn't buy that property. We'd unavoidably have been multimillionaires and I don't think I could have stood it."

His attitude toward the older General Authorities tended to be almost worshipful. With those nearer his age or younger, his relationships were affectionate, occasionally playful and even teasing, as in the "Herpicide" incident. On one occasion he and Bruce R. McConkie were in Mexico City to visit the mission. Because of the oppressive heat they took off their coats during a break between meetings. When the time came to go back in, Elder Kimball picked up and put on Elder
McConkie’s coat, which hung down past his hands, and Elder McConkie pulled on the small coat, which came just to his forearms, as the missionaries raced for their cameras. Later, at Oaxaca, a guide showed the two men a round column and told them the folklore that, if a man reached his arms around the column the number of finger widths left between his hands was the number of years he had still to live. Elder Kimball found that by that standard he had sixteen years left. Elder McConkie, with his long arms, circled the column and overlapped a little. “That,” said Elder Kimball, “means that you are already dead and don’t know it.”

The First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve ordinarily meet in the Salt Lake Temple each week to conduct the business of the Church and often have lunch together. For years it was the practice to pass a box of Cummings chocolates around after lunch, beginning with the First Presidency. By the time the box got to the newest member of the Twelve, at the end of the line, the pieces of candy with light chocolate were always gone. On one occasion—after President Kimball asked, “Is there any further business?”—the junior member said, “Is there any chance to reverse the usual order of choosing chocolates? I don’t care for dark chocolate and that is all there is left by the time the box gets to me.” President Kimball replied, “If you live long enough, you’ll move up into the light chocolates.”

Once the President invited two of the Twelve into his office to give them an assignment. President Tanner said, “I can’t think of two finer men for this job.” One of them urged modestly, “Surely you can do better than us.” The President countered with, “Would you mind going ahead while we are looking for two better men?”

In a general conference session, President Kimball announced that Marion G. Romney would be the next speaker, mistakenly identifying him as his First Counselor. President Romney whispered, “You’ve just promoted me.” President Kimball responded, teasingly, “I’m sorry.”

One of the hardest things is to continue cheerful when you feel ill. Elder Kimball was generally able to retain a sense of humor even under these circumstances and thereby lift both his own spirits and others’. In 1957, he underwent serious surgery for the removal of cancerous vocal cords. Shortly before the operation, during a district conference, the mission leader introduced Elder Kimball in glowing terms, told of the imminent surgery, and said solemnly, “We may never again be privileged to hear his voice of counsel.” Gloom settled over the congregation until Elder Kimball arose to speak and said, “I shall tell the Brethren that when I die it will not be necessary to have a funeral, since I’ve already had a funeral in Portland.” In the ensuing laughter all sadness dissipated.
After the operation he suffered a great deal of pain and sleeplessness. He complained in a letter, "Insomnia is my trouble. Why, I couldn't even doze in sacrament meeting yesterday." To the doctor who operated he wrote a note asking why his tongue was so painful. "We stepped on it," was the reply. "Yes," Spencer wrote, "and with hobnail boots." For a long time during recovery he was told not to try to speak. Still he carried on his work as best he could by writing. He would interview people or carry on a conversation by typing out his part while they responded orally. He reported delightedly that one of the men in the Church Office Building who came to his office engaged in such a discussion with obvious, growing frustration. Finally the man said, "I've dealt before with people who were deaf and dumb, but I've never dealt with anyone who was just plain dumb."

Talking with people was central to Spencer Kimball's life and work, and this period of silence was very difficult for him. A nephew, talking about frustrating dreams, asked, "Have you ever been in a dream and tried to scream, but just couldn't get it out?" "Yes," Spencer answered immediately, "for a whole year now." When he felt himself recovered enough from the throat operation to try public speaking again, he went to a conference in his home area of Arizona. There he explained to a friendly congregation, "I went away to the East and while I was there I fell among thieves and cutthroats. They cut my throat and stole my voice."

The removal of his vocal cords resulted in a peculiar, hoarse voice, easily recognized. Ned Winder, who worked with the Church missionary committee, called Elder Kimball one evening about a mission problem. Ned had a bad cold and a very hoarse voice. He identified himself on the phone and apologized for his hoarseness, but Elder Kimball responded, "Who is this?" Winder repeated his name. After a pause and a chuckle, Elder Kimball responded, "For a minute I thought that I was on both ends of the line."

Humor is a way of dealing with frustration. A friend of some years, commiserating with President Kimball about his recent brain operation, wherein the surgeon drilled a hole through the skull to drain fluid and relieve pressure, said, "I had the same sort of operation; I have a hole in my head, too." The President, though sick, mustered a teasing rejoinder: "I always wondered what was wrong with you." Once, when he was too weak to shave himself, a nurse using an electric shaver worked away for several minutes with no apparent results. Finally he said, "Perhaps it would work better if you took the cap off."

He suffered from pains but hated to take drugs. When I suggested that he should take some aspirin for the latest pain, he replied, referring to all the medications he was taking for his other conditions, "I don't want to take any more pills; I'm already the 'piller' of the Church."
And after the serious surgeries he refused to give up. Once I asked, upon leaving, "Dad, is there anything I can do for you?" "Yes," he replied, "there is something you can do. You can bury me—but not before I'm dead."

Though most of Spencer's humor is oral, typically making mild fun of himself, we find the same kind of wit in his correspondence and his journal. A journal entry when he was in high school records a track meet between his school and another: "Mr. Jones had no one to enter to run so he put me in. I ran mile race and did the best I could. Came out 3rd, close behind 2nd man, but there were only 3 of us running. Ha!! It nearly did me up as I was not used to running so far." He wrote to his girlfriend: "Dear Miss Eyring, The train is very unsteady, rocking like a steamboat but I will try to scratch you a few lines." "The picture [of you] came to me here in Salt Lake last night and I laughed as you requested. Ha Ha. It was fine. I promptly cut off the head (ugh!) and pasted it in my watch as I demonstrated for you [I would do]." "I am the only member in the public speaking class so I get individual instruction. I can now breathe clear down to my toes, can roar like a lion or squeak like a mouse. I can gesticulate till you'd think I was hammering or pitching hay... . I like all my Profs fine but _______ and I can't hardly stand him. Today he had a dirtier shirt than mine and wore the trousers and shoes he wore while milking the cow." "Monday I shaved off my old friend Charlie Chaplin and I look like a monkey. It seems a mile from my nose to my mouth. I hope I don't look like that to you tho' for it might prove disastrous to me." At twenty-three he wrote his father, who was on a trip, "Those blamed hogs are enough to worry one bald-headed. One gets out and then they manage it so they keep me chasing pigs all the time. You might be interested in the fact that Nora has had her confinement, bringing a litter of ten. One was ruptured and died in spite of all I could do. A second she deliberately or accidentally laid on. Anyway, it was mashed like a pancake the third morning. A third died last night from some cause that I could not understand unless it too was crippled in the back from being stepped on or knocked about. A fourth is limping on three legs; the old elephant stepped on its front leg. So taking them all together it is not very encouraging."

This playful note continues in his later correspondence. In 1936, while on the swaying train, just a short hour after leaving home for Europe, he wrote: "Will be a good bronco buster by the time we reach Bowie. We had a glorious trip so far but don't feel very foreign yet as we're still in sight of Mt. Graham, or is it the Alps? We nearly got seasick as we came up the San Simon River so we'll be prepared for the Atlantic." As a General Authority, he wrote to a friend: "I thought you might have been at the depot as my train went through at five
this morning." And "I looked down as my airplane passed over your town today but didn't see you out and around."5

Much of his humor is the play on words. First there is the setup and then the exploitation of ambiguity by reliance on the unexpected second interpretation. For example, when he was a young man starting out in the insurance and real estate business he bragged, "Our business is close to a million dollars." His tiny office on a side street was just a few feet through the wall from the bank vault—about as close as he could be to the bank's million dollars. From aboard a ship to Buenos Aires on Church assignment he wrote, "We dress every evening for dinner. That is, the men do; the women mostly undress." Once an airline hostess asked him, "Would you like something to drink?" He responded, "What do you have?" "Coffee, tea, Coca Cola," she said. He shook his head, then asked, "Do you have any lemonade?" "No," she replied, "but I could squeeze you a little." He recoiled in mock dismay: "Don't you squeeze me!" And on a long mission tour by car Spencer napped with his head in Camilla's lap. When the question arose as to what she and the mission president's wife should do during a priesthood meeting, he suggested they might attend the meeting. Camilla said, "I don't hold the priesthood." Spencer replied, "You have been holding the priesthood all morning."

Finally, the gift for seeing ambiguity in expression is marvelously exemplified in the interchange that occurred when his sister-in-law, who had lived with the Kimbals for twenty-five years, died. I was at their home soon afterward and wanted to be helpful. I asked Dad, "Do you want me to call [my brothers] Andy and Spence, to tell them about Aunt Mary's death?" "Yes, would you please." "Would you like me to call one of them before the other?" Pause. "Yes."6

A daughter-in-law once said, "Last week I was complaining that our zucchini was not doing well, but now the vines are growing fine!" President Kimball responded, "You should have complained sooner."

The heavy burdens of presidency of the Church called forth a wry complaint, dependent again for its thrust on a sense of incongruity with succession by seniority. After he became President of the Church and experienced the demands of the position, he said, wearily, "If I had known it was going to be like this, I never would have run for the office."7

In 1974 President Kimball went to Washington, D.C., to participate in an open house before the temple there was dedicated. On that trip he was invited to come to the United States Senate to offer the invocation. As the Senate was about to convene, only a handful of senators were on the floor of the chamber, most of the others being involved in committee meetings. Someone apologized to President
Kimball for the small number of members there to hear him, but he answered, “That’s all right. I was not going to pray to them, anyway.’”

He managed to make fun of growing older—heavier, stiffer, more forgetful, even blind. At sixty-one he put on a tuxedo and found that “it has been shrinking a bit since I wore it years ago.” A 1973 journal entry says, “Everywhere we go people seem to be amazed at our activity at our ages [seventy-eight], which they think are quite advanced. . . . Some of the mission presidents . . . catch our arms to help us and I jokingly say, ‘Hold on tight; maybe I can help you up the stairs.’”

One day when President Kimball was playing an organ for relaxation, a friend complimented him on the beauty of his playing. The President responded, “I don’t play much any more because my fingers are stiff and I don’t see very well. But I’m not the only one with problems; I notice that you must have a problem with your hearing.”

When he visited Arizona after many years’ absence, he asked, “Is that direction south?” Someone said, “Yes.” He went on, “I knew it used to be south, but so many other things have changed since we lived here that I thought they might have changed that, too.” On the same occasion his sister Alice came to the place he was staying to see him. She gave him a kiss and then greeted various other people in the room. Then she kissed him again, saying, “Did I kiss you already?” He quipped, “The first time must not have impressed you very much.” A relative, greeting him, said, “Do you know who I am?” His reply was, “If you don’t know who you are, how do you expect me to remember?” This may have been teasing, or it may have been a witty man’s cover for the fact that a superlative memory for names and faces was beginning to fade. When Spencer went to Arizona for his brother Gordon’s funeral, his nephew drove him to the chapel. Spencer protested, “Nick, the chapel is the other way.” Nick said, “Don’t worry, I’ll get you there.” Spencer insisted, “You’re going the wrong way.” Nick said patiently, “Just wait.” At the chapel there was a floral delivery truck. Nick pointed it out. Spencer responded, “Somebody else must be having a funeral.” “But you see there, our relatives are going in!” Unwilling to admit defeat, Spencer said, “How can they go to two funerals at the same time?”

At a meeting of General Authorities the President, vision nearly gone, squinted at the gathering and said, “Brethren, I’m sorry I can’t see you, but I assume you’re here.” At another such meeting, after being guided to his seat carefully by two other Church leaders, he jokingly complained he was being “waltzed around” by the pair.

In his last years he joked about death. Driving down the road, Spencer and Camilla saw vultures circling. She said, “I wonder what they’re looking for.” He replied, “They’re looking for me!” Shortly before that, the President had spoken at an area conference where the
local leader, in giving the benediction, had thanked the Lord that the
President was well enough to attend the conference. He had also prayed
that the President could "die in the saddle." When it was suggested
next day at the Church ranch that the Kimballs go horseback riding,
President Kimball said with a smile, "I don't know whether I want
to or not." 11

Spencer Kimball was not a great storyteller or stand-up comedian,
yet in spite of his serious responsibilities he preserved a comic sense
of his own limitations and sometimes kept from sinking under a load
of cares by being able to see something laughable in a difficult
situation. There are unquestionably more important qualities by which
to judge a person, but a warm, friendly sense of humor is by no means
the least of virtues. Indeed, in the view of many it ranks well up on
the list. And on this criterion, as well as others, Spencer Kimball is
a man worth emulating.

Despite his love of humor, though, he tried never to let it
dominate. His was the chuckle, not the belly laugh. Spencer Kimball
valued humor when kept in bounds and in place. He knew the danger
in taking oneself too seriously, but he also recognized a counterbalancing
danger in not taking oneself seriously enough. After attending a
missionary talent show in South America, he noted in his journal,
"I did not mind a little of the slapstick, but when the whole evening
of nearly three hours was occupied by it, it seemed to me a waste of
time." He was capable, though, of using humor even in emphasizing
more serious things. When he visited Italy and asked why no special
missionary meetings had been arranged, he was told that they were
merely trying to avoid overtaxing him. He said, "I know what
you are trying to do, you are trying to save me. But I don't want
to be saved, I want to be exalted." 12 At a large public meeting
in Ohio where a number of Mormon athletes and he were featured
speakers, President Kimball spent some time with a non-Mormon
cousin. Afterward this man, sitting in the back seat of the car with
Arthur Haycock, the President's personal secretary, said, "You know,
Arthur, you Mormons should make my cousin Spencer a saint, like
Saint Peter." Spencer, sitting in the front seat, overheard the comment,
turned around, and said, "No one can make me a saint; I have to
do that for myself." 13

NOTES

11 "Leader Answers Staff's Questions on Administration," Church News, 6 January 1979, 19.
12 Most of the anecdotes have appeared in Spencer W. Kimball, The Story of Spencer W. Kimball. A Short Man, A Long Stride (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), both by Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr. Except as noted, others were collected by the author orally or from letters.
One of the few recorded set jokes he did tell appears in the opening scene of the BYU film *A Chosen Servant*. He said, "I am reminded of the man who came out of the bathroom with a cut on his face. His wife asked, 'What's the matter?' And he answered, 'I was concentrating on my speech and cut my face.' She said, 'Why didn't you concentrate on your face and cut your speech?'"

He was not primarily a raconteur, though he sometimes used stories to illustrate his talks—the iceberg, the mistletoe, the hidden wedge, the tidal wave, "Have you been to heaven?"

"Leader Answers Staff's Questions on Administration," 19.

As General Authority he wrote home after a woman blacked out during his stake conference talk, "It must have been a stuff!!!! sermon!!!"

Elaine Cannon reported a twist on the President's "Do it!" slogan in her talk at April conference 1984.

When she asked President Kimball for some advice to the young women of the Church, he said, "Tell them, 'Don't do it!'"


Paul H. Dunn, address at Brigham Young University, 19 January 1983.

Neal A. Maxwell, as quoted in Associated Press release concerning general conference, 5 October 1983.


"Editors' Note," *This People* 6 (December-January 1985-86): 7.

Apocryphal stories crop up in relation to prominent men. According to one story, after the revelation on priesthood opened the prospect of priesthood leadership for any worthy man, a reporter asked President Kimball, "Will we ever see a black man President of the Church?" President Kimball pondered a moment, then replied solemnly, "Not in my lifetime." Another anecdote related to a proposal before the BYU Board of Trustees to name a building on the campus for him. He supposedly said to the board, "You can name a building for me, if you wish, but please don't make it a short one."

When asked about the stories, President Kimball commented, "I didn't say that, but I wish I had." Even so, the stories are not completely in character for him. The first comes close to making fun of sacred matters; the second might be mistaken as a request for recognition, rather than just a flip comment on his height.

Spencer W. Kimball by Edward J. Fraughton

Edward J. Fraughton is a sculptor living in South Jordan, Utah. Spencer W. Kimball was commissioned as a gift to President Kimball on his eighty-fifth birthday.
Spencer W. Kimball
and the Lamanite Cause

Elder LeGrand Richards recalled the beginning of Spencer Kimball’s official assignment with the Indians in these terms:

When President George Albert Smith became the President of the Church, one of the things that he said to me was, “Bishop, I don’t think Father Lehi is going to be satisfied with the way we’ve neglected his posterity.” And he appointed Brother Kimball to do the work with the Indians. I served on his committee and I don’t think any man in this church has ever been more devoted to a calling than Brother Kimball has been from that day on.¹

Spencer Kimball was three years into his apostleship when he received his special charge to “watch after the Indians in all the world.” With characteristic energy, he adopted their welfare as his cause. His first concern was for the tribes served by the struggling Navajo-Zuni Mission in Arizona and New Mexico, the first modern Indian mission in the Church, established in 1943 with only a handful of members. He studied their problems and visited their reservations repeatedly.

Harsh weather and early snow in the fall of 1947 gave him reason to intensify his concern. He mounted a publicity campaign, writing magazine and newspaper articles, contacting congressmen and service organizations, and giving dozens of talks to stir up interest in providing aid to Indians who were suffering cold and hunger because of the unseasonable weather.

This was only the beginning. His interest spread to other Indian tribes in the United States and Canada, then to the nations of Latin America. Twelve times he used his opportunity to speak at general conference to speak out forcefully on the subject of the Lamanites and their florescence, and he frequently addressed this topic in other talks and writings. This emphasis, together with his efforts promoting the Indian student placement program, irrevocably identified him with the American Indian in the the minds of Church members. Many others, less visible than he, contributed vital efforts to the Indian programs, but he stood as a symbol of the Church’s commitment to the Lamanite cause.

His involvement went beyond just preaching. His twenty-five years as chairman of the Church Indian Affairs Committee gave him
responsibility and opportunity to influence the direction of Church programs. He continually prodded local Church officials to look after the Indians in their areas. He promoted the teaching of natives in Central and South America in their own languages. As President of the Church, he called Elder George P. Lee, a Navajo, to serve as a General Authority. And he personally helped individuals by counseling, writing letters of recommendation, performing marriages, intervening with officials, giving money, providing housing.

For him the work with Indians was not just an assignment. He felt a personal identity with their cause. Stewart Durrant, who worked with him on the Church Indian Affairs Committee, said:

I saw Elder Kimball really angry only once. He said to me, “Stewart, you go down and release the stake president.” “Elder Kimball, I can’t do that; I haven’t the authority. I’ll get the information and report back to you.” “He has not been doing right by the Indians. You release him.” Of course he knew I could not do it, but he was expressing his frustration. A few weeks later Elder Kimball himself visited the stake and released the stake president.2

Elder Boyd K. Packer reported a similar incident:

I’ve only seen him really impatient once, and that was on an Indian reservation. [The stake president] had released the branch president because he was not worthy. So then the stake president had dissolved the branch, and Elder Kimball said, “Well, why would you do that?” “We’ve got no one to serve.” “You mean you’d dissolve the branch?” “Yes.” Finally he went through everybody in the branch name by name, and the stake president said, “We can’t use him; we can’t use him; we can’t use him.” Finally Brother Kimball stood and in real exasperation said, “President, do you have an eleven-year-old boy who you think would be worthy?” And he said, “Well, yes. I’m sure we do.” “You make him branch president.” The stake president said, “You’re fooling!” Elder Kimball’s reply was, “I’m not fooling. We’re going to have a branch here for these people!”3

Though as the years passed Spencer Kimball’s responsibilities and concerns broadened to include all peoples and all programs of the Church, he maintained a special place in his heart for those in whose interest he had worked so long and so hard. He did all he could to insure that “the time of the Lamanite” had arrived.
The Lamanite Cause

NOTES

1LeGrand Richards, videotape interview by Bonneville International, winter 1980.
2Stewart Durrant, statement to Edward L. Kimball, 17 April 1979.

Additional sources on President Kimball and the Lamanite cause:
Edward L. Kimball and Andrew E. Kimball, Jr., Spencer W. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1977). See chapter thirteen and passim.
Chiefs

The land is dry, Spencer.

The desert blusses with the setting sun
and the sheep bleat at rising stars
and the sudden brightness of the moon.

The wind is dry. It is cold
on this night. Fall is here.

I have been a chief. My tribe is old.
I am old. My people dwindle.
Yours, too. You call them back
with a shepherd’s voice. And they come.

Winter is a dry time here. The sheep
stray too far, looking for water.

I have seen you on the reservation.
I have seen you feed the sheep.

Was there a time you did not weep
and wipe the soiled feet of your folk
with that cloak you wore?

Spencer, you sleep today
longer than you did before.

By my fire, you sang such music,
a song made of a quiet voice.
In the night, I hear you whisper.

My eyes are dry, Spencer.
My heart is still.

I see you when the stars walk.

When you come again,
sit with me awhile.
We will sing together in the wind.

—Virginia E. Baker

Virginia E. Baker, an editor-writer for Novell, lives in Provo, Utah.
A Small and Piercing Voice: The Sermons of Spencer W. Kimball

Eugene England

Notwithstanding it being a small voice it did pierce them that did hear to the center.

3 Ne. 11:3

Spencer W. Kimball was one of the most valuable Mormon orators of the twentieth century. In fact it is quite likely that, because of his unique opportunities as President of the Church during a dramatic period of world-wide growth and change, he was the Mormon speaker we have most to learn from about living and speaking. Though President Kimball was not as obviously gifted as other great speakers he admired and learned from, such as J. Reuben Clark, David O. McKay, and Stephen L Richards, when Latter-day Saints in the future think of individual sermons that have affected their lives, they will, I believe, recognize him as standing foremost in our time as a prophetic spokesman.

The first sermon by Spencer W. Kimball that I remember hearing remains for me the most surprising, challenging, and influential speech in my experience. In April 1954 Charlotte and I had been married three months and had recently received letters calling us both to serve as missionaries in Samoa. We had begun to feel something of what might be called “the spirit of Lehi,” a powerful desire to help fulfill the remarkable promises made in the Book of Mormon about the “blossoming” of modern “Lamanites” and the prophecies of their crucial role in preparing for Christ’s second coming. As we sat together in the Tabernacle on Tuesday, 6 April, we heard the most powerful evocation of that spirit—and perhaps the most forthright denunciation of prejudice—that we have ever heard, before or since, and it changed our lives. First, Elder Kimball shocked us out of our complacency about race consciousness (including our own) by quoting from an anonymous letter to him: “I never dreamed I would live to see the day when . . . an Indian buck [would be] appointed a bishop—an Indian squaw to talk in the Ogden Tabernacle—Indians to go through the Salt Lake

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Temple."1 Addressing himself to "Mrs. Anonymous," he proceeded to demonstrate God's absolute scriptural condemnation of all forms of racism and intolerance: "If it be so wrong for fraternization and brotherhood with minority groups and their filling Church positions and pews and pulpits of the Lord's Church, why did the Apostle Peter maintain so positively: '[God] . . . put no difference between us and them' (Acts 15:8-9)." 2 Then he reviewed with impassioned rhetorical power the achievements of the ancestors of Jews and Indians and Polynesians and the promises made to their modern descendants:

O ye, who hiss and spurn, despise and scoff, who condemn and reject, and who in your haughty pride place yourselves above and superior to these Nephite-Lamanites: I pray you to not despise them until you . . . have that faith to burn at the stake with the Prophet Abinadi. It is possible that the prophet's children may be among us. Some of them could be now called Lagunas or Shoshones.

I beg of you, do not disparage the Lamanite-Nephites unless you, too, have the devoutness and strength to abandon public office to do missionary work among a despised people . . . as did the four sons of Mosiah . . . Their seed could be called Samoans or Maoris.

I ask you: Do not scoff and ignore these Nephite-Lamanites unless you can equal their forebears in greatness and until you can kneel with those thousands of Ammonite Saints in the sand on the field of battle while they sang songs of praise as their very lives were being snuffed out by their enemies . . . Perhaps the children of the Ammonites are with us. They could be called Zunis or Hopis.3

This remarkable refrain, unusual in style and unique in content, continued through eight separate examples. It built to a climax with a reference to Christ's personal appearance to the forefathers of these "Lamanite-Nephites"—and it left us moved and changed. We were made ashamed of the liberal condescension of our earlier desire to go "save" the Samoans. We were open for the first time to go and learn and to be permanently affected in our feelings by Polynesian peoples with a magnificent past, remarkable present qualities, and a marvelous prophetic future. Elder Kimball had helped prepare us to see all these things behind the labels and skin color and cultural trappings. He had changed our missions into a painful, exhilarating struggle toward new perceptions and emotional maturity and had so inoculated us with the spirit of Lehi that all our lives since have been significantly involved in learning from and trying to exercise intelligent responsibility toward "Lamanites."

How could a twenty-minute conference sermon, not sophisticated in language nor elegant in style, have such a profound effect? It is my thesis that Spencer W. Kimball's sermons are so powerful because they are modern examples of what Erich Auerbach has praised as the
epitome of Christian expression, the *sermo humilis*, the "lowly" or humble style which is characteristic of the New Testament and of the best writing and speaking through the Middle Ages, but which has increasingly given way to rhetorical and moral posturing since then. The *sermo humilis* was developed by the classical orators of Greece and Rome and codified by Cicero as part of a hierarchy of levels of literary ornament and sophistication parallel to three levels of subject matter: "low," where financial dealings and ordinary people are concerned; "lofty," where life and well-being, especially of the elite, is at stake; and "middling," largely for artistic entertainment. But Paul and the early Church Fathers understood (and Augustine effectively demonstrated) that since God has created and Christ has redeemed *everything*, no such distinctions of the value of subject matter could be acceptable to Christians. Thus the whole range of rhetorical devices and levels that had been developed in classical oratory and literature could be used and mixed entirely as appropriate to each sermon's *purpose*, which includes consideration of the *needs*, but not the social class, of the audience. The result was the *sermo humilis*, a humble style understandable to all.

In the best oratory, as in the best literature (measured not by popularity or critical acclaim but by influence for good on actual lives), style is a purposeful but natural expression of the author's being and intentions. It is intelligent but not calculating, persuasive toward transparently unselfish and morally sensible ends, aimed at moving the hearers but courageous to the point of being willing to offend them—and all with the intent of bringing about eventual repentance and redemption.

A good example of such style, from early in President Kimball's career, is a speech given at BYU in 1951 that, repeated in various versions, became famous as "A Style of Our Own." That is an interesting title since the speech itself seems not at all designed to be "stylish." It is not elegantly phrased or formally structured and certainly does not seem calculated to please—or even to be effective. It starts out, somewhat awkwardly and uncertainly, with a series of stories and examples centered around the general theme that the purpose of BYU is to build character in its students and that the students have a responsibility to take that purpose seriously, heavily subsidized as they are by the tithes of humble Latter-day Saints all over the world. The sermon then digresses into simple accounts of trips Elder Kimball had taken with his wife, recently to Mayan ruins in Central America, years before to Pompeii. Reflections on the human corruption suggested by those ruined cities are followed by scriptural accounts of licentiousness and divine judgment and destruction—until a theme begins to appear: "Unchastity is the great demon of the 1950s.
Avoid it as you would leprosy." And finally this rather common speech takes on uncommon force through the unique potential of Spencer W. Kimball's *sermo humilis*—his ability to speak, with the power of personal witness and specific detail, on an everyday human action that has eternal consequences:

I am not talking about something, my young brothers and sisters, of which I do not know. We interview thousands of missionaries, Church officers, and other people. . . . I know I'm not going to be popular when I say this, but I am sure that the immodest dresses that are worn by our young women and their mothers, contribute in some degree to the immorality of this age.7

The young Apostle gets increasingly specific and direct with his Mormon audience, many of whom were guilty—and still are:

I see in the *Deseret News* and other papers constantly, things that hurt me. These queen contests! It seems that every class, every group, every club, must have a queen. The flattery resulting is destructive. If I had a hundred daughters I would resist any one ever becoming a queen, the object of a beauty parade or contest. . . . Evening gowns can be most beautiful and modest if they clothe the body. But the Lord never did intend that they should be backless or topless. Now I want to tell you, it's a sin. I tell you that the Prophet of the Lord abhors it. (I can see it isn't going very well with some of you.) But—it is still true! . . . Women who [come to a dance] in strapless gowns, or with strap gowns, and there is very little difference . . . are an abomination in the sight of the Lord.8

In this sermon there is full acceptance of any subject matter, however "common" or even embarrassing, as relevant to salvation, and there is also that ingenuous mixture of styles, not according to prescribed classical categories but by inspired sense of effectiveness, that Augustine recommended in the Christian version of *sermo humilis*. As used by Roman theoreticians, the word *humilis* connoted inferior rank, but that adjective was taken over by Augustine and later Christian writers as the best word, in Auerbach's phrase, "to express the atmosphere and level of Christ's life and suffering":

The Incarnation as such was a voluntary humiliation illustrated by a life on earth in the lowest social class, among the materially and culturally poor, and by the whole character of Christ's acts and teachings. It was crowned by the cruelty and humiliation of the Passion.9

Christ's life and death were "lowly" in that sense. And the gospel of Christ was addressed to the "lowly," the dispossessed and uncouth whom the worldly wise disdained, the "weak things" who would confound the mighty and strong (1 Cor. 1:27). And the gospel itself, as contained in the scriptures, was "lowly," even absurd, both in
content and style—it was to "the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). The paradox of the *sermo humilis*, as of the gospel itself, was, and is, that the humblest subjects and examples, addressed in the humblest and most direct manner by humble servants of God to humble children of God, could produce the most sublime literature and profoundest effects, could indeed move people to identify with the humble Christ, "the least of these my brethren," and thus to become like him.

Knowing about President Kimball's own physical and spiritual humiliations helps us understand some of the fundamental sources of his sermon style. His biography quotes journal accounts of such emotionally devastating times as when he had difficulty accepting, or even believing, his call to be an Apostle: "I was in convulsions of sobbing. My wife was sitting by me on the floor, stroking my hair, trying to quiet me." There are reflections about the terrible inadequacy he felt because of continuing physical ailments:

Thousands of people in the Church . . . look at me with my smallness, my ineptitudes, my weaknesses, my narrow limitations and say, 'What a weak Church to have such weak leadership.' It is one of the things that has brought me to my back now. I have tried by double expenditure of energy to measure up.

Those physical troubles—boils, heart disease, throat cancer—did not *end* because of miraculous blessings, though there were blessings and miracles. They continued, even after the miracles, to be painful and dangerous trials that had to be endured—and that made their contributions to President Kimball's unique speaking style, to the form and content of his sermons, and even to the voice with which they were delivered. In 1957 he had an operation to try to stem the cancer in his throat. He pleaded with the New York specialist to remove as little tissue as possible because of the unique importance of his voice to his responsibility in the Church. Though this involved some risk of not getting all the cancer, the doctor left the larynx and part of one vocal cord. Through enormous, often painful and humiliating effort and the aid of a miraculous regrowth of some tissue, Spencer W. Kimball learned to speak again: "I realize I cannot quit for anything, though the temptation is terrific when I stumble and stammer and halt." The voice was forever changed, becoming small and raspy, full of the effort of breath required to sustain it—but emotionally piercing in a new way because it now constantly symbolized to his hearers what he had paid in courage and humility for that voice.

The voice changed in another way in 1974 when Elder Kimball was sustained as President of the Church after the unexpected death of Harold B. Lee. The sermons in the 1960s and early 1970s had been plain, straightforward, mostly single-subject, and usually directed to
a basic moral commandment or repentance—always focused on helping the Saints live better day by day. The new responsibility to speak as the Prophet, to and for the whole Church, made President Kimball’s sermons often much more miscellaneous and general than before, shaped by the need to give counsel to the whole Church—and the world—on a number of matters, from cleaning up yards and planting gardens to missiles and abortion. But the directness, the challenging emotional and moral plainness fundamental to the sermo humilis, remained the same, and the combination of style and vision often reached up to the sublime that is paradoxically linked to the lowly.

Even before he spoke for the first time as President to the general Church in the solemn assembly at April conference 1974, the new prophet delivered a remarkable address to the Regional Representatives seminar that outlined in detail how the Savior’s command to take the gospel to all the world could be literally obeyed—and soon. The speech was not flamboyant in style nor did it announce any dramatic new program. It merely reviewed the clear commands of Christ to his former- and latter-day disciples, reminded us of our supposed belief that the Lord would provide a way to fulfill his commands, and asked us to proceed in that faith, providing us with a clear vision of future possibilities, complete with maps and numbers:

I felt absolutely certain that I would die, when my time came, as president of the Twelve. I had no idea that this could ever happen. But since it has happened there is only one thing for us to do and that is to move forward. . . .

When I read Church history, I am amazed at the boldness of the early brethren. . . . Even in persecution and hardship, they went and opened doors which evidently have been allowed to sag on their hinges and many of them to close. . . .

I believe the Lord can do anything he sets his mind to do.

But I can see no good reason why the Lord would open doors that we are not prepared to enter. Why should he break down the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain . . . if we are still unprepared to enter? . . .

Suppose that South Korea with its 37,000,000 people and its 7,500 members were to take care of its own proselyting needs and thus release to go into North Korea and possibly to Russia the hundreds who now go from the States to Korea.

If Japan could furnish its own 1,000 missionaries and then eventually 10,000 more for Mongolia and China, if Taiwan could furnish its own needed missionaries plus 500 for China and Vietnam and Cambodia, then we would begin to fulfill the vision.

That sermon helped transform the Church, releasing energies that almost doubled the missionary force in the next eight years, with similar
increases in converts, new stakes organized, and total members. But the new energies were felt in a variety of other ways consistent with the humility and directness as well as sublimity of Spencer W. Kimball’s \textit{sermo humilis}. I remember how great a sense of shock and loss we all felt at the sudden death of Harold B. Lee, whom we had expected to preside for many years, how little some expected of the little man with the small voice whom we knew had health problems and might not live long—a caretaker President. But then all barriers melted away when President Kimball began that solemn assembly in April 1974 by exclaiming, “Oh, Harold, we miss you,” and his voice pierced us with a sense of his open vulnerability as well as new visions and energy. Our expectations were changed especially when, after he matter-of-factly laid out his plan for converting the world, he sounded the call to “lengthen our stride”\textsuperscript{13} and then set the pace himself with personal action and expression and also with decisive leadership. He expanded the number of area conferences around the world and then spoke four or five times at each. He announced dramatic increases each year in planned temple-building throughout the “free world” (and the first temple behind the Iron Curtain) and then participated in increasing numbers of temple dedications, where he both spoke and gave many of the prayers. He directed major changes in the organization of the General Authorities and made the first modern additions to the LDS scriptures, culminating in the 1978 revelation that gave blacks the priesthood.

The announcement of that revelation itself (though it was a First Presidency statement, not written solely by President Kimball) is an excellent example of the style I am describing—simple, weighty but unflamboyant, personal but chaste:

Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the Church who have preceded us that at some time, in God’s eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these, our faithful brethren, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple suppling the Lord for divine guidance.

He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come. . .

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of all his children.\textsuperscript{16}

That first long sentence—reflecting the long wait of the Church, of faithful blacks and whites who prayed for the day to come, of President Kimball’s own long struggle against our prejudices, culminating in those many hours at prayer in the Temple throughout the spring of 1978—is one example of how a natural style reveals itself. Another example is the brief clarity that follows, suppressing the emotion like.
a spring in sentences that witness that God has spoken, until it is released by the arresting biblical phrase, "We declare with soberness."

President Kimball's most biblical sermon, in language, content, and general approach, was written for the June 1976 *Ensign*, apparently designed to be read by Church members at the very time they would be celebrating the American bicentennial in a somewhat self-congratulatory mood. The title, "The False Gods We Worship," provides fair warning of how severe the prophet will be, but the sermon opens with a gentle personal reminiscence of recent walks in his garden that brought back childhood memories. He injects a slightly ominous note with a reference to "dark and massive clouds of an early thunderstorm," then returns to what seems an innocuous patriotic theme, reflecting on the "mellow light" of his childhood valley, certain that if he were to create a world it would be "just like this one" and affirming that "there is much that is good in this land, and much to love." But with a sudden "nevertheless" he turns to his real theme, reinforcing the change with his imagery again: "The dark and threatening clouds that hung so low over the valley seemed to force my mind back to a theme the Brethren have concerned themselves with for many years now— . . . the general state of wickedness in which we seem to find the world." Using a device of the Old Testament prophets, particularly Amos, he allows his audience for a time to think he is denouncing the wicked world outside Israel, Babylon's "pollution" and "idolatry." Then, just as we have reached full agreement with that denunciation of the world at large and are even feeling a bit smug and superior, he makes it clear that Americans are also guilty and then that Mormons come under the judgment, in fact are in greatest danger because "where much is given much is expected."17

In one of the very few theoretical passages in all his work, President Kimball proceeds to explain his literal use of the word *idolatry*: "Carnal man has tended to transfer his trust in God to material things. . . . Whatever thing a man sets his heart and his trust in most is his god: and if his god doesn't also happen to be the true and living God of Israel, that man is laboring in idolatry."18 He identifies in unforgettable imagery and anecdotes the two chief idols of many of us—Americans and Mormons—material goods and armaments—and then preaches as the only saving alternatives the individual living of the law of consecration and an active, affirmative loving of our enemies.

I am afraid that many of us have been surfeited with flocks and herds and acres and barns and wealth and have begun to worship them as false gods. . . . Forgotten is the fact that our assignment is to use these many resources in our families and quorums to build up the kingdom of God—to further the missionary effort . . . to bless others in every way, that they may also be fruitful. . . .
... We are, on the whole, an idolatrous people—a condition most repugnant to the Lord.

We are a warlike people, easily distracted from our assignment of preparing for the coming of the Lord. When enemies rise up, we commit vast resources to the fabrication of gods of stone and steel—ships, planes, missiles, fortifications—and depend on them for protection and deliverance. When threatened, we become anti-enemy instead of pro-kingdom of God; we train a man in the art of war and call him a patriot, thus, in the manner of Satan’s counterfeit of true patriotism, perverting the Savior’s teaching [that we love our enemies].

We forget that if we are righteous the Lord will either not suffer our enemies to come upon us—and this is the special promise to the inhabitants of the land of the Americas (see 2 Ne. 1:7)—or he will fight our battles for us.19

President Kimball ends this sermon, which seems to me one of the most unusual and challenging given to twentieth-century Mormons, with an irrefutable explanation of why revenge and confrontation, name-calling and sanctions, indeed any form of fighting our enemies, even winning, will never resolve conflicts—and thus why all who call themselves Christians must do something with enemies other than fight them. We must rely primarily on love, on praying and giving and teaching, rather than on armaments, if we are ever to do away with those enemies in the only effective and permanent way, by changing them into friends:

What are we to fear when the Lord is with us? Can we not take the Lord at his word and exercise a particle of faith in him? Our assignment is affirmative: to forsake the things of the world as ends in themselves; to leave off idolatry and press forward in faith; to carry the gospel to our enemies, that they might no longer be our enemies.20

One of the measures of great oratory, certainly of any in the Christian tradition of *sermo humilis*, is that it not be expedient, not obviously, or even unconsciously, designed to tickle anyone’s ears or serve any of the earthly powers that be. Sacvan Bercovitch, in *The American Jeremiad*, demonstrates that most American religious as well as political rhetoric has been expedient, has consistently tended (even when couched in what seem to be cries of doom and calls to repentance) to serve the purposes of a remarkably durable and essentially secular national dream. From John Winthrop’s early evocation of the wrathful watchfulness that God would turn on his chosen people in the New World, through the many doom-prophesying “election day” and “fast day” jeremiads in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the nineteenth-century “progressivist” calls to an individualistic, entrepreneurial patriotism, even through the “social gospel” and civil rights activism of many modern preachers—through all this there has
been a central ambivalence in American preaching. It has invoked the city of God but done so in order to promote the city of man. It has used, even created, anxiety about our failures and the threatening forces in and around us mainly to energize our commitment and our striving toward that powerful but morally questionable American dream of materialistic success and self-satisfaction. As Bercovitch writes:

The latter-day Jeremiads effectually forged a powerful vehicle of middle-class ideology: a ritual of progress through consensus, a system of sacred-secular symbols for a laissez-faire creed, a "civil religion" for a people chosen to spring fully formed into the modern world—America, the first-begotten daughter of democratic capitalism, the only country that developed, from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, into a wholly middle-class culture.21

Early Mormon orators were, of course, heavily influenced by the traditional Puritan sermons and also the revivalist preaching in their immediate frontier backgrounds, but they modified both the form and content. The usual structure of (1) biblical text, (2) argument, and (3) application was modified by less dependence on scriptural literalism—and by the Mormon emphasis on both reason and the influence of the spirit—toward a looser, much more personal shape. The Mormon sermon was organized around a threefold structure of doctrines, reasons, and applications, but it also employed extemporaneous examples and arguments suggested by the occasion and type of audience, even the individuals present. The best early example is the "King Follett Discourse," in which Joseph Smith uses a specific funeral occasion to proclaim the startling and fundamental doctrine of God’s manlike origin and man’s godlike potential. He creates dramatic actions such as holding up his ring for a symbol of man’s eternal existence and speaks directly to individuals in the audience. And he ends with a poignantly personal cry for understanding of his role: "You never knew my heart. No man knows my history."22

Heber C. Kimball and Brigham Young unselfconsciously developed this form into high art that is fully in the sermo humilis tradition. Their sermons combine very personal and situational references with easy wit; careful, powerful (though sometimes highly personalized) doctrinal argument; dramatic prophecies; and spiritual witness. And this unique Mormon version of the basic Puritan sermon continues to this day in its basic form, though it has developed variations as diverse as the authority-teasing humor topped with direct moral and spiritual witness of J. Golden Kimball; the elegant, dignified but still anecdotal and spiritually direct sermons of Hugh B. Brown; and the dramatic, even breathless, crescendoing litanies of scriptural defense of the faith combined with personal anecdote and commonsense testimony of LeGrand Richards.
But the best Mormon orators have not succumbed to the inherent duplicity of the American jeremiad, the preaching of American materialism and jingoism under the banner of Christian witness. When Brigham Young and other Mormon orators of the latter part of the nineteenth century issued jeremiads on the failures of America, there was no self-serving hidden agenda aimed at an ideal national vision which would corroborate their own materialism or complacency as Americans. As the historian Davis Bitton has written, in describing Mormon denunciations of the America of that time:

Overcrowded cities, exploitation of industrial workers through wage slavery, prices determined purely by the market and at the expense of human needs, commercial insurance, and the social evil of prostitution, all came under fire from Mormon pulpits. This . . . was a structural criticism which denounced the built-in values and institutions of acquisitive capitalism and proposed to erect a radically different society. . . . Mormons could scarcely be accused of being apologists for the national Establishment.23

The German scholar Ernst Benz similarly concluded that Brigham Young was uniquely successful in keeping Mormonism from the “false secularization” which had already in the midnineteenth century captured America. Instead, President Young fostered a “positive secularization” or proper involvement of the divine with the world, investing all of man’s honorable, but mundane, activities with sacred meaning by making them part of God’s penetration into the realities of the world for the purpose of developing mankind, thus “building up God’s kingdom.”24

Bitton argues that a dramatic accommodation by Mormons to American culture followed the all-out attack by American society and government on Mormonism in the 1880s, and we might well wonder if some modern Mormon leaders finally succumbed to the compromise Bercovitch elucidates.

If so, Spencer W. Kimball was certainly not one of them. His unique quality is manifest in the paradox that he remained one of the most personally beloved and energetically obeyed Latter-day Saint prophets while challenging modern Mormons on crucial moral issues—particularly the assumptions of middle-class America, which is the domain or aspiration of most of us Mormons. The response to those specific challenges was mixed, but the sermons remain as a constant reminder and will, I believe, have unparalleled cumulative effect.

It is probably true that some of us American Mormons still think we can hunt for sport, can promote our daughters’ participation in skimpy-costumed drill teams or beauty contests, can engage
in conspicuous consumption, can be vaguely suspicious of other races, and can put more faith in missiles than in missionaries. But Spencer W. Kimball’s denunciations of all of these actions and attitudes stand in the record, in powerful sermons that will touch and help change all who read carefully and humbly. And they stand in judgment on those of us who will not.

Even into the late 1970s, when physical problems began to slow him down, President Kimball continued to challenge all varieties of Mormons. First Presidency messages condemned abortion, the Equal Rights Amendment, the MX missile and by clear implication all primary reliance on nuclear deterrence and asserted that international conflicts as well as personal ones can best be resolved by obeying Christ’s command to “love our enemies.” Earlier, President Kimball had reviewed the great prophecies and expectations past leaders had voiced concerning the development of a great Mormon art and literature and then added his own hopes. But he did so with unusual but characteristic advice, consistent with his own sermo humilis, about what would make such literature possible, that is, a willingness to deal with both the problematic and the exalting in Mormon experience rather than merely with the safe middle ground:

For years I have been waiting for someone to do justice in recording in song and story and painting and sculpture the story of the Restoration, the reestablishment of the kingdom of God on earth, the struggles and frustrations; the apostasies and inner revolutions and counter-revolutions of those first decades; of the exodus; of the counter-reactions; of the transitions; of the persecution days; of the miracle man, Joseph Smith, of whom we sing “Oh, what rapture filled his bosom, For he saw the living God” (Hymns, no. 136); and of the giant colonizer and builder, Brigham Young.

But the sermon of President Kimball’s that perhaps best combines the qualities of both the lowly and the sublime, both the hard moral challenge and the comforting, exalting divine witness, came quite late in his career. At the priesthood session of the April 1978 general conference, he began with some very general exhortations about the family and the need for priesthood holders to guard it from evil influences through their selection of magazines and newspapers. But then he moved into a purely pastoral passage of reminiscences from his Arizona youth, much like that at the beginning of “The False Gods We Worship.” This was extended with wonderfully personal, vaguely self-deprecating details and anecdotes, climaxing in a review of songs he sang in church, spiced with some witty interjections and repetitions:
I can remember how lustily we sang:

Hark! Hark! Hark! 'tis children's music,
Children's voices, O, how sweet. . .
That the Children may live long,
And be beautiful and strong.

I wanted to live a long time and I wanted to be beautiful and strong—but never reached it. . .

Drink no liquor, and they eat
But a very little meat
[I still don't eat very much meat.]
They are seeking to be great and good and wise.

And then we'd "Hark! Hark! Hark!" again.27

This apparently merely entertaining interlude united us powerfully with the "lowly" humanity in President Kimball, so that we were well prepared to accept, as coming from one like ourselves, the remarkable conclusion, in which he challenged (for the first time in a modern general conference) our complacent participation in a major Utah industry, hunting for mere sport:

I remember many times singing with a loud voice:

Don't kill the little birds,
That sing on bush and tree. . .

I had a sling and I had a flipper. I made them myself, and they worked very well. . . But I think perhaps because I sang nearly every Sunday, "Don't Kill the Little Birds," I was restrained.28

The seriousness with which President Kimball took his subject is indicated by his repeating and expanding on this topic in the following October general conference, just before the Utah deer hunting season. The difficulty of taking this stand in the Mormon community was reflected in a statement issued by the Church Public Communications Office the next week that the Church had not officially condemned all hunting—and perhaps in the rather indirect title the earlier sermon was given in the Ensign: "Strengthening the Family—The Basic Unit of the Church."29

The sermon ends with a different, though equally difficult, challenge, one that is spiritual rather than moral, but one that has also received little attention, perhaps because it was not really noticed. In the way characteristic of sermo humilis, the President moved without any transition or any dramatic explanation to a short, small, unique, typically humble and indirect, but piercing testimony of his prophetic calling and consequent experience with the divine:

"I know that God lives. I know that Jesus Christ lives," said John Taylor, my predecessor. "for I have seen him." I bear this testimony to you brethren in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.30
NOTES

2. Ibid., 425.
5. Given originally at a BYU devotional assembly, 13 February 1951, and published as “BYU Students Warned of Immodesty in Dress” in Deseret News, Church Section, 28 February 1951, 5. This speech was repeated in various forms and quoted in subsequent speeches by President Kimball; for instance, as “Immodesty in Dress” at the Portland stake quarterly conference MIA session, 9 September 1956, and as part of his devotional address at BYU, 12 September 1978.

A useful source for anyone wishing to study President Kimball’s sermons is Edward L. Kimball, ed., The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1983), a selection, by topic, from the sermons, with a complete index by year and useful information on sources. The file of materials used to produce The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball (including copies of sermons not published in easily accessible form) is in the Harold B. Lee Library at Brigham Young University and can be consulted as I have done in writing this essay.

7. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 253.
11. Ibid., 318.
12. Ibid., 312.
13. Spencer W. Kimball, "When the World Will Be Converted," Ensign 4 (October 1974): 3, 6, 7, 12. This was a message that he had given before, but his new position at the head of the Church made it now particularly striking and powerful.
14. This was his title and theme for the Regional Representatives Seminar, 3 October 1974, developed in his address to the Mutual Improvement Association June conference, 29 June 1975, and soon a popular phrase throughout the Church.
17. Ibid., 4.
18. Ibid., 4, 6.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., Deseret News, Church Section. 7 October 1978, 14.
Andrew and Olive Kimball family, 1897 (Spencer on father’s lap)

Andrew and Olive Kimball family, 1902 (Spencer seated)

Gordon, Spencer, and Delbert, 1906, at the time of their mother’s death
Spencer W. Kimball and Clarence Naylor

Eighth grade graduation, 1910

Gila Academy basketball team, 1912–13 (Spencer standing at right)
High school boys expelled for cutting school on April Fool's Day, 1914
(Spencer, student-body president, standing second from left)

Hog-killing time, 1917

Milkers at South Globe Dairy, 1914 (Spencer in center)
High school graduation, 1914
En route to the Central States Mission, 1914

Lewis Critchfield, Spencer W. Kimball, and Edward Christensen, Missouri, 1916

Spencer W. Kimball and Leland Hawkes, Missouri, 1915

Spencer W. Kimball at the end of his mission
Spencer and Camilla, February 1918, three months after marriage

First child, Spencer LeVan, fall 1918

Spencer W. Kimball with Spencer LeVan and Olive Beth, 1923
Images of Spencer W. Kimball

At Pompeii, 1937

At Mount Graham, 1936

In Holland, 1937
Young businessman
Family portrait, 1943 (Olive Beth, Andrew, and Edward, standing; Spencer, Camilla, Kathryn, Barbara, and Spencer LeVan, seated)

Spencer and Camilla in Boulder, Colorado, 1943, with Spencer LeVan’s family, en route to Salt Lake City after call to be an Apostle
Mark E. Petersen, Matthew Cowley, Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, and Harold B. Lee (seated), 1946

Spencer and Camilla, October 1947

Spencer W. Kimball with Glen Spencer Charleston
Napping during tour of European missions, 1955

Camilla and Spencer, with Stephen and Thomas Mack, on return from a trip around the world on Church business, February 1961

In Egypt, January 1961
Wedding reception, 1959

Near Santa Cruz, California, about 1968
With Indian family in Mexico City

With Navajo children in Arizona, 1972

With Harold B. Lee, 1973

With Ezra Taft Benson, 1975
Utah State University baccalaureate service, 1975

Samoa area conference, 1976
Images of Spencer W. Kimball

Spencer W. Kimball, 1979

Spencer and Camilla with Dr. Ernest L. Wilkinson, Greece, 1979
Eighty-fifth birthday celebration, 1980

Special microphone
Spencer and Camilla at the dedication of the Spencer W. Kimball Tower, Brigham Young University, 1982, with Patricia and Jeffrey Holland and D. Arthur Haycock, personal secretary to President Kimball
Spencer W. Kimball and Gordon B. Hinckley, general conference, April 1984
The Mission Experience
of
Spencer W. Kimball

Spencer W. Kimball indicated to his biographers that during his mission he had kept a journal in a little black notebook, but he did not know where he had put it, so the biographers had to rely almost exclusively on his reminiscences for information about his mission experience. During the clearing out of President Kimball's office shortly after his death in November 1985, an inch-high stack of three-and-a-half-inch by six-inch looseleaf sheets turned up, which proved to be the missing journal. The journal includes irregular entries starting when he was fifteen; the entries are nearly daily from age eighteen to twenty-three.

The portions of Spencer Kimball's journal reproduced here are drawn from his missionary years, ages nineteen to twenty-one. They show a boy still in the process of maturation, but one with the basic qualities we would expect from our acquaintance with the man. Even though the journal is not highly introspective, it offers unconscious clues to the kind of person who could become a prophet. We see indications of humility, penchant for hard work, sensitivity, sociability, faith, and other qualities that in heightened form characterized him as a remarkable Church leader. We learn of his talents with people and with music. His baritone voice and skill at the piano provided much satisfaction to him and to those who asked him to play and sing.

In his reaction to events, we learn something about Spencer Kimball's feelings about war, religion (particularly Mormonism), sexual mores, big-city life, political conventions, alcohol use, and many other things. A journal is positive evidence of what it states, but we should be cautious about drawing firm inferences from what is missing. A journal writer has preconceptions about the purposes of such a record, and those notions dictate what he will include. For example, Spencer Kimball had a rich sense of humor, but little of that can be seen in his journal. He had a normal interest in romance, but there are few hints of that in his journal. He was cognizant of world events, but he rarely referred
to them unless they somehow affected his life rather directly. His journal is a record of what he did, more than what he thought. He records the daily events of work, travel, and recreation; his successes and failures; reflections on how he had been treated by others; occasional expressions of faith; and self-conscious sketches of people and places.

Going beyond the story of one man's life, the journal contributes to our understanding of missionary work. The journals of a number of early missionaries, such as Wilford Woodruff and Parley P. Pratt, have been published, but not many journals that reflect missionary work in the United States in the early twentieth century. Through the eyes of a diligent young elder, we can see the rhythms and routines of that era of missionary life.

We find in his journal regular reporting of morning study class, tracting door to door in an effort to strike up gospel conversations and lend or sell at cost pamphlets and books, evening cottage meetings in the homes of investigators at which missionaries gave talks on gospel subjects, and occasional and sometimes awkward street meetings. He also writes of attending meetings of the local branch, visiting members, administering to the sick, and such recreational activities as attending plays or movies, swimming, and sightseeing. But the more dramatic experiences are found in his country tracting, when the elders depended on the hospitality of farmers for beds and meals. These forays into the sometimes unfriendly Missouri countryside tested a young missionary's physical and spiritual mettle.

Though Spencer Kimball was probably above average in ability, as suggested by the fact that he served as a leader among missionaries, he had no dramatic accomplishments to draw marked attention to his missionary service. His mission experience appears to be typical of the time and place.

Commas and apostrophes have been inserted for clarity and ease of reading, but the occasional spelling errors, the variable spelling of personal names, and the frequent capitalization of common nouns appear as in the original. Comments in parentheses are the author's. Editorial insertions appear in brackets. Omissions within entries are indicated by ellipses. Omissions of entire entries are marked by spaced dots between entries.

[Spencer attended high school at Church-operated Gila Academy, just down the block from his home in the Mormon village of Thatcher, Arizona. He was outgoing, popular, and president of his class each year. At the graduation exercises for his small class in 1914, his father, Andrew Kimball, presided as stake president and president of the board of the Academy.]
Thur., May 7, 1914. Graduation Exercises held at Thatcher Meeting house. We 21 H. S. & 7 Com[merica]l Graduates met in hall below and marched up stairs. We had an excellent program (so we were told). I sang a Baritone Solo, "The Plains of Peace." Father informed me in these exercises before this vast assembly that I was to be called on a mission. This greatly surprised me for I had been planning all winter to go to college next winter. After the exercises we 1914's gave a surprise on Miss Mansfield. Ice cream, cake, candy, lemonade, strawberries, etc.

Sun. May 10. Lawrence, Ella, Iretta, Grace Layton & I enjoyed a sumptuous dinner at Iretta's. We started to Sacrament Meeting but an accident (?) happened and we returned. Had pictures taken. From the Ice cream parlor home to say goodbye then to the A.E.R.R. [Arizona Eastern Railroad] Station where I said goodbye to many of my girl friends and went to Globe to work again on the South Globe Dairy.

Sun. May 17. . . . This week I received a call from Pres. Joseph F. Smith to go on a mission to Switzerland and Germany in Oct. (1914).

Sat. June 6. Went to town (Globe) and had a long talk with Father who was down on business. I was ordained to be a priest [at age nineteen] by Father and Bishop Hunsaker.


July 12. Gave a brief talk on "Baptism" in church.

Aug. 16. Gave a brief talk on "The Reception of the Holy Ghost" in Sacrament meeting.

Aug. 17. Preparing to go home.
Aug. 18. Mr. [L. J.] Walliman [non-Mormon employer at the dairy] took me to the train in the “Hup.” Went to home (Thatcher). Had a dandy visit at home with the folks. Went to town and met many old friends. Went to Safford for a ride with Frank Martineau. 8:30 Went to a dance at L. C. Snow’s and had splendid time. [At the dance he was introduced to Camilla Eyring for the first time.]

Sept. 7. . . . I received a letter from the 1st Presidency changing my mission field from Germany to the Central States.

Sun. Sept. 13. . . . I was ordained an Elder in the Melchizedek Priesthood by Bro. S. J. Sims [after three months as a priest].

Wed. 16. Went to a farewell party in honor of Elder Paul B. Talmage [son of James E. Talmage] who was called on a mission to Eastern States. I contributed my “mite” toward helping him financially.

Sun. Sept. 20. Work in day. Attended the Band Concert then Sacrament Meeting. I was called on to speak. Everyone said goodbye to me and Bro. S. J. Sims slipped a dollar in my hand to help on my mission.

Tue. 22. Work as usual. P.M. I went over to Miami and visited Milas Larson. He presented me with a little pearl handled knife. I returned home to the dairy. About 7:30 while I was talking to Clell a crowd of guests assembled. Mrs. Walliman called me to the telephone where I was terribly surprised by being carried into the room full of company. I was made acquainted with those who were strangers, then the fun began. Games and music with some dancing on the porch. We drew our partners and went to the table of ice cream and cake. Miss Bessie Walliman presented me with the Dairy boys’ present to me—an excellent gold watch—More music and games. The party broke up about 11:25 all saying they had a splendid time. O! how grateful I was to think my friends cared so much for me, to show their kindness and regards by the splendid social and valuable present. “Appreciation” is too weak a word to express my feelings. Long will these dear people the Wallmans and the dairy Boys live in my memory. Geo. Lee, Clell Haynie, Rue Harmon, Jesse Cluff, Walter Cluff, Earl Larson. Louis Walliman, Clara Walliman, Glenn & Bessie Walliman. Many thanks to you.

Wed. 23 Sept. Same work. Visited Miss Elsie Glenn and played the piano and sang with her. In the evening a social was given in my
honor by the Globe Ward. A large crowd was present. Some outsiders. A program was carried on. I sang twice. Refreshments were served. A collection of $21.50 was taken up to help me on my mission.

Thur. 24. Left Globe for Thatcher. Lawrence got on at Pima and we were met at the train by the girls. I helped prepare the ice cream for the social for me. The boys and girls and my dear parents honored me with a party. A large crowd of my best friends assembled. Games were played, then dancing on the lawn. Punch, ice cream and cake were served. All had a good time. Miss Iretta Layton was my partner.

Sat. [26.] . . . Attended Priesthood Meeting where I was passed upon to be ordained a Seventy.

Tue. 29. Helped Iretta wash clothes, get dinner, eat it and wash dishes. At 8 P.M. the Elders Quorum gave a program in my honor. I spoke.

Uncle Tom K. gave me a dollar 1.
Albert Sims gave me $1.
Ralph Bilby '' '' .50
Mr. Chandler '' '' 1.00
Jesse Green '' '' .40
Henry Maloy '' '' .50
Katie Martin '' '' .50

Aunt C and Iretta & Carrie gave me an "old woman" fitted out with comb, brush, scissors, buttons, needles, pins, etc.

Verne Pace gave me a neck tie and a pair of socks. All expressed kindest wishes. I was very much disappointed, however. In Globe the Ward had treated me so well & given me $21 besides a nice farewell party. The Thatcher Ward—as far as I know—did nothing for me, did not even recognize me at all. I felt slighted very much. Individuals treated me royally tho!

Wed. 30. Visited and said goodbye to Nettie, Ella & Iretta and O! how sad I felt!! I boarded the A.E.R.R. at 11:20 and said goodbye to my sisters and many friends for 2 years or more. . . . Tears dimmed my eyes as the train rolled out of Thatcher and my friends & sisters sank from sight.

Fri. [Oct.] 16. 9 A.M. Andrew Smith and I met with others in the annex of the Salt Lake Temple. After meeting we went thru' the temple where I received my own endowments. The temple gave me the impression of Sacredness divine and it was all wonderful, getting thru'
at 2 P.M. We ate dinner at Aunt Alice’s [father’s twin sister, married to President Joseph F. Smith]. I went to Uncle [J.] Golden Kimball’s office where he ordained me a Seventy in the 89th Quorum of Seventies.

Tue. 20. We met many other Elders at the Pres. office where we were tested by a Dr. who pronounced me “sound as a Dollar.” I was proud to tell him I kept the Word of Wisdom in full, for I have never in my life drank tea, coffee, liquor or never used tobacco in any form. We Elders met at 2 P.M. in the annex of the Temple where we received many valuable instructions and were set apart for our missions. Bro. Seymour B. Young set me apart. He prayed among other things that all dread and fear should leave me and that my tongue should be loosed like the pen of a ready writer. We all went to the Pres. office where we received our transportation and more instructions.

Wed. 21. . . . I left at 6 P.M. . . . on the Union Pacific.

Fri. 23. After a long lonesome journey I got in Kansas City at 4:30 and easily found my way to Independence where I was treated well by Pres. [A. O.] Bennion and others at the Mission House.

Sat. 24. Bot my grip, books, tracts, etc. Studied a few hours on my tracts. Went up town with Mrs. Clarene Quinn & Miss Rose. Came home and entertained family with music. [Typical home entertainment was singing, playing games, making ice cream.]

Sun. 25. . . . Went to Sacrament Meeting. I was called on to speak but my speech was very short. I bore my testimony.

Tue. 27. Worked all day on the sidewalk around the new building [a chapel about to be dedicated by President Joseph F. Smith]. Attended choir practice at night. Elders I. O. Brown, Smith Gibbons and I slept in one bed.

Wed. 28. Worked on cement sidewalk around and grounds of church. Went to M.I.A. at night.

Thur. 29. Worked hard all day on Zion. I considered it quite a privilege to work on building up some of the buildings in Zion. I often shot of this being the ancient “Garden of Eden” where Adam walked & talked with God. Went to bed early. Had a cold.

Fri. 30. Worked hard all day on sidewalks & grounds of the L.D.S. church here. Just a week since I landed here. A week of pleasure. To bed early again.

Mon. [Nov.] 9. Worked hard till noon when we finished up the work of laying sod. Bro. Cardon and Pres. S. O. Bennion took 8 of us Elders for a joy ride in their autos. About 55 miles. We went to Lee's summit then thru' a millionairress's horse & cattle farm where we saw $10,000 horses. Then thru' the beautiful Swope park to Kansas City where we went thru' the new Union Depot which is huge & gigantic. Pres. Bennion took the 10 of us to supper then thru' the Hippodrome Show where we saw a splendid performance of acrobatic stunts. Enjoyable day.

Tue. 10. Elder Gibbons & I got in Kansas City at 10. Went out tracting. The first door I knocked at was slammed in my face. Got along fairly well. At 4 we quit and bot groceries and began "baching." Went to Dr. McCartney's home and practiced quartets for a funeral.

Nov. 12. Tracting till 4 P.M. Study, a bachelor's supper. Attended a cottage meeting where I was called on to speak.

Nov. 13. Mush for breakfast, "Bachelor's delight." Ha ha. Tracted till 3 o'clock, bot doughnuts for luncheon. Got along fairly well. Met some Reorganites. After returning to the rooms and eating supper, Elder Selin, Shore & I held a cottage meeting. I talked a short time on prayer. Very good meeting. In going to & from work today I have walked some 120 blocks, so I am tired. I am very thankful to the Lord that with His help I have done as well as I have so far in my work and I pray for a continuation of his blessings. (1 weigh 153 lbs., a gain of 7 lbs since coming here.)

Wed. 25. Elder Peterson and I [assigned to do country tracting for several weeks] fixed up our grips and bot every necessary equipment in Jefferson City [in the center of Missouri]. We left Jef. City at 11:30 carrying our overcoats and grips weighing about 35 lbs. We walked about 12 miles, then as it was getting dark we began seeking entertainment. At House after house we were turned away. On, on, on, we dragged our tired limbs. After walking another 3 mi. and having asked 12 times for a bed without success we were let in
a house, not welcome tho. 15 mi. Very tired, sleepy, & hungry. No
dinner, no supper.

Thur. Nov. 26. Thanksgiving Day. Hurrah! As for the year's
blessings we were very thankful to our Lord, the "Giver of all," but
as for a Thanksgiving dinner we had none, but had a very enjoyable
conversation with some reorganites. We tracted all day till 5 o'clock
and found entertainment the third time. Very nice people. Oh! how
thankful were we for the supper and bed. Our travels were from
Jefferson city to Osage to Bonnotts Mill to Frankenstine to Luyston to
Voschell to Linn, Osage Co., Mo. [towns east of Jefferson City, within
about twenty miles].

Fri. 27. A good breakfast with our new Catholic friends, then
we tracted. Most of the people were Catholics and would not converse
on religious topics. I had a very good conversation with one Catholic
and we were invited in and I sold him a "Voice of Warning." We
tracted till nightfall and after one refusal gained entrance to the home
of friendly Reorganites, where we had a supper & bed.

Sat. 28. After a good breakfast with the Mantle Family we tracted
on to Linn, Osage Co., Mo., meeting very little success. The Catholics
seemingly are forbidden reading any other literature. They do not know
enough about their belief to converse. We arrived in Linn and rented
a room and two meals for 75 cents each.

Sun. 29. Wrote letters and studied all day [since Sundays were
not spent tracting]. Played the landlady's piano and sang for them.
We visited the Methodist church, which was interesting. The Pastor
among other things compared the people's Sun. lives with the Soldier
on dress parade and said, "A thinking people judge religionists by
their weekly works, not their Sun. manners and good acts." He
explained that anyone could be a Methodist just so they believed in
the Apostle's creed. I thot, "I am glad that any one or every one
cannot be a Mormon, but just those who accept the principles of the
gospel of Christ." I dread the thots of walking again tomorrow in the
mud.

Mon. Nov. 30. Hurrah! I sold 2 books today. We walked about
7 miles tracting. Were invited in to dinner. From Linn we went to
Potts. We stayed all night with a widow lady and her son named Potts.

Tue. Dec. 1. Tracted on to Lane, Mo., where we got the Union
Church for a meeting. We were invited in to dinner, supper, and
breakfast with a bed. Our host was a Mr. Lockwood. We had a good
meeting, there being about 100 people present. "They liked us fine,"
we heard.

Wed. Dec. 2. On awaking we found it steadily raining. After
a good breakfast with Lockwoods we began tramping thru' the sticky
miry mud and clay [heading south]. We were invited in to dinner with
Scotts. On we went toward Judge. It was steadily raining and we came to the creek. I started across the creek on a log but it broke. Throwing my grip on an island I jumped back, but wet to my knees nearly. We went down a little farther and I threw my overcoat over, then my shoes & socks, the latter falling in the stream and being lost. Removing my trousers, I forded the stream which was swift and deep. Barefooted on the sharp rocks with wet clothes and it raining on me I limped back and gathered up my belongings and with chattering teeth and shaking limbs I redressed my freezing feet. On for miles thru' the miry bogs. We stayed with a baptist good hearted fellow, with whom we had a long conversation.

Thur. 3. A fine long pull or walk thru about 15 miles of the most miry, sticky roads without a bite to eat from early morn till late at night. We crossed the Gasconade river 5 miles from Judge. We went to one home to ask for entertainment but found the husband and wife in a "spat," so we drearily dragged ourselves along another mile or two thru' loose sticky roads till we came to Summerfield where we, the second asking, were invited in for the night with a young couple, who treated us very well.

Fri. 4. A long, cold, but cheerful walk along the muddy county road between Summerfield and Vienna. I sold four books today. Up and down hills and jumping creeks. We asked for and obtained a good dinner. We were unable to talk gospel today. At about 5 o'clock I asked an old man for entertainment. "No chance," he said. "I wouldn't keep anybody free if they would all turn to apostles." On we walked. Darkness came on but still no shelter. One lady says, "I am not very well, besides Lizzie'll tak yu' in, she's got more room'n us." We crossed the Gasconade R. and plowed our way slowly thru' the deep slushy mud, falling in ditches, running into banks and fences and stepping into puddles. We were again nearly refused but put up such a hard plea that we gained admittance. We have walked and tracted 18 miles.

Sat. 5. After a good breakfast and a mile's tracting we reached Maries Co.'s county seat, Vienna. We got our shoes soled and got a room in the Hotel [for the Sabbath]. Had a good talk with the 17 yr. old Prin. of the Vienna Public School called Hutchison. Did a lot of writing.

Sun. 6. Went to Methodist church and heard a "punk" sermon. The preacher said Baptism was not essential to salvation & mode was not important. Played piano and sang for the hotel people.

Mon. 7. Walked from Vienna toward West of Co. Ate dinner with a Catholic family. A kind gentleman let us ride across the big Maries R. We lodged with a man who said he did not believe in God. We talked to him but could get no satisfaction. He treated us well. Tom Connor, by name.
Tue. 8. Still cloudy. We have not seen the sun for about 8 days. Met some Christian people. After tramping around to the Directors' homes all afternoon, we got consent to hold meeting in the school house. After a good supper with the young man and family, we went to the school house and were greeted by about 50 people who had come thru' the rain and darkness. I took charge of the meeting. I talked a half hour on the 1st Prin. of the Gospel. Elder Peterson spoke. The people were delighted and quite insisted that we stay and preach another night. We stayed with our friend Dolph Coplan. Were treated fine.

Wed. 9. Behold!! A snow covered forest meets our gaze. How beautiful. How grand and exquisite. It is still snowing. All day it slowly snowed and was very wet under foot. We walked about ten miles. Were unable to hold meeting in the meeting house so went on thru' Vancleve. We stayed with young family by the name of Wm. Barnhardt and we held a fine cottage meeting with them. He was humble & good.

Thur. 10. The ground was covered with snow. We walked back thru' Vancleve, then stopping in nearly every home to get warm. In one vacant house we stopped and with ice water from the creek shaved the extra long whiskers from our faces. With numb feet, face & hands we trudged on to a home where we accepted an invitation to a chicken dinner. On to the Tavern Mill where we tried all afternoon till late to make arrangements to speak in one of the two churches near on the school house, but were unable to get either (thru' prejudice, we believed). We stayed by invitation with a New Light or Christian man who was rather radical.

Fri. 11. Walked on thru' the cold on the frozen ground and thru' the ever falling snow. Had many conversations. Were invited to dinner and walked on thru' Tavern. Met a Mr. Moss who invited us to stay all night. Then a Mr. Crone who insisted we stay with him. We previously met these gentlemen. Another invitation for the night we had to decline. We stayed at Louis Crone's and were treated exceptionally well. We sang & played for them and talked and felt quite at home. Conversed till 12 o'clock. He is a very broadminded man. We were invited back any time to stay a few days. He seemed impressed with us and our doctrine.

Sat. 12. Visited Mr. Jim Moss, then walked ten miles arriving in Vienna at noon. We had to wade the ice water in the Big Maries R. which nearly froze our feet. Went to the Maries Hotel and cleaned up.

One day while we were riding along the road with a man and woman in a wagon the conversation drifted from crops in Mo. to Ariz. crops, then to oranges, when she asked, "Well, how do they plant oranges there? Like we do wheat?"

Played and sang all evening to a crowd of Vienna young folks. There is about 2 in. snow, which has just fallen.
Sun. 13. Wrote letters and fixed up things generally. P.M. I played piano and sang for some young Vienna people.

Mon. 14. Oh! it is cold!! -6 degrees F., a sharp cold wind. We made arrangements for the schoolhouse. Studied all afternoon. Held meeting in the schoolhouse. Only a few attended. I spoke about 35 min. on first Prin. of Gospel. Sun is shining for 1st time in 2 weeks.

Tue. 15. Another very cold day about 5 below zero in the morning. All day we walked over the frozen rough ground and thru' the snow with only two invitations in. Cold and disagreeable. People very prejudiced. After canvassing unsuccessfully for some time, we finally were taken in reluctantly. Unwelcome.

Wed. 16. All day thru' the snow and over the cold frozen rough roads [eastward]. The cords of my ankles are stiff and pain on and off all thru' the day. No success at all in selling books or getting conversations. Very discouraging. About 5 o'clock we got into a home where the people had the Book of Mormon and other books. A very pleasant evening, a good supper and conversation. We were made very welcome. Mr. Durrett's father-in-law told us of the war and of the hard times. "Often," he said, "food was very scarce. We took flour from a store or home and spreading a handkerchief or blanket mixed flour & water (no salt or soda). Winding the dough, which they had pulled in the shape of a rope around a stick they baked it over the campfire."

Thur. 17. Walked in to Vichy, a town of possibly 75. Here we tracted all day and found the people very prejudiced. On toward St. James we made our way and stopped with a very poor family, Barns. They made us welcome to the best they had, which was scant, also they slept 5 in a bed in order to give us two a bed and place to stay. God bless these worthy souls! Such generosity we have found nowhere as yet.

Fri. 18. O! how my feet pain. The cords back of my ankles are swollen and pain at every step. The sun came out and thawed out the frozen ground making it very muddy and hard walking. 'Twas quite late when we finally found shelter for the night. A touch of rheumatism in my leg caused me some pain.

Sat. 19. My feet pained so badly for the first few miles that I could hardly walk. Polygamy, Polygamy! thrown up to us continually. 8 miles of hard walking over frozen ground and snow brot us to St. James where Elder [W.] Lindsay met us. We visited Elder Berry who is doing good missionary work there. We took train [thirty miles east] to Sullivan and walked 10 more miles to Pea Ridge over rough frozen roads. Met the family of Bro. Strauser [where missionaries were always welcome and routinely stayed at holiday times].
Sun. 20. Sunday School at Bro. Strauser's. In the evening we all went down to the pasture where I had my first sled ride. I was not very good at guiding, so we went on our heads on the frozen sleet. At night we held meeting at which I spoke a few words on the efficacy of prayer.


Tue. 22. Did a lot of writing and sent off a few gifts. P.M. We rode sleds down the hill all afternoon. Again after supper we rode sleds till 9 o'clock. Lots of fun but also lots of bumps.


Thur. 24. Thur. night had a Xmas eve party. Program, games and a jolly time.

Fri. 25. Xmas morning. Bro. & Sis. Strauser gave us handkerchiefs, garters, armbands and straps for grips. Games and a good time. Xmas dinner of Turkey, duck and all other dainties. Excellent dinner. Games & singing were the afternoon away. To the frozen pond we went and skated and danced, then to the hill where we sled-rode. Back home and games again took our attention. O! What a glorious Xmas. A most happy one. No thots of home hardly.

1915

Mon. [Jan.] 4. Left after dinner for the country. Traveled a couple of miles and found Mr. Thos. Collins. He had bot books from Elder Lloyd & Elder Papsworth. We stayed with him, explaining the gospel to him & family and held a meeting with him, which they enjoyed.

Tue. 5. Traveled thru' thick mud all day without any dinner. We ate our Xmas cake given to us by Elsie Strauser. umm it was fine, tasted more-ish. To Decamp where we tried to get the schoolhouse but failed. Found a kind host & hostess in the persons of Mr. & Mrs. John Hale.

Wed. 6. Walked to Hale Schoolhouse and got permission to hold meeting. Only 5 listeners came. We both talked very poorly. Stayed with a Greig family.

Thur. 7. "Back to St. Jas." the slogan. By 11 o'clock the ground had thawed and it was terribly muddy. We wired on our overshoes with "Mormon buckskin" bailing wire. A long never-ending muddy walk bro't us to the Central Hotel in St. James. A visit with the Saints in that place and some good meals were followed by a meeting of Saints. At the hotel we (H. E. Peterson & I) went to bed but at 12 o'clock,
then 1–2–3 and 4 I awoke and looked at my watch. At the last named hour we arose and hurried to the depot just in time to catch the St. Louis bound train. An hour's sleep, an hour's study & one of sightseeing, then St. Louis the great [after five weeks in the country and one with Strausers]. After getting cleaned up I found my way to the Headquarters and found the Elders ready to go and I went out tracting. Found lots of mail, among which was the Xmas cake from Ruth. The Elders entertained the Lady Missionaries to supper. A splendid spread considering men cooks. Out to a cottage meeting where I took up the time. To Sister Haskell's.

Sat. 9. Meeting each morning. With Elder Phippen I went to Sister Favre's and administered to her. I anointed the oil and this was my first experience at this work. We visited the Mississippi River, which was full of floating ice. Went thru' a river boat. Very interesting. Went to the "American" Theatre and saw the musical comedy "Bringing up Father." Extra fine. Splendid. Attended Priesthood Meeting.

Sun. 10. Began Janitor work for a week in the church. Built fires, etc. Attended Sunday School, Priesthood Meeting. Went to Thurmans' and practiced songs. To Sacrament meeting, then [St. Louis Branch] Pres. Martin took two Lady Missionaries & me to ice cream.

Mon. 11. Class at 7:30. Out tracting. Cottage meeting. Elder Melvin Earl Phippen is my companion.

Mon. 25. Tracted, selling six small books. O! How cold. My feet, ears and fingers!! Door after door was slammed in my face. Most of the people were catholics and when I had introduced myself they said, "O!! I am a Catholic and don't want any of your tracts. I thank God I am one, and God forbid that I ever change." They seemingly expect us to run when they say, "I am Catholic." A hard day's work without any results, seemingly. Visited Sister Hall who had pie for us. Cottage meeting.

Tue. 26. Tracted alone, it being too cold for my companion. Very cold.

Wed. 27. Put in a hard day at tracting and sold 9 small books which is the most I ever sold in a day up to this time. It was so cold I would tract a few doors then walk around the block to get my feet, hands & ears warm. I felt fully compensated when I sold the books.

Mon. Feb. 1, 1915. Tracted. Met an old "Mormon Hater" who was terribly blasphemous and cursed us shamefully. I was Bishop at a cottage meeting at Hoyts'.
Tue. 2. It was snowing, so we did not tract. We went to the New Catholic Cathedral which is immense & great. We climbed to the top.

Sat. 20. Took a new elder to Sister Hall's. She did not let on as tho' she was a "Mormon." She talked to him awhile then introduced herself as a Mormon. Tracted till noon. Got the pictures and went home to write letters & reports. Priesthood meeting.

Sun. 28. S. S. Officers meeting then Sunday School. I took charge of my class. Then followed an officers meeting, then Elders Ritchie, Hill, Sisters Beardshall, Ritchie & I went to see the Infirmary or Poor House. Here we saw thru' the buildings and were invited to hold service. I played the organ and we all sang the beautiful "songs of Zion." "Please sing more" was the begging petition of some of the poor cripples. We sang about 7 or 8 songs, prayed, and Elder Hill preached to them. The poor unfortunates enjoyed the services and asked us to come again. We saw the lame, blind, sick, etc. Also we went thru' the hospital. To the Mo. Crematory we made our way. Here we saw many shelves full of vases, urns, jars or boxes which contained ashes of the bodies. Some ladies had the ashes of one of their friends out in a paper and were raking thru' them. There was about 2 quarts of ashes to the body.

Mon. [Mar.] 8. At morning class I learned I was called to go to Hannibal, Mo. . . .

Tue. 9. I was feeling very blue over the idea of leaving the Elders Ritchie, Phippen, Hill, etc., whom I had so learned to love. Elder Henderson and I left St. Louis for Hannibal at 7:50, arriving at 11:40. . . .

Wed. 10. . . . We began our baching it. Spent all our money but 20 cents for coal, room, groceries, 15 cents more went to coal oil. We began to get nervous. The landlady lent us a quarter for the quarter gas meter.

Thur. 11. Good breakfast. Ate up all the bread and most of the food. Room rent of $2.00 due. Called for mail, but no money came. "We'll have to sell some books or starve," so we went to work. We sold some books, but did not get the money for them. No money for laundry, food, rooms, etc. P.M. I sold a "Ray" and gave 5 cents to Elder Henderson to get bread. Almost cleaned up our meagre stock at supper. We joked and laughed about our plight, but it was nevertheless serious. We didn't know where our breakfast was
coming from. Our office money was due but delayed. We held class at Sister Miller's and Brother Walker brot me mail. A letter from Clell Haynie I was impressed to open. There was a dollar bill. Hurrah! 'The Lord will provide,' I joyfully exclaimed. We rejoiced to think the Lord had provided at such an opportune time.

Wed. 24. . . . Down to Sister Gordon's at night to spend evening. My throat began getting sore and I took a severe cold in my head. Before we reached home I could hardly walk. I went right to bed, but slept not at all. Rolled and tumbled all night. My back, head, legs, and every bone in my body ached and my throat was intensely sore.

Thur. 25. No one knowing of my illness, I was very lonesome all day. Elder Henderson nursed me well. Elder H. went to class at Rardens' and told them all of my condition, so immediately Bro. Daniels and Forest came down and I enjoyed their company & visit.

Sat. 27. . . . Sister Daniels & Hazel came about 5 o'clock with a large box of carnations & ferns from the florist. They had gone out and made up a small collection from the Sister Saints who made me a present of the flowers to cheer me in my illness. 'God bless the dear people.' . . .

Sun. 28. My Birthday. I awoke about 2 a.m. with a severe earache. I did what I could for it, then walked the floor and groaned until 4:30, when I went back to bed. The coal oil for my sore throat had burned the skin off my neck. Elder Henderson went to S. S., leaving me alone. I ate a fairly good meal at noon. He went to meeting & Forest Daniels came to stay with me. We talked gospel. O how my ear did pain!! What a pleasant birthday!! May I enjoy a few more like it!! I should say not. The pain became almost unbearable. I was left alone again while they all went to the park. How lonesome & painful no one knows.

Thurs. Apr. 1. My weakness, earache, sore throat, etc., not being enough afflictions, I was visited with a sore boil on my neck. Dr. Blue came and put me to bed, said I had tonsilitis or quinsy and punctured ear drum. I had much company. . . .

Fri. Apr. 2. . . . The Dr. said he would come next morning to lance my tonsil as it was enlarged and so sore I could hardly talk. O! the pain & torture I suffered for those few days!! My ear still throbbed constantly. No sleep at all but early Sat. (Apr. 3) my tonsil broke and I gained a great deal of relief. The Dr. said I must have my ear treated by an ear specialist.
Sat. 10. . . With Bro. Daniels we walked to Oakwood and found a place to baptize under the old covered bridge in the New London road. . . .

Sun. 11. I took charge of Sunday School, after which I went down to Sister Gordon's and with her and Mrs. Fuller went out to Oakwood, where we held the baptismal service. I preached on Baptism. Elder Ritchie baptized Frank C. Daniels, his wife Amanda Daniels, his daughter Hazel, and sons Earl & Forest, also Minnie Rarden. . . .

[Mission President Bennion sent Spencer and a companion to visit a dying member near the Missouri-Iowa border. Afterward they took advantage of the opportunity to make a quick visit to Nauvoo.]

Sat. [May] 15. Crossed the Mississippi to Nauvoo. Walked up Parley St., named for Parley P. Pratt, [to] the home erected by grandfather Heber C. Kimball. A stone was engraved thus: "H. C. K. 1845." On we went to the homes erected by John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, Erastus and Lorenzo Snow, Joseph Young. Also the home of Brigham Young and the homestead and mansion of Joseph Smith. In the lot near the old homestead (which is in ruins) we saw the grave of Emma Smith, the 1st wife of the Prophet. We went up into the town, which now has about 1200 people (rough guess). . . . The Nauvoo people generally recognized us and spoke. Much prejudice has disappeared. . . . Arrived at Hannibal 11:15. . . .

Sun. 16. . . A contention arose among the Saints, which hurt us Elders very much.

Thur. 20. Went to say goodbye to all the Saints. Found contention among the Saints. Boarded train and arrived at St. Louis 3:30. All were amused at my moustache. Went to Mutual, after which we all had a jollification. Elder Hubbard & I are pals.

Fri. 21. Had picture taken with moustache.

Tue. 25. Very sore & lame from exertion in ball game [after missionary conference]. Bad news from Hannibal. Saints all in quarrels & troubles. Aunt [Rose Bradshaw, a distant Kimball relative he had baptized in Hannibal, 9 May] very angry.

Sat. 29. Went tracting till noon. When I came in, Pres. Guymon said, "Bad news for you." On the table was a telegram which said, "Your sister Ruth died Thur. night. Letter to follow." Oh! the sorrow, grief and anguish to lose my dear sister. It seems like a terrible dream. I can hardly realize it.
Sun. 30. I lay in bed till ten o'clock with a headache and a terrible heartache. I was excused from my meetings. Went to Shaw's gardens with the crowd. Everything reminded me of Ruth, Ruth. A most noble, almost perfect spirit returned to its father.

Mon. 31. Decoration day. Tracted till noon. We Elders & Ladies went to cemetery and saw countless people decorating most beautiful graves and wonderful monuments. My thoughts were of my dear, dear sister who was to be buried today.

Tue. [June] 15. Tracted all day. After supper 5 of us Elders went down on the street (20th & Franklin) and held a street meeting. O! how frightened I was for it was my first experience in that line. 3 of us got out and sang two songs and quite a crowd collected, mostly children, negroes, foreigners and a few white adults. Elder Peterson preached, I introduced the literature and dismissed the meeting. We came up to the "Full Gospel Assembly Mission" and heard the preacher, then as one man went up to the mourners' bench they began all to sing, shout, pray and say, "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord, Bless Jesus, Glory to God," What a confusion! Is it of God, I wondered? "If they would only come up and be saved," he said. O how it made me appreciate the gospel and Mormonism. We came to a mission, the "Apostolic Assembly," where some were trying to get the Holy Ghost. Shaking, singing, Praising & shouting until it was ridiculous. (European war goes on in its terror.)

Mon. 21. Good luck at tracting. Elder Reed & I held a street meeting. We sang 4 songs. A number of little tots stood before us. A "tough" nearby said, "You'd better begin the Sunday School." Had a fairly good meeting.

Tues. 22. Met new Elders J. F. Seeley, J. L. Tidwell, N. J. Wadsworth. Took one out to work. Went to street meeting at which I talked. While out tracting a Policeman stopped us and demanded our business. I explained the nature of our free work and he walked off and would not accept a pamphlet. It is appalling to us Mormons to see this constant string of old and young men, women, and children file into the saloons (which are on every corner and in the middle of the blocks) & come out with their pitcher & can filled with the foamy hell-juice beer. The curse of the nation.

Thur. July 1. Discouragement was ours when we found ourselves tracting among the idle rich, who treated us with indifference.
Wed. 7. As it rained very hard all day, we did not tract, but made one revisit. Missourians say this is the most rainy season Mo. has known. Nearly every day. The daily paper says the world war in Europe is going on in its fury, men’s lives are lost in the air, in the sea, in the trenches, etc. It is a most horrible slaughter of human life.

. . .

Tue. 13. . . While tracting, one man yelled with a curse to me saying, “No, we’ve got too d--n much religion now.”

. . .

Fri. 30. Tracted in the city. Met a woman who had been visited by the Lady Missionaries two years. It had no effect. O! ye hardhearted & stiffnecked people. How long will ye treat with indifference the truth?

. . .

Fri. [Aug.] 13. Arose at 6:30. Breakfast at 6:45, then to class. When I got there one of the Elders said there was an excursion to Chicago for $6.00. We began joking about it till class, after singing and prayer Pres. Guymon asked how many wanted to go. We decided to go so class was dismissed. The next two hours were full of excitement getting ready. Some backed out, but Pres. Guymon, Elders Ritchie, Hill, Call, and myself and Srs. Ritchie and Salmon boarded the “Illinois Central” 10:35 A.M. and soon were flying across the bridge into Illinois and across the country. . . . Never in all my life did I see so much corn. The grain was being harvested and many threshers were active along the R.R. tracks. . . . I sat alone most of the way. When we were nearing Chicago a fellow came up and talked to me. Tried to get me to read a vulgar book with obscene pictures. I told him it didn’t appeal to me. He began tempting me then to go with him in Chicago and I knew he’d lead me down to hell. I shut him up but after he was gone I could feel myself blush for an hour. I tho’t—“Oh! how hard Satan, thru’ his imps, tries to lead young people astray.” I thanked the Lord that I had power to overcome it. The ride was very dirty and tiresome before reaching Chicago at 6:30. We ate supper, then took the surface cars to the Mission Headquarters. . . . We had to transfer several times and we went thru’ the poorer part of town, consequently our impression of Chicago was not very good. The streets were muddy and poorly lighted. Reaching the L.D.S. Mission office, one of the Elders took us to Madison St. where we stayed. We rode there on the elevated R.R.

Aug. 14. Sat. . . . Taking the elevated, we rode to Sears & Roebuck & Co., the largest Mail order house in the world. . . . We went to the Chicago River and when the iron bridge turned we had a splendid view of the ship “Eastland,” which had . . . turned over
on its side, drowning nearly a thousand people. . . . Walking up in the city we gazed at the huge skyscrapers. . . . The surface cars took us to Riverside Park. This was an amusement world in itself. . . . The fireworks at the "Opening of the Panama Exposition" was splendid. We saw the Baby Incubators. . . . We were told that from 80 to 90% of the premature children were now saved, whereas 10% only were saved before.

Sun. 15. By noon we were to Lincoln Park. . . . We got in line of hundreds waiting for the free suits to go in bathing. Fully 5,000 people were in the lake, so thick one could hardly move. . . . We came on to the Zoo. . . . The two Ladies, Elder Ritchie and I went to church on Sawyer Ave. and met the Saints of that Branch. . . .

Mon. 16. We all went to Marshall Fields big Retail Store, the largest in the world. . . . Jackson Park was also a beautiful place. . . . After eating our evening meal we found a Vaudeville show which was highly entertaining, then to the Illinois Central depot, where at 10:30 we left for St. Louis. Slept quite well on the cars and arrived in our city at 7:45 Tue. On the whole I was glad I had taken the trip to see one of the largest cities of the world. I was particularly interested in the Elevated system of transportation, the wonderful sign display of electric lights, the immensity of the city, and the Parks, also the wonderful skyscrapers.

Mon. [Sept.] 6. Labor Day. With Elder Ritchie I stood on the corner of 14th & Locust for two hours watching the Labor Day Parade consisting of 10,000 people in uniforms. 71 Unions were represented. It was a wonderful affair, so immense. We went to a Vaudeville which we found was "rotten," then went home. In the evening Hill, Hawkes and I saw "The Birth of the Nation" in pictures, which was truly wonderful, showing the Civil War and its consequences.

Mon. 20. . . . Pres. Guymon, Hawkes & I went to 16th & Market to hold street meeting. After singing three songs to the tune of which the children danced and one little 2 yr. old blended in her "lullaby with variations," I stood forth to preach to the few scattering people. The few soon scattered and I got "cold feet" and stopped. Pres. Guymon stood and preached earnestly to the deaf cobble stones and rattling cars, then Hawkes stepped forth facing the empty lonely sidewalk with the words, "If you'll all give me your attention, we will dismiss." One poor drunk fellow proffered to take one of the Books of Mormon, if we had one to spare, but when he found out they were 50 cents he pitifully turned to me with his hunger story.
But as I smelled the whiskey breath I knew what he wanted the 5 cents for, so I did not give. Our meeting was a complete failure almost.

Sun. [Oct.] 3. Attended meetings from 10 A.M.—2 P.M. and 7:30—9:30. Felt terribly blue and as if I didn’t care for anything. Elder Call and I prepared to go to the country in response to a telegram on account of sickness. (I was terribly discouraged & despondent.)

Mon. 4. At 7:32 A.M. amid a drizzling rain Elder Call and I boarded the Iron Mountain R.R. for DesArc, Mo., [in southeastern Missouri] where we arrived at noon. Henry White had sent a telegram for Elders to attend a sick man, so we started out for Henry White’s place. We walked all afternoon to Brunot to a Henry White’s, but it was the wrong one. We stayed at Brunot, where we paid 75 cents and Elder Call explained the Gospel. The people were prejudiced.

Tue. 5. We set out for the place of Henry White on Crane Pond. Here we found Sister Matlock living. Her son Will was in bed. He was worrying over family troubles and his visions.

Wed. 6. We cut wood, which came in handy as it became very cold. We were unsuccessful in our squirrel hunt. Cottage meeting.

Thur. 7. We almost decided to go but were begged to remain. We were going to baptize Will’s wife, but when she got out in the water she backed out. I blessed the little boy of Will’s. Administered to Will.

Fri. 8. After administering to Will, taking some pictures and bidding goodbye we walked 8 or 9 miles to Annapolis to catch the train. We ate apples, persimmons, pawpaws, & hazel & walnuts on our journey. Our train landed us at the Broadway station at 6.

Sat. 9. Tracted with good success in A.M. and attended the St. Louis Fair P.M. Saw areoplane for the first time and it was wonderful. The aviator circled, dipped, looped the loop, etc. The fair was otherwise very poor.

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Thurs. 14. Tracted till noon and met a club woman of the Anti-Mormon clubs and was invited in. Made some revisits. Attended M.I.A. and prepared for country.

Fri. 15. With Elder Lewis R. Critchfield I went to Union Station and rode Iron Mountain R.R. to Annapolis, Mo., where we got off and walked to the home of Sister Matlock near Minimum, Mo. We found Will better and cutting wood. (See Fri. 8.) Talked, sang and spent the evening pleasantly.

Sat. 16. Made out reports, cut some wood, studied, wrote, then after supper the family and some neighbors went to the creek (Crane Pond) where I had the privilege of baptizing Sinthan Ingram Matlock (wife of Wm. Matlock), her daughter Nannie May Matlock and
George Reason Bell Matlock. I confirmed Sr. Sinthan Matlock and Elder Critchfield confirmed Geo. and May. We administered the Sacrament to the family and we explained to them their duties in regard to tithing, Word of Wisdom, prayer, etc. I went to bed in wet clothes, as I had only one suit of underwear.

Sun. 17. Morning broke with a steady light rainfall. Everything is so pleasant in the narrow little valley. Since last week's frost the leaves of the trees have turned to variegated colors. From the crane pond creek of clear cold rippling water rises rather abruptly a hill on either side completely covered with foliage. A little to one side of the narrow valley in the midst of a small field of shocked corn stands a little wooden structure of three small rooms. A few rough boards have been crudely nailed together to turn off the weather. In the larger room is a sackcloth carpet, but the rest of the house is bare. The ceiling is of rough lumber, but the walls are partly papered with Chicago and St. Louis daily papers and it is so convenient that one can read the papers while in bed or at the table. With the exception of the bedsteads, the furniture is homemade and the table is so high that one might think the people eating were playing "peek-a-boo." Upon entering the door, (but stoop for it is low), you will see a little old woman of perhaps 60 years bended over the stove, cooking the corn bread, biscuits and meat. You will find this Sister Chrisey Lutitia Matlock an interesting person. Uneducated but well versed in the bible and having a strong testimony of the gospel and often preaching it to others. She will tell you she has been a "Mormon" 30 years. Some of her experiences, dreams & visions will call for a smile. See the man in his thirties, lounging on the bed. That is Will, the sick man, the husband of the large tall woman and father of those two little 9 & 7 year old girls and the bright eyed chubby 16 month old Clarence, who amuses you with his jabbering and actions. George is the tall slender boy with the curl in his hair and the twinkle in his eye. Welcome? Yes, indeed, they will make you at home, give you the best in the house to eat and will all seven crowd in one room to give you the best bed. Ha! ha! the chicken? surely you shall feed on them for breakfast every morning. Every member of the family will tell you dream after dream, vision after vision, until if you are not careful you will become a dreamer and visionary, also. Surely their clothes are patched till it is hard to find the original. But for all that, they are a kindhearted [people] and will treat you fine.

We held Sunday School in the morning. Elder C. taking the two little girls and I the 3 older people. It rained most of the day so no one came to our public meeting at night but the family, all of whom I preached to sleep. (Ha! ha!)

Mon. 18. After having a talk with Will and his wife we bade goodbye to the family and made our way on foot toward Brunot. On
our way we visited a rural school and it seemed to me like they were "back numbers." Thru Brunot S. 4 or 5 miles we found Sister Farmer's home near Patterson. (Waded a creek.) Here we stayed and spent the night and we found Bro. Farmer, cold or getting so.

Tue. 19. A six or seven mile walk put us in DesArc, Mo., where we caught the train [back north toward St. Louis] to Mineral Point, Washington Co. Here we boarded a little shakey mixed train for Potosi, the County Seat. In the only passenger car was only 10 seats. 15 min. for 3 miles. North and West we traveled and stopped about 3 mi. from Potosi with a Baptist family. While we talked gospel the family (father, mother and sons) smoked constantly.

Wed. 20. After a breakfast of bread and molasses we began our walk at 7:30. A big swinging walk we kept up and mile after mile passed. We went about 10 miles without seeing a home or person, without water or food, only grapes we found in a tree. When I became tired till I thot I could go no farther, then I sang or repeated scripture. Tired, oh so tired and dusty, we finally finished our 30 mile walk and came to Lohmans', where we visited overnight with Sister Lohman and family.

Thur. 21. Early we started for Strausers', where we arrived an hour later and a warm welcome awaited us. The family treated us royally. Spent the day visiting the family and the evening in a Sacrament meeting, after which we looked at pictures and talked of bygone days. Happy dreams.

Fri. 22. Early 'twas when our adieus were bade and we were riding bumpety bump on a load of 14 R.R. ties with Bro. Strauser. Across the hilly country, the Meremec River to Stanton, where after a lunch of sausage and crackers we said goodbye to Bro. Strauser, took our grip and the 3 gal. can of Molasses Strausers had given us and boarded the "Frisco" for St. Louis. A cool pleasant ride thru' the Meremec valley where the Aug. floods had done so much damage and we were soon in the city and up to the rooms.

Sat. 23. . . . One year ago today I registered at the office as an Elder of the Central States Mission. A year of pleasures and sorrows, hardships and joys. 2 months in the country, 2 mo. in Hannibal and 8 in St. Louis.

[Spencer received assignment to do country tracting in an area eighty miles northwest of St. Louis.]

Mon. [Nov.] 8. Left Perry 8 A.M. and walked most of the way (Waded the Salt River) to Florida. . . . With our book in one hand and grip in the other we walked 10 mi. to Paris, took the train and came to Moberly. There was much ado here. The eve before election
on prohibition and hundreds were assembled to hear the street speeches for and against. (Went wet.)

Tue. 9. The "wet" and "dry" bands kept the music in the cold windy air. We studied till noon, took the train [west] to Salisbury and went S. E. in the country. The third asking brot us in for the night with a nice young couple. We were well kept.

.. .

Fri. 12. .. . We tracted to tell the people of our meeting at night. About noon met Mr. Dixon who seems to be a "dry land 'Mormon.' " No dinner as we were in colored district. On to the Missouri, in the water of which we bathed our tired feet. Arriving back to the schoolhouse at 4 P.M. we spent the time cleaning up. At 7 P.M. a crowd of about 40 or 50 greeted us and we explained some features of Mormonism to them. Very appreciative were they, then three almost quarreled over who should take us home. Sat up till 10:30 explaining.

.. .

Sat. 20. From Tipton to Versailles on the Mo. Pac., then E. on the R. I. to Meta, then S. on foot at the rate of about 4 mi. per hour to Burns store, where we caught a ride several miles. It was late when we found the home of Mr. J. D. Moss—a friend I met last Dec.—here we stayed over night.

Sun. 21. Enjoyed a splendid visit with Mr. Moss and family. After dinner and after singing for them we went to the home of Louis Krone and were received by him and his wife with open arms. They seemed very glad to see us and made us welcome. We held a splendid meeting in the Prosperity schoolhouse with a good attendance. Met many of my last year's friends—Dolph Coplan, Charlie Pearson, and others and four invitations were given us to stay all night. It was 1 A.M. when we got to bed after singing and talking. Stayed with Louis Krone.

Mon. 22. Rode to Tavern with Louis Krone to sell some turkeys which we had caught. Spent the day inside talking and quilting. Talked till late on the gospel.

Tue. 23. After breakfast we bade goodbye to Mr. & Mrs. Krone and daughters Eliza and Sallie, we left for Dixon. Our grips weighed about 25 lbs. and we walked to Dixon 16 miles in 4 hours & 45 minutes. We were very tired and glad to sit on the cushions of the Frisco R.R. to St. James. We enjoyed a lunch put up by our very dear friends the Krones. .. .

Wed. 24. .. . The Frisco R.R. put us in Sullivan 3 P.M. and by 7 P.M. we had arrived at Strausers' at Pea Ridge, where we found Elder Call, his wife, Sr. Perry and Davis, besides the family. A Pleasant evening.
Thur. 25. "Thanksgiving Day." How happy were we to be with Missionaries and Saints to eat such a splendid Thanksgiving dinner. Spent the day pleasantly playing games and visiting. Rained.

Mon. 29. . . . The rest went back to Strausers'. Elder Miller and I went home with Mr. & Sister Russel and helped carry the infant the 4 miles. And what a home!! One little rough log hut about 12 x 12 ft. in which were two beds, a table, two stoves, sewing machine, wood, flour, etc., and when the three broken chairs were placed around the stove there was hardly breathing room. We sat and talked till 12 o'clock, then went to bed. A small hole in the ceiling gave entrance to a tiny attic to which the children one by one climbed. No ladder was there, so they bared their feet and went up squirrel fashion. The small children were lifted up thru' the hole. Mother and seven children lay stretched out on the floor of that attic and four of us on the two beds below. We remained in bed while the man went to the store for the flour. (Tue. 30.) We had to dress in bed, for the woman and eight children were standing around. Our faces & hands we washed in a saucepan and dryed on a flour sack. Biscuits, bacon & Molasses was the bill of fare. The children standing to the second table hastily pushed down the doughy bread & 'lasses, and got ready for school. The little ones had their hair tied with carpet rags and their shoes with twine string. One of them had on two pairs of stockings so that possibly where the one missed the other hit. Without stockings little 5 year old Dorothy pulled her porosknit underwear down into her shoes. My sympathy was aroused in behalf of this family of 13 (one child dead), all depending on a father who had nothing but a few acres rented.

Fri. [Dec.] 3. Walked [toward St. Louis] from St. Clair thru' Union to Washington, arriving at 7 P.M. 20 mi. Many empty autos and wagons passed us up. One man stopped his auto and asked us how much we'd give him to let us ride. Upon learning how we were traveling and what we were doing he passed on. Had a hard time finding a place to stay. Visited the large Catholic Church in session. Heard the sermon, saw the rites & ceremonies, after the service many remained to go into the little secret chambers to confess their sins. The singing and much of the service was carried on in Latin. They all (hundreds of them) bowed the knee and mumbled their prayers.

Sat. 4. Crossed the Mo. river on the ferry and walked 8 mi. to Agusta. Rode the M.K. & T. R.R. to Weldon Springs, where we got off and walked hard to O'Fallon, arriving late. Had to pay 50 cents each for our bed and no fire. We had asked for entertainment some six times until they ran us into town [in other words, the missionaries
ran out of possibilities for a free bed before they arrived at the town]. A strong Catholic town and we were treated shabbily.

Wed. 8. At 8 o'clock (A.M.) I put on some of Millard's (Wm.) clothes and we went to the creek. After breaking the thin sheet of ice I waded down into the water and baptized Mr. Millard Andrew Barebo. The water was very cold and my body was numb when I got out. We hastened to the house, clothed ourselves, then held a service in which Elder Miller confirmed the convert, then we administered the sacrament to our Brother. He went to work and we bade goodbye to him, Dan, Mrs. Barebo and children and walked thru' O'Fallon, St. Peters to St. Charles, a distance of 17 miles, then taking the street car we were soon in the city of St. Louis, meeting the Elders.

Thur. 9. Went tracting with Elder Tidwell till noon. We came in and learned of the postponement of Conference, so after Mutual I asked permission to go in the country again.

1916

Sat. [Jan.] 8. . . . Went to class, then at 10 A.M. Pres. B. met all the Missionaries in Priesthood meeting in which he gave splendid instructions and appointed me to be Conference President of this, the Missouri Conference, and all the missionaries voted to sustain me. I feel terribly weak, small, young, and inexperienced, but having been called by proper authority, I cannot but accept and do the best I can. Heaven help me!! . . .

[As conference president, Spencer's responsibilities changed. He tracted, but he also directed others' efforts, visited the sick, handled mail and reports, kept in contact with elders doing country tracting or working in small towns, looked after church property, and so on.]

Tue. 18. Besides regular tracting I walked about 50 blocks making revisits. I talked gospel with Sr. Favre and also made my daily trips to the hospitals.

Wed. 26. Went tracting early at 9 and stayed till 5. From 1 to 5 it was hard to drag my tired body up the steps, but I determined to stand it. When I got home I found a call to go to the City Hospital, where I went and found a young man sick with the typhoid fever asking for Mormon Elders. He was once a reorganite. We talked to him a while.
Thur. [Feb.] 3. Held no class, but we all went to the Coliseum to see and hear Pres. Woodrow Wilson of the U.S.A. At 8:30 we were in the street with the crowd to await the opening of the doors at 9. Rapidly the crowd pushed in till we were crowded like "sardines in a can." The St. L. U. boys came in numbers and pushed & squeezed and rocked till the immense crowd were rocking to & fro. Tighter and tighter we were squeezed until it was really dangerous. As the big doors opened at 9 A.M. the crowd pushed madly on from all sides, wedging in tighter as we neared the door. Thousands pushing madly on, thinking not of life or anything. Boosted from our feet we went, whether or no, and as we neared the door and the wedge became tighter and girls & women began crying, screaming, and moaning. I was finally squeezed thru' to the door and we rushed to a good seat on the 1st Balcony, where we awaited till 10:30 amid the whistling & yelling of an anxious public. The band and 1500 voices kept the music ringing in the air. When 12,000 people had become quiet, the Pres. of the U.S. was escorted in while the thousands of people stood and sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and waved 12,000 flags. (which was the most wonderful & beautiful sight and the loudest noise of yells & whistles that I have ever heard). He was introduced and talked interestingly and most impressively upon the "Preparedness for War." A splendid speech. He was much applauded. His new wife was also in attendance.

Thur. 24. Felt miserable. We practiced our quartet, then after a nap I got ready and went to the funeral chapel where the services were to be held over remains of Mrs. Loflin. The services were placed in my charge by Leslie Loflin. The Rev. Dr. Bitting of 2nd Baptist Church came and said to me, "Leslie says you would like to speak a few minutes." "Yes," I said, "the services are in my charge and we shall be glad to have you speak briefly." Altho' he was one of the most educated and influential Pastors in the city or even in the state or West, I gave him to understand that we were holding the services. Sr. Rose, Smith, Elder Critchfield & I sang quartets. I talked upon the Resurrection, then after Mr. Ravold sang a solo I called on Rev. Bitting to speak. Thru'out his talk he slurred and crossed me, but gave no scripture to prove any assertions. Said when he died he was going in an instant to his Maker. At the grave we sang another quartet, I dedicated the grave. Mr. Ravold sang a solo and I offered a final prayer. Mr. Ed Meyer, a cousin of deceased, was almost dumbfounded to learn we did not accept money for our services.

Tue. [Mar.] 28. My 21st Birthday!!! My duty as Con. Pres. put me to tracting all morning, in which I was blessed with some success.
In P.M. I accepted an invitation to dinner in honor of my birthday at St. Hall’s. An elaborate spread. Here I spent the P.M. in conversation. St. Hall gave me a beautiful shirt and Helen some handkerchiefs, which I truly appreciated. I learned also that St. Hall, Titlow and others had planned a surprise on me and intended to give me an umbrella with my name engraved on it. Plans were all made but as some Elders were dissatisfied it was given up. “We all have birthdays, too, and no mention is made of it,” they said, so it was dropped. Not for any loss of present or party, but it cut deeply to know their feelings concerning me. I felt such a strange cold feeling come over the work for the previous week, felt a cold estrangement between myself & Elders over I did not know what. Where some of them previously were rather chummy they now seemed to avoid me. I knew not why. It hurt me very much.

Sat. [Apr.] 29. With Elder Sparks I left St. Louis and we were met at the train in Hannibal by the Elders Neibaur & Miller at 11:40 and we all went to Aunt’s for dinner. She seemed to be very glad to see me. We visited most of the day and preached on the street at night. An old drunk came out and threw his arms around me to sing with us. Elder Neibaur took him back to the sidewalk. After the meeting Aunt (Mrs. R. A. Bradshaw) and we four Elders went to a show at the “Star.”

Sun. 30. We took advantage and slept late. At 10 A.M. Sunday School was held at St. Gordon’s, but there was an unusually small turnout owing to a feeling between some of the Saints. They are almost at sword’s point with one another. All too ready to talk. Differences amounting almost to hatred existing among them. A bad spirit prevailed.

[Back to St. Louis]

Wed. [May] 17. Feel terrible, blue, discouraged, gloomy, despondent. Visited & tracted investigators who had recently turned against us. This increased discouragement. Visited St. Hall an hour. On the street I had to step out on the sidewalk so that Elder Critchfield wouldn’t have to talk to emptiness. An amusing incident happened to one of the Elders, Sparks. While resting in the park at noon he fell asleep on a bench. Two large detectives awakened him from his slumbers and as they saw his book sacks under his coat they mistook them for pistol holsters and one stood guard with one hand on gun while the other searched the Elder. On his hip they found a Book of Mormon and on both sides in sacks other literature. They laughingly said, “Well, you are well loaded,” as they sat on either side of him.
in response to his invitation to them to sit down and he would tell
them about the Mormons. Elder Critchfield came up and they had
a good talk.

Sun. 21. In Priesthood meeting I made as strong a plea as possible
for the Elders to refrain from lightmindedness and so much frivolity,
which I had noticed of late.

the Elders from the country were in. We met at 9 A.M. and waited
for Pres. Bennion. At 10 A.M. He came bringing with him Apostle
James E. Talmage. Dr. Talmage recognized me and gave me a hearty
handshake and said his son Paul sent Best Wishes to me. Several times
during the day he talked with me as man to man, now giving suggestions,
now complimenting me on the work, etc., which confidence I truly
appreciated, for in my estimation Dr. Talmage is one of the greatest
of men, for with all his great intellect, his knowledge, etc., he yet is
as humble as can be.

Sun. 11. Arose about 10 min. to 9, but was to Priesthood
meeting on time at 9. I could not afford to be late, as I was teaching
the missionaries punctuality.

Tue. 13. After tracting till noon Elder Wadsworth and I went
to the Maryland Hotel, where we found the Utah Delegates to the
[Democratic National] Convention. They treated us fine and we
had a splendid talk with them. Bro. [James] Clyde [of Heber, Utah]
took the three Missionary Sisters & us Elders to an high class dinner.

Wed. 14. Eleven of us betook ourselves to the Hotel for
Headquarters of Utah Delegates. Spent most of the morning in
pleasant conversation with many of the “Mormons” from Utah. We
visited Brevort & Planters Hotels and found Arizona people in the
former who treated me fine and Idahoans in the latter, some of which were
of our belief. The Utah delegates obtained tickets for the missionaries
and at 12 N. we were admitted to the Coliseum to the National
Democratic Convention. Some 10,000 people or more were present
from all over the U.S. The keynote speech by Glynn of New York was
truly a wonderful oration. I also saw William Jennings Bryan, who was
present. We came home in a rain.

Thur. 15. After mutual we missionaries hurried to the
Coliseum to the Convention to see Pres. Wilson nominated, but found
that the building had been packed with people who had bogus tickets.
Mission Experience

We were among the thousands of Guests, Delegates and Visitors who remained outside. We could not gain admittance tho' we had tickets. We waited till Pres. Wilson was nominated, when Sr. Knight, Sr. Clyde & Sr. Jones came out and the former took us all to the ice cream parlor and treated us. Arrived home 12 o'clock.

Mon. [July] 17. Up early, packed grips and Sr. Rose, Dye, & I started for the country. It was almost unbearably hot, even on the Frisco train we could hardly get our breath. Leaving St. Louis 7:40, we arrived at Sullivan about 11. Bessie Strauser met us at the station. After getting us some large straw hats we began our ten mile ride for home. The heat was intense. The clouds gathered. Just as we started thru' the Meremec River the rain began coming hard. I drove the mules but they hated to face the furious storm. Srs. Rose, Dye and little Helen sat in the 2nd seat with an umbrella, but Bessie & I sat in the front and faced the rain. Even the umbrella was useless, for the rain came so hard it beat right thru. Hail the size of bird eggs pelted us on the bare heads, hands, etc. We became cold and shivered and our teeth chattered. The creeks were rising fast, so our motive was to get over them while we could. The rain came down in torrents so that we could not see far ahead, but I pushed the mules when we had good road. Tho' it was more or less serious and some danger attached to it, yet we kept up our incessant laughter and kept smiling. Finally we arrived at Strausers' like drowned mice. Everything in the wagon was drenched, hats, grips, literature, groceries, etc. We obtained dry clothing and felt better. We picked berries and spent a pleasant day and felt like we wouldn't have missed our today's experience for anything. Went to bed 8:30 and after a good night's rest arose Tue. 18 at 8:30. Spent the day pleasantly joking, teasing the girls, picking wild blackberries, quarreling, singing, eating and snoozing. Sang the evening away.

Mon. [Aug.] 14. It rained off and on all day, nearly 5 in. in 24 hours, nearly 10 in. since Fri. morning. The Elders all stayed in, tho' it was not too wet to work. I was thoroughly disgusted, but said nothing. 

Tue. 15. . . Came in to cook at 4 and at supper proposed a plan of having a quiet study period. I have come to the conclusion that the Conference is running down. I am losing enthusiasm. I also realize that I have not many months in the field now and must get the work better in hand or it surely will not be much honor to me. 

. . .
Thur. 17. Awoke feeling very drowsy, but got up and helped to cook breakfast. Spent the morning wrapping bundles for the country Elders. Tracted some and helped get supper, then started the Elders out evening tracting. Some of them almost balked, but they went out and had some success. Attended M.I.A. and took part in lesson. Very hot.

Thur. 31. Wrote to Elders and in the P.M. we all went to the new church and washed windows, etc. M.I.A.

Fri. Sept. 1. . . . A Hurry call came on the phone and when we answered it at Odgaards', expecting to find someone very sick, we were amazed when they told us that a certain man was slandering the Mormons in Denmark and wanted us to stop it. I told them that was an everyday occurrence here. . . .

Sat. Sept. 2. Early (dispensing with class) we went to the church and put down the carpet. I had the Piano & organ moved. Finished cleaning up and put in electric lights. Returned home tired in the extreme, but with a degree of satisfaction. 12 after when I retired.

Sun. 3. Arose early and went to the church and held Priesthood Meeting at 9:15 and I was thereby the first to preside over a meeting in the new church on Maple and Clarendon. I tried to encourage the Missionaries to greater diligence. The S. S. Officers & Teachers meeting convened, then S. S., and as usual I led the singing. To S. S. we had a large attendance and some strangers. At 12:15 Pres. Martin called us to Testimony meeting and everyone expressed gratitude for the Church's gift of the beautiful church. Some strangers were present and a reporter from the Republic. The Evening service was the Conjoint M.I.A. I led the singing. A double mixed quartet under my direction sang two splendid pieces. A male quartet also. I played for Sister Nettie Rose's solo. I had the privilege of delivering the first public discourse or gospel sermon in the St. Louis Church. For 1 hour & 5 minutes I preached and felt fine. The Apostasy and Restoration of the Gospel was my subject. Several visitors. I also had the privilege of blessing the first child in the new church. Justina Louise Welty. 80 people were present and everything was splendid. No hitch or trouble. And thus passed the first day of the St. Louis Branch in their new church on Maple and Clarendon Avenues.

Sun. 17. Met Pres. Bennion at Church and attended Conference meetings all day. Felt badly when he rather chided me over a thing or two, which I tho' I was not to blame for. I went down to the station with him.
Tue. [Oct.] 17. Business in town. I received a splendid letter from Pres. Bennion (See Sept. 17) expressing appreciation for my work. He said, "I have been exceedingly pleased with the way you have conducted your Conference. It has been highly satisfactory and I am sure the Lord is pleased with your splendid service. I think you have had a wonderful experience for a young man. I will really be sorry to see the time come for your release, but I realize that time comes to all. ——Now I hope you will lead and not be led, only in the right. You have the elements of leadership in your character, so execute promptly and chastize if necessary, always, however, let the impressions of the Holy Spirit guide." These words of appreciation made me feel so very much better when I realized that my humble efforts had been appreciated.

Sun. [Nov.] 5. In the M.I.A. program I accompanied two solos, led a choir number & a quartet, sang in a duet and did all the preaching on the subject "Israel."

Sun. 26. . . Had a brief interview with Pres. Bennion and a short walk and he told me I might come to Independence in two weeks to go home. Elder Brimhall was to be my successor. I was overjoyed. . . .

Wed. 29. With tear filled eyes I bade goodbye to most of the Elders who were going in the country. Elder Stolworthy and I left for Argyle, Mo., and being directed, we set out for the home of Louis Krone and after a distance of about 8 miles finally were gladly received by Mr. & Mrs. Krone and the two daughters. We had a good supper and spent the evening in conversation and music.

Thur. 30. Thanksgiving Day. Had a splendid chicken dinner, after which Mr. Krone took Elder Stolworthy & me to visit Mr. Jim Moss. We found persimmon trees and helped ourselves. Spent evening in singing and conversing.

Fri. Dec. 1. Up at 5 A.M. and hastily eating breakfast, started hiking toward Dixon, 16 mi. south. Mr. Krone accompanied us 2 or 3 miles and poor fellow!! broke down as he bade me goodbye, never to meet again. Fearing we would miss the train, we walked very fast and were almost exhausted when we finally arrived at Dixon. It was hard to leave Elder Stolworthy as the Frisco pulled out. I got off at Sullivan and briefly visited old Sr. Prather, who was very feeble. Dear old soul! Started to walk to Strausers' and after a 2 mile hike Elder Anderson met me with a riding pony. . . .
Sun. 3. . . . It was an effort to leave Elder N[eibaur] at Sullivan when the train pulled in. He told me how much he and the other Elders really had appreciated me & my work. The "Frisco" put me in St. Louis at 7:10 and I hurried to church. Being late I took a back seat, but was called upon to talk. . . .

Sat. 9. Arrived in Kansas City and went to Independence on the car, where I was gladly received. . . .

Tue. 12. Pres. Bennion said many good things to me. Putting his arm about me he said I had done remarkably well, was proud of me and disliked to lose me. I felt like my tears, prayers, etc., had not all been in vain. I left at 5 from K. C. depot and with Elder Dalton started homeward. . . .

Fri. 15. . . . Andrew S[mith, a cousin]. met me at the Pres. office and I made my report. Went in Private office and talked to Pres. Smith, Lund & Penrose and they told me to keep up my missionary work. Pres. Smith remarked how poor [in other words, thin] I was. . . .

Sat. 30. . . . Got to Thatcher at 5 P.M. and a large crowd met me. I spoke few minutes in M.I.A. Went to New Year's Eve social at Ray Killian's.

1917

Jan. 1. The new year came in as about 30 of us young people were seated around the table, well filled, at the home of Ray Killian. We did justice to the splendid menu and went home in the wee hours of the day. I awoke about 10:30 A.M. by the sound of music and I was barely dressed when the Thatcher Band came to my window and played several pieces. Father gave them $5.00 to help them out. We rode in the car till dinner and Nettie, Dave [foster sister and her husband] & Alice, Geo. [sister and husband] were here to eat New Year's dinner with us. I went to the big dance at night. Lawrence, my dear chum, met me on the stage and we embraced. It was so good to see dear boy again. I had a good time at the dance and came home tired and leg weary. Lawrence stayed all night with me.

Tue. 2. Rode in the auto with father. Went to see Bp. Tyler and family and more especially Ella, spent joyous evening.

Wed. 3. Dug ditch, helped kill a large hog.

Thur. 4. Chopped wood and dug ditch.
Spencer W. Kimball at College

Edward L. Kimball

Spencer W. Kimball returned home to Thatcher, Arizona, from his mission to the Central States on 31 December 1916, just in time for a New Year’s Eve party with his friends. A month later, he went off to Tucson to attend the University of Arizona and signed up for English, German, American history, English history, economics, and military training. After the first day, he wrote in his journal, “The Profs made such a big bluff that I was almost frightened to death and tho’ t I would never get thru’, consequently I was much discouraged.” After three weeks, his fear had disappeared: “I feel quite encouraged in school, as my Eng. themes are accepted and my other lessons seem to be getting easier.” Three days later: “Washington’s birthday, a holiday. I am studying hard at home as the school library is closed.” The next week: “Worked hard at my lessons all week, took exams in Economics, A – in one, 83% in the other.”

His journal shows that he was not a drudge. He often records Church activities, parties, participation in the college glee club, and part-time work for an invalid at twenty-five cents an hour. “By this means I am supporting myself thru’ college.” He lived with his brother Gordon in the nearby town of Binghampton and rode to and from Tucson with Gordon.

“Spent a great deal of time [Friday, 30 March] on a thesis on the ‘Great Revolution of 1688.’ All evening [Saturday] and until 3 A.M. I wrote on the theme. All day Sunday I wrote on my history theme till 2:30, when we went in to town and marched with the 7000 paraders in an American day parade.” (On 29 May, he recorded, “Rec’d Hist. theme. A., best in class, said Prof. Hubbard.”)

Friday, 6 April:

Today War was declared against Germany. It is probable that I shall soon be forcibly enlisted in the army and killing my fellow beings. Horrors. This morning in assembly the Pres. of the school said that the U. of A., with all its appurtenances are offered for the use of the nation. We were counseled to get our school work up to date and if called shortly away from school we may get our credits anyway. Serious!!!

Edward L. Kimball is Ernest L. Wilkinson Professor of Law at Brigham Young University.
Sunday, 29 April:

Wm. Jennings Bryan [whose son was in the class] gave the Baccalaureate address when the 50 U. of A. Seniors received their degrees. Graduation was hastened one month because most of the boys went to the Presidio at Frisco to the training camp.

His own exams occupied the last week of May. He then returned to Thatcher for two weeks before going to Los Angeles to work in the freight yards for the summer, earning money for college. A month later, his father telegraphed him, ‘Come Monday night, better job waiting.’ He returned home and worked from mid-July to mid-August on the Gillespie ranch. ‘Started work mining 200 ft. below, digging for water.’ On 17 August he reported, ‘Worked hard in the well. We hand-drilled with a churn drill two holes 22 ft. 6 in. and 25 ft. deep, found no water. I read ‘Richard Carvel,’ ‘The Crisis’ by Churchill.’

Thursday, 30 August: ‘After I finished my work [at home in Thatcher] I went to Pima to see Lawrence [best friend Lawrence Holladay]. In the jitney I met Miss Camilla Eyre and I accompanied her home.’ In the next ten days, he spent time with Camilla on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, before taking the train to Utah on Monday, 10 September, to attend Brigham Young University. Their time together had been brief, but though his journal gives no hint of his feelings, the letters Spencer and Camilla exchanged after he left for BYU indicate the growing warmth of their relationship (see pages 85-90 in his biography).

Journal entry for Monday, 17 September:

Caught the 1:15 Orem train to Provo. Got off on Center St. and, seeing a large bldg next the hill and thinking it the University, I started out to walk there. When I neared the building a curious looking fellow called out hilariously, ‘Hello, old spott.’ I proceeded and saw numbers of old men and women playing croquet, so I decided it was the mental asylum. I got my directions and retraced my steps.

The student body was tiny because of the war. Spencer registered for English grammar and composition, mathematics, European history, public speaking, philosophical Mormonism, and physical training. But after exactly one week of classes, he received a letter from the draft board in Arizona directing him to report for a preinduction physical examination and then return to Arizona to join a contingent leaving the next week. He wrote Camilla:

I shall file no exemption claims and I’m positive I can pass the physical test.

I can’t study tonight. I can only think. Pardon me for bothering you with my troubles but I tho’t you might be glad to know. If I am
to leave soon I am not unwilling to go but of course it is hard to have one's plans so broken into that's all. . .

I was the only member in the public speaking class so I get individual instruction. I can now breathe clear down to my toes, can roar like a lion or squeak like a mouse. I can gesticulate till you'd think I was hammering or pitching hay or etc. etc. There were two of us in Math. 4 in Hist., about 6 in Theology. . .

I like all my Prof's fine but ________ and I can't hardly stand him. Today he had a dirtier shirt than mine and wore the trousers and shoes he wore while milking the cow.

I wish I had a class under your uncle [Carl Eyring] for he is the swellest Prof in the whole faculty.

When he told President Brimhall, who was also his theology teacher, that he was leaving, the president put his arm around Spencer and said he was sorry to lose him as a student. The BYU Archives also contain a stiffly formal letter of withdrawal and President Brimhall's warm response:

Brigham Young University
Provo, Utah
Sept. 26, 1917.

To the Presidency and Faculty of the B.Y.U.

In order that you may know the cause of my absence from school and my abrupt discontinuance therefrom, I leave this note.

I have received an authoritative call to arms from the authorities of the United States. I have successfully passed the physical examination. I shall file no claims for exemption, and shall in a few days leave for my home in Arizona, from which place I shall leave for the training camps early in October.

I wish to express my appreciation for the kindness and consideration with which I have been treated while in your midst.

Yours, with gratitude,
Spencer W. Kimball

October 2, 1917

Spencer W. Kimball
c/o President Andrew Kimball
Thatcher, Arizona

Our beloved Student:

I found your letter on the tabel [sic] under date of September 26; and now having time to answer it, I wish to say that you have a flood of friends in the B.Y.U.

Your sudden call was something of a disappointment to us as we had hoped to have your valued services in the student body this year.
Had I not met you personally and felt the atmosphere with which you are surrounded, the closing paragraph of your letter would have been sufficient for me to know that you are an Israelite, and that you will be a valiant defender of the truth, physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. God bless you our dear friend, brother, student.

We enclose herewith your tuition, less the entrance fee, which holds your membership in the school.

With the assurance that the Lord will have you in mind wherever you go, and that whatever road you may take in the end you will be among the triumphant ones, we are

Very sincerely,
The Faculty of the Brigham Young University
By ______________ President

This was the end of Spencer W. Kimball’s college experience. By the time he was able to return to Arizona, the contingent he had been drafted for had already left. While waiting to leave, Spencer and Camilla decided to marry, despite the unsettling prospect of immediate separation. Before he had been home a month, the wedding ceremony took place on 16 November 1917. Though he never did serve in the Army, his responsibility to support a wife—and a child that arrived nine-and-a-half months later—kept him from returning to school.

At one time, about 1924, Spencer and Camilla considered his leaving his job as a bank teller and going back to school to become an accountant or teacher. They obtained from the university a report on his credits and thought about how they and their two children could live on savings and part-time work while Spencer finished his degree. But this possibility of further education disappeared when Spencer, at age twenty-nine, was called to serve as a counselor in the St. Joseph stake presidency. That took priority.

All his life, Spencer suffered from feelings of inadequacy, among them a sense of embarrassment that he had no college diploma. Though he lived in a time when only a few of his high school classmates completed college, he felt that he could and should have found a way. When he became a General Authority, he feared that people would think less of the Church because he, one of its leaders, was under-educated. He never bothered to modify the official biography that the Church sent out for publicity purposes, identifying him as having graduated from “Gila Academy (now Eastern Arizona College),” even though the Gila Academy at the time he attended offered only high-school-level work. For a man so meticulously honest to have allowed that characterization to stand suggests how embarrassing he found the fact that he had completed only one semester of college work.

Though Spencer W. Kimball had no degree, it would be absurd to think of him as uneducated. Formal courses with lectures and
examinations, leading to letter degrees, are only one way to education, and not necessarily the best way. Spencer was a great reader, with a taste for fact rather than fiction. He marked up his books vigorously, usually with a red pencil. His file cabinets bulge with dozens of feet of folders crammed with clippings and notes from magazines and books, reflecting goal-oriented reading.

In 1948, while he was recuperating in Long Beach, California, from a 1947 heart attack, he took a twenty-five-foot roll of shelf paper and made for himself a time line of the world's secular history, going to the history books to put in sequence the eras and great events from the ancient Near Eastern civilizations to the "Russian cold war." Then he ran a parallel time line of the prophets and kings from the scriptures and Church history down to that time, ending with the notation "172 stakes."

To the extent that Spencer W. Kimball thought of himself as uneducated, he was seriously mistaken. His sermons, writing, conversation, and conduct all demonstrated that he was a superbly self-educated man.
As He Has Spoken

For Spencer W. Kimball

He spoke of a greater miracle
  than healing
  than angelic visitations
  than speaking in tongues,

A miracle that
  beautifies
  and warms
  and lifts,

    a second kind of healing
    a second kind of seeing,

A miracle that brings
  the blessing of peace
  from the turbulent storms of hate
    of enmity
    of distrust
    of sin,

  the fruit of righteousness
    which cannot be bought
    cannot be traded
    cannot be bartered
      but which the poorest
      as well as the richest
      may have in abundance—

A miracle of cleansing
A miracle of purification
  The miracle of forgiveness.

—Sally T. Taylor

Sally T. Taylor is an associate professor of English at Brigham Young University. This poem was inspired by the last chapter of The Miracle of Forgiveness.
Spencer W. Kimball as Extemporaneous Speaker

Most of the acquaintance members of the LDS church have with Spencer W. Kimball as a public speaker comes from his prepared public addresses. He spoke at fifty-eight of the sixty-one general conferences of the Church held during his years as an Apostle (1943–73), missing only October 1948 after a heart attack and April and October 1957 after throat surgery. During most of his twelve years as President of the Church he spoke as many as five times at each conference. And he spoke several times at each of the many area conferences over which he presided. At BYU devotionals and on numerous other occasions he also spoke from prepared texts.

But the bulk of his public speaking was extemporaneous—several times at each of the stake or mission conferences he attended nearly every week for thirty years, at firesides, at seminary graduations, at service clubs, at missionary meetings, and on and on—thousands of times during his service as a Church leader from 1943 until his last public remarks in 1982.

The conference reports provide access to the full text of most of the formal talks. Some of these and several others given at BYU (particularly "Tragedy or Destiny?") have been widely circulated by republication in the Church magazines or in pamphlet form. The only collection of sermons, Faith Precedes the Miracle, presents them edited for reading—by shortening length, tightening organization, and excluding repetitive or lengthy quotations from the scriptures or other authors. They do not, therefore, completely reflect Spencer Kimball’s speaking style.

A slightly different facet of the man can be seen by looking at his extemporaneous speeches. Of the few examples extant, we offer two, in nearly verbatim transcript, retaining even the awkward phrases that one finds in extemporaneous speech. The first is an excerpt from a talk he gave on 21 October 1979, in Shepherd’s Field, a hillside opposite Bethlehem, Israel. Just a few weeks earlier he had undergone
surgery for subdural hematoma on the right side of his brain. Though eighty-four years old and feeble, he had gone to Israel to dedicate the Orson Hyde Memorial Garden on the Mount of Olives. While there, he had been taken to a number of important biblical sites, and in his talk he reflected on that experience. From the audiotape it is evident that he spoke laboriously, every word an effort. This is the last extemporaneous talk of which we have a recording. It holds interest, also, for President Kimball's expression of his views as to the location of the Mount of Transfiguration.

The second talk was recorded at a stake conference in Fresno, California, twenty-one years earlier, when Spencer Kimball was sixty-three and vigorous. In this address he began by speaking in Spanish, reading with difficulty a text that had been translated for him. He wished to demonstrate by his conduct the importance of integrating the Spanish-speaking members of the stake into as full participation as possible. In the sermon he speaks at length on parental responsibility, drawing on a newspaper report of research into the background of Utah prisoners as the skeleton for his remarks. He thus illustrates his penchant for using newspaper or magazine clippings as a framework on which to build his remarks. He was a voracious reader, always alert for ideas he could use. He had a dozen or more file drawers of folders containing clippings or notes from magazines, books, Church publications, conference reports, and items referred to him by others. Most bear the marks of his red pencil. In addition he had shelves of binders labeled "Sermon Seeds," with the same sorts of materials and partial drafts of talks.

The talk draws power from its very roughness. It seeks to reach people directly, candidly, persuasively, not with polish and abstractions. In his oral presentation there is a kind of fervor and urgency that leaves no doubt about his conviction that what he is saying is of great and immediate importance to the lives of the people. It illustrates his character, particularly in extemporaneous discourse, as one who was less concerned with explaining doctrine than with encouraging righteous living.

PRESIDENT SPENCER W. KIMBALL AT SHEPHERD'S FIELD
NEAR BETHLEHEM, ISRAEL
21 OCTOBER 1979

Brothers and sisters . . . we have had some marvelous experiences this day. . . . We went first to Mt. Tabor and there we climbed to the top. I felt very sure that this was the spot where Jesus had taken his three disciples—Peter, James, and John—to this "high mountain apart" and there had given certain blessings. I felt a very warm spirit
as twenty or more of us gathered together there. And I believe they all felt about the same. In the seventeenth chapter of Matthew, Peter said, "Lord, it is good to be here." And he said, "Let us make three chapels, one for thee, two for thy servants [Moses and Elias]." I felt that was the place. I know there has been some disputation and difference of feeling about it since there are some other possible places, but I have always felt this.

I remember when Camilla and I and Howard Hunter and his wife came the first time. That time we came here from Babylon. . . . [We traveled] first to Damascus by air and then by taxi to Jerusalem and then Bethlehem. It was Christmas Eve and there was terrible confusion, with people here from all parts of the world. They were playing raucous music. It didn't seem much like Christmas to us, nor like we were in sacred spots. So after we had glanced around a while, we got in another taxicab and came down here on these hills. Here we felt a different spirit. The four of us walked off by the fence in the darkness and there we spoke of serious things, and Brother Hunter offered the prayer. We had a sacred prayer, just the four of us, here in this sacred spot. . . .

We saw many places today wherein the Savior seemed to be near us. He seemed to be watching over us, and we feel a great inspiration that has come to us in being in this land. I would bear witness to you that the things which the Savior taught to us and taught to his servants through devious ways all these years are true, as true as truth can be truth. . . . I bear witness also that this is the truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, of salvation and eternal exaltation for us all who will live the gospel as the Lord has taught us to do. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER SPENCER W. KIMBALL AT STAKE CONFERENCE
FRESNO, CALIFORNIA
30 NOVEMBER 1958

Mis queridos hermanos y hermanas, les traigo saludos de los Hermanos de las Autoridades Generales. Les prometo que Dios los bendicirá al paso que guarden sus mandamientos y se conserven limpios. Ahora, [para] poder ganar las bendiciones gloriosas tienen que ser fieles hasta el fin. No deben ceder a la tentación. Santifiquen el día del Señor, pagen sus diezmos fielmente, guarden la Palabra de Sabiduría estrictamente, sean honorables y pagen sus deudas, den un día completo de trabajo por su salario, sean buenos y considerados con sus empleados, asistan a todos sus servicios regularmente, cumplan con
todas las tareas que les sean señaladas, guárdense limpios de toda maldad, particularmente de los pecados sexuales. No olviden sus oraciones con sus familias. También, honren y estimen a sus esposas y maridos y crien a sus hijos en los días del Señor en todo respecto y todo promesa y convenio se cumplirá, cada bendición se da. Los estimo y los amo a todos. Dios los bendiga. En el nombre de Jesucristo. Amen.

[My dear brothers and sisters, I bring you greetings from the Brethren of the General Authorities. I promise you that God will bless you as you keep the commandments and maintain your worthiness. Now, in order to receive the glorious blessings, you have to remain faithful until the end. You should not yield to temptation. Sanctify the Sabbath day, pay your tithes faithfully, keep the Word of Wisdom strictly, be honorable and pay your debts, give a full day's work for your salary, be considerate of your employees, attend all of your meetings regularly, fulfill all the assignments that have been given to you, keep yourselves from all evil, especially sexual sin. Don't forget your family prayers. Also, honor your wives and your husbands and rear your children in all respect. If you do this, in the days of the Lord every promise and covenant will be fulfilled, every blessing received. I respect and love all of you. God bless you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.]

I hope that all the people of the Fresno stake consider it a very great privilege to have one of the eighteen units a Lamanite unit. You are especially blessed and privileged. Very few stakes have that opportunity with the international aspect, the interracial aspect. The love of brother and brother can be exemplified here as in few stakes. I am positive that the Lord has some extra blessings for everyone who assists the Lamanite cause. In your family prayers why don't you pray for all the missionary work, but especially the Lamanite missionary work, and for the Lamanite cause.

I hope that the day will not be far distant when we may have a Lamanite high councilor in this stake of Zion. I hope we will have one or more Lamanites on every stake board in this stake. I hope they will be given every opportunity that others are given. I hope that in the quorums that they will be given their privileges. I hope that there will never be a stake conference in the Fresno stake without at least one Spanish testimony borne or a Spanish song sung or a Spanish prayer offered. That would be somewhere near their proportion of the population.

I love these people. I hope you do. If you don't, something is wrong with you, because the Lord loves them. And if you love the Lord and his program you will love the Lamanites and you'll do everything in your power for them.
I know I didn't speak Spanish perfectly, but I hope they could understand what I was trying to say.

My theme this afternoon is grapes. This is a great grape-growing area. In the book of Ezekiel, the eighteenth chapter: "The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" [Ezek. 18:1–2].

Do you have sour grapes in this country? Every one I ever tasted was sweet. But I suppose that there is a time when you can eat sour grapes in the Fresno area. And if you do, if you eat enough of them, and if your teeth are like mine, they get very sharp. They cut my tongue, they cut my cheek, and you have your teeth on edge.

That scripture refers back to Jeremiah. (See if I can turn to it.) "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge" [Jer. 31:29–30]. That works both ways. If the father gets up in the morning cross—with sour grapes—his children will suffer. His wife is likely to be cross, too, even when he comes home that night. The sour grape message carries on through the day. If the father sins, the child may sin, too.

[Inaudible] . . . "Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter. Thou art thy mother's daughter, that lovest her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite" [Ezek. 16:44–45], and so on.

It is amazing how many divorces come to the children when the mother and the father are divorced. It is amazing how easy it is for the children to fail the family prayers when the parents fail in their family prayers. It is not surprising when children will not go to church or their meetings when the father and the mother do not go. Do you see the sour grapes? They go right on down through the generations.

Some time ago in the Deseret News there was an editorial that I clipped. I think the reading of some of those paragraphs might be of interest to you. For the benefit of the children, down at the Point of the Mountain about twenty miles from the center of Salt Lake City is a very large and portentous prison, a penitentiary. You all know who go to penitentiaries. It is men and women who do bad things, who break the laws, who go against the policies and program of society. They end up in the penitentiary. The penitentiary is not a building like this with open doors, but is locked with heavy metal gates. The keys are carried by paid guards. There are some places in there
that are the death cells—where men lie waiting for the day when they
will be executed for breaking the laws of man and of God and of society.
That is an ugly picture. But it is there and it is all over the land and
a tremendous amount of your taxes go to support the men who live
generally in idleness, with total security—shelter, food, clothes, and
everything that is necessary for their well-being and their livelihood.
They have it all, free. Well, how do they come to get into the
penitentiary? They never go from the goodness of a righteous home
into a penitentiary. It is never done. There is a gradual loss of
righteousness. One is never good today and bad tomorrow, or bad
today and good tomorrow, it is a process.

It is like the Niagara River. Most of you have been there, the older
ones. The river starts out just an ordinary river. It just flows along rather
gradually and finally gets a little more steep and a little more steep
and finally comes to the edge of the precipice and drops down a
tremendous distance into the holes and whirlpools beneath. That is
the way men and women and boys and girls are. They never just fall
off the precipice. They have a long process of skidding before they
get there. How do they do it? They begin by failing their prayers, by
stealing nickels and dimes. Never bank robberies at first, it’s little,
a pencil or something at school, and the mother and father go back
and have some bad words to say to the teacher because their particular
little child did something wrong. The parents who go back and
excuse their children, alibi for them, pay back their little debts, they
are the ones whose sons and daughters end in the penitentiary. The
fathers and mothers that meet issues realizing that children are
children—they’re all human beings—the child that steals a nickel, or
da dime, or a quarter goes back and makes it good—that’s the child
that will grow into righteousness. The child that is forced from the
beginning to meet issues and not to go around them, not to evade
them.

Somebody made a study of these men in penitentiary in Utah.
They took a large number of them who were willing to cooperate. Why
not? They are there for long times, some of them maybe for all their
lives with no hope of getting out. So they told all about their lives,
their childhood, their youth, their temptations, their teenage, their
weaknesses and their strengths. It is a very interesting but sordid
picture. Then they took an equal number of men, same age, the same
area, same general background, same race, everything as near as they
could the same. They called them the normals. They are the people
in the professions and the businesses, laborers, school teachers, and
many walks of life, just the ordinary people, not the best, not the worst,
just the average people. Then they went to work to contrast the
normals and the prisoners. May I read a few excerpts that I think may
be interesting to you? First, they were the same sex, as far as possible the same intelligence, and same general background. These were some of the findings. One, the prisoners' parents were footloose. They lived in trailer camps, they lived in houses for rent. They didn't own their own homes. Remember there are exceptions in both directions. But these are generalities that developed in the study. The families from which the prisoners came tended to be more mobile, footloose. They moved oftener and greater distances. They didn't get their roots set down. They didn't belong to communities. They didn't contribute to communities. Prisoners came from broken homes five times as often. What is a broken home? There are a lot of broken homes. There are broken homes where there is divorce, where the mother carries forward for the children or the father does; those are broken homes. There are broken homes where the mother and father still both live in the home, but they are quarreling and cussing all the time. They are not a unit, they are two people; they are not one, but two. Those are broken homes, and there are many. And the great majority of the prisoners in the penitentiary, the boys and girls in reform schools, come from those homes.

Any woman and any man who is beginning to feel a little antagonized by his or her companion, who doesn't know whether he or she can stand it any longer with this particular spouse, had better think about ten times before they make a decision to make a break. They better get busy, go back together, understand each other's weaknesses, learn to forgive, accept forgiveness. They must, for they are selfish when they say, "I am entitled to peace, to happiness; therefore I am going to divorce my husband, my wife, so I can have peace and happiness." Almost nobody ever gets it that way. It is selfish, tremendously selfish, when a man and a woman will throw away the future of their children in order to get a little peace for themselves, which peace can never and will never come through divorce. If that man and that woman are going to be happy later on in their life in their second, third, or fourth marriage, they will have made their own adjustments because divorce cures nothing. It merely separates them, and if they take their present weaknesses with them into their second, third, and fourth marriages, they are only asking for continued trouble. There are rare exceptions, I say. So the thing to do, of course, is for smart people to be smart, to go back and analyze one's own weakness, eccentricities, and then forgive those of his or her spouse. Let peace come that way. It can never be otherwise. It has got to be a conscious effort on the part of two people who are willing to give and take, but mostly give, who are willing to take problems but give instant forgiveness. And so, five times as many of the prisoners came from selfish mothers and fathers who would prefer to be at peace
themselves rather than to have their children grow up in righteousness. The homes of the prisoners were characterized more often as negative and full of contention. If the father and mother have to adjust their problems, if they have problems, misunderstandings, how thoughtless to ever say a word before their children. Go in a closet, close the door, discuss the problem sanely, salvage it, save it. The children must never know that their parents have had misunderstandings. You have them of course, most parents will.

There are very few of you in this room that do not have misunderstandings, but most of you have had courage, strength, and determination enough to go back and solve your problems. I have marital problems in my office every week, sometimes day after day. I have them come thinking they are the only people that ever had any problems. They have neighbors across the street the same age as they are, and the neighbors are supremely happy, and they say, "Why do we have all the problems, and their stream runs calmly and tranquilly along?" They are quite surprised when I say, "Wait a minute. You both started with the same kind of opportunities, same beautiful prospects, a happy marriage, and then began to come the problems. One, two, three, four, five, and on and on—the problems. What happened? The other couple solved their problems, you folks fell victims to yours. They settled them, you let them become serious and sad in your life. They solved, you became a defeated soul and you thought divorce would cure it, and it wouldn't." Only one of five prisoners could honestly describe his parents' relationship as excellent. Can you see why the father and mother, if they are going to have children, must have excellent marital relationships, excellent family relationships at all costs, at all costs.

My little girl grew up and got married. One day she came to her mother. She and her husband had a little misunderstanding, like other people do, and she said, "Mother, why is it that my husband and I have these misunderstandings and these heartbreaks, and aching hearts, when you and Dad never had one in all your lives?" Sister Kimball laughed at her. She was married now, so you talk to her pretty frankly. She said, "If you only knew!" Of course we have a lot of misunderstandings. We are both strong people, strong ideas. Both had made our lives very well before we were married. (We didn't marry until we were 22!) I tell couples, like this mother told this young girl, "Of course we had misunderstandings, but we had sense enough to go in the bedroom and talk them out. We didn't talk them out in front of our children. In great part they didn't know about it. And they didn't grow up frustrated."

How selfish can mothers and fathers be that will let their little children ever hear a cross word between parents. Not all children go
to the penitentiary who have those kind of parents, but there is a
good chance they will. Mothers of normals remember to be more
open, straightforward, and consistent in their expression of love and
disapproval. Now a good mother is not necessarily one who gives a
child everything he wants. It is a mother that is consistent, a father
who goes down the lines, always the same. Fathers, in the case of the
prisoners, more frequently were lax in the control of their sons,
short-tempered and nervous. Parents of the prisoners tended to be either
too soft or too brutal. It is just as bad to give your child everything
he wants as to give him nothing he wants, just as bad. And no one
can say she is a kind of a mother to be proud of if she yields to every
whim of her child. And because a child wants a car, or wants a trip,
or wants this or that or the other, no father is a real father who yields
to all of those desires, unless they are righteous, of course.

A woman came to me the other day from Idaho, a long, long
distance. She couldn't see her bishop because he was too young and
wouldn't understand. She couldn't see her president because he didn't
know about these things. She had to come all the way to Salt Lake
to see one of us. She said that her children neither respected her
nor her husband. Why? I asked her a lot of questions. "Isn't your
husband a good man?" "Oh, yes." "A good Latter-day Saint?" "Oh,
yes." "True and worthy?" "Oh, yes, indeed." "Well then, why don't
they respect each of you?" Then it leaked out word by word as I
talked to her. The husband was cross. He got up and quarreled with
the children. He cussed them—I guess that's the best word—and she
wasn't going to take it. And so, instead of doing the right thing about
it, she began to shield the children. She put them under her cloak,
under her wing, and there came a big, deep chasm—the father on
one side and the mother and the children on the other. Now she
thought the children should love her, but they didn't. They hated
her for it. They hated the father for his part. I said to her, "My dear
sister, why don't you go home and marry your husband and become
his wife? Why have you stolen your children from your husband?"
She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You have stolen your
children, kidnapped them away from your husband. Now, why didn't
you go in the closet and close the door and say, 'Father, these children
are being frustrated by your continual nagging.' Maybe you'd have
some effect. At any rate, why didn't you clean it up?" I said, "Why
did you go steal the children from him and make the children hate
him?" I said, "How much do they love you?" And she said, "Not
at all. They have no respect for me." Why? Because she didn't
discipline. She was too soft. She gave them everything they ever wanted
and she tore them literally out of the heart of their father. I see that
every day in lesser or greater degree. Parents, then, of the prisoners
are too soft or too brutal. We do not believe in brutality, neither do we believe in softness. Parents must not be erratic or inconsistent. They must be wise, flexible, understanding, and lovable. Parents of the normals tended to take a more middle-of-the-road course. They also tended to use verbal methods and isolation more often in their efforts to control, teach, and discipline.

Someone was telling me the other day that they had in their kitchen a little stool over in one corner. The name of the stool is the thinking stool. Some people would call it the dunce stool or something else. But this was the thinking stool. Whenever the child is cross or belligerent or cries, he goes and sits on this stool in the corner and thinks and thinks and thinks until he has everything straight, and then he comes back, and the next day he doesn’t have to sit on the thinking stool. That’s what they mean by verbal methods and isolation methods rather than with the stick, and the foot and hand or slapping or beating. Once in a great while—perhaps a time or two or three or four in every child’s life—the rod would be a wonderful thing for him. I hope there is no family that has totally discarded the rod, but no brutality.

Perhaps of special significance in this age of busyness was the finding that there was no apparent difference in the father–son relationship in regard to the amount of time together, for example, fishing or camping. What is important, the study disclosed, was not how often the father goes places with his son, but what he does with his son when he is with him—in other words, the quality of the relationship, rather than the quantity. That is exactly what I told the bishops and counselors last night as we were setting apart them and their wives. They and their wives listened and I told them exactly that. If the stake presidency, and the high council, and the bishoprics, and other Church leaders, their husbands who had the positions, if they will give themselves generously to their sons the two or three days they are home, that will amount to infinitely more in the child’s life than if they were there all seven days, twenty-four hours a day, but didn’t give himself to his child. Therefore, I said to them, you can follow the example of the authorities of the Church. In general, with exceptions, they are successful parents. You can spend time in the Church and still, when you are home, have good relationships with your children. Even when fathers are often gone, they can spend much time with their children in family night, family picnics, in family prayer, and in other situations.

The normals had significantly greater religious involvement, both before and after puberty, than did the prisoner group. Don’t overlook this. We preach about it all the time. The children whose parents have a religious concept that is strong and virile, those children will be your
community leaders. Those children whose parents have no religious foundations, who do not attend their meetings, whether they are Catholics or Protestants or Jews, whoever they are, if they have no hitching post or foundations, their children are likely, that is, there is a better chance for them to end up in the penitentiary and the reform schools, at least in broken homes themselves, divorces and unhappy lives. The greater significance was the religious involvement and attendance of the parents, especially the father. More than twice as many fathers of normals attended the church services often than did the fathers of the penitentiary men. That’s a sin in itself, that’s all that needs to be said. And if every boy and girl who anticipates marriage, every young couple that has gone into marriage would ponder that one statement, it would be enough. Twice as many fathers of the normals go often to church as the fathers of the subnormals. It is a great sermon. Many fathers have said, “Well, I can do this. My son will grow up righteously anyway.” But like father like son, like mother like daughter. A few weather the storm. Most of them capitulate and fall.

The findings agree with another study made with delinquent boys and girls. They compared the same. Thirty percent of the delinquents’ fathers were rated as religious whereas 71 percent of the fathers of the nondelinquents. That beats out what I said. Your children have a tremendously better chance if their fathers were at priesthood meeting, to Sunday school, to the sacrament meeting and do all the other duties. The normals engaged in family prayer more often—57 percent of the normals were engaging family prayer or they came from family-prayer homes. Only 34 percent of the delinquent children came from homes that ever have family prayer. That is another sermon. Family prayers give your children a tremendous edge, increasing the chance that they will be happy in their home, they will marry right and their marriage will be successful. Of the normals, 93 percent came from homes that believed in God. A very much smaller percentage of the delinquents came from homes that believed in God. Now, coming back to the courtship angle, of the prisoners at least 50 percent as teenagers dated or were out with a gang three, four, or more nights a week. The normals spent more home time.

I went down the street in Salt Lake the other day at seven o’clock in the evening, pitch dark, and here was six or seven little children not over ten or eleven out in the dark. What were they doing out of their homes? They couldn’t have been playing ball, because they couldn’t see the ball; it was dark. What were they doing on the streets, and what were their mothers thinking about, and their fathers? The children who are in their homes at night, who stay home longer, who do not date as soon, have a much better chance for a happy marriage
and for a normal life. And here let me say, the Church is making a strenuous effort to get all the people to teach their youth to date later, not to begin dating [too soon].

Don’t let your little girls go to parties with boys before they are in their teens—never, never, and even in their early teens. Let them go in groups and have a glorious time, boys and girls together, for a long time. Then when they date it will mean something to them. A little shorter period of dating, and then a little shorter period of steady dating—no steady dating until they are way along in their teens. That’s the Church program, that’s the Lord’s program. I hope you parents are listening, I hope you boys and girls are. Don’t you get excited. You have plenty of years. When you are fifteen you have five or six or seven years before marriage and plenty of time to date and to find the right man, the right girl. They found that children who have brothers and sisters to fight for them, brothers and sisters to teach them, to discipline, were better boys and girls than the ones that were alone. (There are exceptions there.) Where older children do disciplining, they can knock each other around and save the parents an awful lot of trouble sometimes. They found that the children who became prisoners were often isolated, they lived alone, then roamed the streets. The better children go in crowds—I don’t mean gangs, I mean nice crowds of many young men and many young women—their parties, their dances, their picnics, their school, all their functions as crowds for a long, long time before they begin to break up into pairs, which of course is extremely important. They found it was a dangerous thing for boys and girls to go with older people. You don’t ever want to let a fifteen-year-old girl go with a twenty-year-old man. Never. Nor vice versa, of course. It is a very dangerous thing because she is not ready to match the thinking of a twenty-year-old person.

One or two more things and I must go.

The normals received better grades. Not that they were more intelligent. The prisoners had just as good gray matter, but they [the normals] got better grades. They stayed at home and did their homework. They followed the normal path and were not out wasting their time. They found that the normals came from homes well established—better-trained people, the educated folks. I don’t mean highly educated. But the unskilled people furnished more prisoners than do the skilled people.

They found 64 percent of the normals received their first sex education from their parents, or teachers, mostly parents. But the men in the penitentiaries and boys in the reform schools received their sex education from their companions; they got it the ugly way. The parents gave it to their children the beautiful way so they could understand.
I think I won’t go any further than that, only to say in my final appeal, will every one of you parents who still have children under your roof, will you develop a consistent, continuous program of education to your children? Will you tell them the things they ought to know at six, eight, ten, and twelve, and fourteen, and sixteen, and eighteen? Will you warn them against all the sex deviations? Will you fortify them and strengthen them, so they will know what’s what, know the dangers and know how to protect themselves against it? Don’t leave it to teachers. Teachers cannot do the job that fathers and mothers can do, because the father and mother only has one, or two, or three girls; four, or five, or six boys. They come at changes in their lives at different periods. The father and mother see them every day, can analyze the pulse, the heartbeat. They know when they should be saying something by way of clarification.

Summarizing, then, brothers and sisters, if you want your children to have their teeth on edge, find the sour grapes. And you know what the sour grapes are—they are frustrations in the homes, lack of attention to family prayers, neglecting paying tithing, the little criticisms that come at the breakfast and the dinner table of the Church and Church authorities. You know what the sour grapes are, you’ve tasted them, you know people who have tasted them, and we’ve seen children with teeth on edge. God grant that all the children of this stake of Zion may grow into rich and full maturity with a deep and abiding background that will take all your boys into the mission fields, every boy and girl to the holy temple and every son and daughter into happy, eternal marriage, I pray, with my blessings upon you, my congratulations to you, my love for you, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.
President Kimball at Mestre

As he came out
(hat and briefcase)
down the plane steps and across the tarmac,
we saw he was pleased to see us
and from our whole half-circle
love burst in towards him.

He took it;
and, continuing to walk steadily forward,
gave back to each
more than all had given him:
acceptance.

Simon entering Caesarea,
Paul by the riverside at Philippi,
Spencer at Venice Airport;
acceptance of acceptance.

—Arthur Henry King
October 1977

Arthur Henry King is a professor emeritus of English at Brigham Young University.
Spencer W. Kimball and Poetry

Spencer W. Kimball had great respect for the power of words and felt complimented when people characterized some of his sermons as poetic. Occasionally he tried his hand at poetry, but most of it was strictly for private consumption. In his study he kept a looseleaf notebook containing poems he had written. His own uncertainty about the merit of his poems is suggested by the label "Verse or Worse" affixed to the notebook and by this introductory quatrain:

Sometimes I muse and weep a tear
And write another verse.
In spite of all the pains I take
Each gets a little worse.

Despite the humorously apologetic tone of these lines, it is apparent that he took poetry seriously as a way of dealing with the significant emotional events in his life. In the notebook there is a scrap of paper on which he jotted, "Write verses about Ma's Death, Eddie [his son who contracted polio], My Call, and Surgery."

A man of action with little time for the shaping of poetry, Spencer W. Kimball seldom finished a poem in the sense of refining it for publication, and only a few pieces of his verse were published during his lifetime, usually because they were included in talks he gave. Most of his poetic work was of no particular consequence, just homely verses about family or things scratched out during funerals. A few poems have more substance, however, and we include them here, both for their literary merit and for the additional insight they give into his character.¹

¹A poem by Spencer W. Kimball about the devastation in postwar Berlin appears in Brigham Young University Studies 25 (Winter 1985): 54.
When I Look Back

To Camilla

When I look back across our mingled years,
I know it is not just the joys we shared
That made our lives one pattern, but the tears
We shed together, and the rough, wild seas we fared.
Through all the disappointments we have faced,
Through this world’s faults and failures, we have come
To heights of understanding that are based
More on the sorrows than the joys of home.

Young love is beautiful to contemplate
But old love is the finished tapestry
Stretched out from oaken floors to heaven’s gate.
We wove on earth for all eternity
With threads made stronger by the steady beat
Of hearts that suffered but knew no defeat.

—Spencer W. Kimball
Dachau

In 1935 Spencer W. Kimball visited Dachau, a Nazi death camp. He recorded in his journal:

From Munich we drove off the road a little to the famous and infamous Dachau, where some of the most horrible and bloodcurdling atrocities of the Second World War were committed. . . . The place was morbid and distressing. We walked away silently as we walked around it. Was there anything could be said? . . . The little city of Dachau, perhaps three or four miles away was enjoying the holiday which Germany is enjoying today and seemed to be unworried about the death chambers and death ovens so near. They have gotten used to it, I suppose. I should not like to live in a town by the name of Dachau.

Later, still brooding over the experience, he wrote his feelings:

We felt the tomb-like silence of Dachau, walked speechless through the empty four-wall gas chambers—cold walls scribbled on by numerous visitor relatives of the lost dead. And as we filed breathlessly past the open ovens and the incinerator tools, we felt the clammy clutching of the ghosts of death.

The mounds of human ashes brought a tingle to the spine. The rifle range where many fell successively in line and hangman's spot caused shivers and gave us a painful start. The blood ditch made us gasp with growing horror at the heart. The metal statue, figure of the symbol victim there, with form so gaunt and skin so taut and disappearing hair—his eyes so deep and hollow and his clothes so loosely hung, emaciated sufferer, just skin on bones is strung. It seemed we died there also, as expressionless we walked among the ghosts of multitudes whom heartless death had locked. The silenced cries of tortured dead kept ringing in our ears, and fancied haunting sighs and moans kept whispering through the tears.

Oh, Father, please this scene erase. Thou Holy One so kind. Let us return to pleasant thoughts; remove this from our mind. Forgive the fiends who terror wrought, in spite of whom souls live. If they sensed not the thing they did, dear Lord, can you forgive?

—Spencer W. Kimball
His Work All Done?

His work all done? Not so, my friends, for it is scarce begun.
You think his dear sweet voice is ever stilled? Not so! Know ye
that testimonies truly borne by conscientious bearers
do not fall unheeded, unremembered, lost for aye.
But faithful angels write down each one's every word, a record
for all time—eternity. Rejoice at this assurance.
It is sure forgiveness follows testimony borne
and nothing's lost that fits into the great eternal Plan.

His work all done? Not so, my friends, for it is scarce begun.
In this life's work we make a bare beginning. There's no end.
How glorious the truth that our eternities are built
upon foundations firmly set in these our mortal days.

—Spencer W. Kimball
I’m Home Again

I’m home again!
And when I came my dear friends smiled and waved their hands
In welcoming salute.

I am home again!
But many an old friend’s face is missing from the crowd.
A scythe has reaped the grain.

Thank God I’m home!
And may it be his will that I
Shall come again
To this, a land beneath
The desert sun with beauty rare and peace and friends
That all do make it home.

—Spencer W. Kimball
As We Came

One departs and leaves the other.
They would rather go together
   Through the veil,
But the plan of God our Father
Comprehends that we should rather
   In travail
Pass into the world of spirits
One by one as we came here
   Into this vale.

—Spencer W. Kimball
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I found out he died when I got up for water. My roommate had left a note for me. The world seemed to fold, not as colors before a storm, but as the wings of a bird over a warm lake, sliding into the last wound of day.

—Lance E. Larsen

Lance E. Larsen is a graduate student in English at Brigham Young University.
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