



Max H. Parkin as a member of the Salt Lake LDS Institute of Religion faculty, 1980.
Photograph courtesy Salt Lake LDS Institute of Religion.

Mormonism's Remarkable History: A Conversation with Max H. Parkin

Interview by Alexander L. Baugh

I first became acquainted with Max Parkin's research and writings while I was a graduate student in history at Brigham Young University. As part of my coursework I read his master's thesis, "The Nature and Cause of Internal and External Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio between 1830 and 1838" (Brigham Young University, 1966), and his doctoral dissertation, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Clay County, Missouri, from 1833 to 1837" (Brigham Young University, 1976). I considered both studies to be exceptional, but I was particularly intrigued with his dissertation. In fact, my reading of three "Missouri" dissertations—Max's, Warren A. Jennings "Zion is Fled: The Expulsion of the Mormons from Jackson County, Missouri" (University of Florida, 1962), and Leland H. Gentry, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Northern Missouri from 1836 to 1839" (Brigham Young University, 1965)—stimulated my own research interest in the Missouri period of early Mormon history (1831–1839).

In the early 1990s, while researching and writing my own dissertation on the 1838 Missouri-Mormon War, as historical questions would arise, I would frequently contact Max to get his take on things. These conversations and interchanges led to a warm, collegial friendship. On a number of other occasions he opened his research files and shared any materials I asked for or that

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he thought might be helpful to me. I will never forget the time I visited him in his office in the Salt Lake LDS Institute and he let me photocopy all the newspaper reports he had collected about the Mormons which appeared in Missouri newspapers in 1838–1839. It had probably taken him several days—perhaps even weeks—of scrupulous reading in a dusty, dark, and dingy reading room in Missouri to comb through the microfilm copies of a dozen or so Missouri newspapers to extract the reports. He did all the work, then handed what he had over to me. Typical Max—unpretentious, unselfish, and more than willing to share what he had painstakingly collected and turn it over to a historian wannabe.

In September 2000, as the expanded Joseph Smith Papers Project was being inaugurated, both Max and I were teamed together as co-editors for two (or perhaps three) volumes. For the next several years we worked closely together on a regular basis. Usually one day each week I would go to his house, or he would come to BYU, where we would spend the better part of an afternoon reviewing electronic copies of the original manuscripts, checking typescripts, verifying our notes and annotations, and going over what we each had written about the documents. I came to quickly value Max's methodological skills, particularly the meticulous precision he exhibited in analyzing and interpreting the text and his eye for detail. Many times he extracted things from words and passages that I had never even considered. To him every word and sentence was important and conveyed significant meaning. These were choice learning experiences for me and I became a better historian working side-by-side with him.

As I came to know Max, I became more and more impressed with his professional career as an educator in the LDS Church Education System (now Seminaries and Institutes) and the contributions he made to Mormon history. But what impressed me the most was his faith commitment. Max fits the trademark of a disciple-scholar. There's no question where he stands: Mormonism is true, and the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is indeed remarkable! I eventually persuaded him to do an interview so that his story could be told. The following interview took place on March 8, 2011.

Interview

ALEX: My name is Alexander L. Baugh. I'm a professor of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, and I'm with Max H. Parkin at his home in South Cottonwood, recently annexed to east Murray, Utah, to discuss his life, his adventures, his journey, and how he has pursued his career and profession in Church Education.

Take a few minutes and talk about your Mormon heritage—some of your ancestors, and how they joined the Church and came to Utah.

MAX: That's a good place to begin, and it was a dear subject in our home as I grew up, thanks to my mother. She talked a lot about several subjects—history generally, the gospel, the importance of education, and of course Church history, especially as it pertained to her ancestors. On her line, my earliest ancestors were converted to the LDS faith in New York during the Kirtland, Ohio, period. They visited Kirtland and knew the Prophet Joseph Smith. Mother would relate some family experiences about their meeting the Prophet and helping him financially. These first ancestors in the Church were Ira Stearns Hatch and Wealthy Bradford, a descendant of William Bradford of the *Mayflower*, and in 1621 the governor of Plymouth Colony. Since mother talked a lot about Governor Bradford, my wife, Yvonne, and I, who both respected his memory, named our first child Bradford, after him. One of Ira and Wealthy's sons, Orin Hatch, my great-grandfather, was a boy in Nauvoo, and later as a sixteen-year-old served as a member of the Mormon Battalion. His name is on the Mormon Battalion Monument on the Utah State capitol grounds.

ALEX: So I understand that the Hatch family were some of the first settlers in Bountiful?

MAX: Yes. Orin Hatch settled in Bountiful, Davis County, in 1848, after being discharged from the Mormon Battalion, and he later married Elizabeth Perry, whose father, John Perry, my great-great-grandfather, was baptized by Wilford Woodruff in the pond on John Benbow's farm in Herefordshire, England; he arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in the summer of 1847. In late September, John Perry joined Perrigrine Sessions and other herdsmen in driving Church cattle for Brigham Young northward about seven miles from the pioneer fort in Salt Lake City to graze on new land. That fall, Sessions built a dugout there and spent the winter. The next spring, both Perry and Sessions and others began plowing part of the new grazing land, which became Bountiful. My mother later built the house in which I mainly grew up across the street from the site of the Sessions' dugout. John Perry died of cholera in 1855 on the plains just west of Nauvoo while returning home from a three-year mission to England, anticipating the marriage of his daughter upon his return.

Another great-grandfather, William Woodward, was baptized in England in 1848, and arrived in Utah three years later. Still later, returning from a mission to England in 1856, he was appointed clerk of the fatal James G. Willie handcart company at the age of twenty-three. He agreed with the wisdom of Levi Savage, who cautioned Captain Willie about leaving Florence, Nebraska, so late in the season. Elder Woodward sadly wrote, "We never ought to have left the Missouri [River]." The next year in Salt Lake City, President

Daniel H. Wells, newly appointed counselor to Brigham Young, married William Woodward and Harriet Hogan in President Young's office. The couple returned to pioneer Bountiful, where he taught school and began to build their home. Obviously, there was a great deal for mother to talk about to us boys, which built in me a testimony and a strong connection to the past.

ALEX: Did she talk about your father's family?

MAX: No, she didn't say much about my father's ancestors, and my father, Kimball Mann Parkin, didn't say much either. Nonetheless, I attended large family reunions on both sides and gleaned impressions of their faithfulness. But it wasn't until after my father's early death that I also learned details about the devotion of his Latter-day Saint ancestors. John Parkin and his wife, Elizabeth, my father's great-grandparents, were converted in Loscoe, Derbyshire, England, in 1850. Afterwards, John served as a traveling missionary in England and then as a branch president in nearby Heanor. The family finally sailed to America in 1863 and settled in Bountiful. My father descended from the oldest child, William John Parkin.

ALEX: Do you wish to add anything about your English ancestors?

MAX: I want to make a point about their remarkable faithfulness. But first, my father's maternal grandfather, Charles W. Mann, and his first wife, using handcarts, arrived in Utah from England in 1859 and settled in West Bountiful. Charles W. Mann then married Annie Busby as a second wife, who was my great-grandmother. They married in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City in 1864, and had a large family. Their daughter Jessie was my father's mother. Now, with Charles W. Mann included in this story, I have named all four of my great-grandfathers, who all settled in the Bountiful area. These four great-grandfathers were faithful in many ways, but notably, each of them was loyal to the law of celestial marriage as that law was taught in their day. Because of it, three of them spent time in the state penitentiary "for conscience' sake." Two of these were on my father's side—William John Parkin and Charles W. Mann; and one on my mother's side, William Woodward. The other one, Orin Hatch, somehow escaped that punishment. I am grateful to all four of these grandfathers and their wives for their obedience and sacrifice in the cause of the early Church.

ALEX: I know you are also very proud of your Norwegian heritage. Where does that come in?

MAX: That too is on my mother's side. By 1837, the year my Norwegian ancestors arrived in America, several other groups like them had come from Norway to New York on fishing boats to get away from the religious intolerance in Norway. Some of these, including my great-great-grandfather, Eric G. M. Hogan, and his wife, Harriet, and children, moved to Northern Illinois, and from there the Hogans and others moved to Sugar Creek, Lee County,

Iowa, about the year Nauvoo was founded. In 1842, Joseph Smith sent missionaries to convert the Norwegians in Northern Illinois, and the next year, they converted some of their friends in Iowa, including the Hogan family. On one April Sunday morning in 1844, Eric and his fourteen-year-old son Goudy, walked the long distance from their home to the Mississippi River, and rowed across it to attend general conference at Nauvoo. With other boys, Goudy climbed on some boards behind the speaker's stand, where he said he was close enough to touch the Prophet Joseph Smith as he spoke. He described the holes in the elbows of the Prophet's coat and other curiosities about him as he delivered what we now know as the King Follett discourse. He also wrote of the family's deep sadness in Iowa in hearing of the Prophet's death two months later.

Also on their voyage from Norway in 1837 was Ellen Saunders, who married Heber C. Kimball, one of the three women in Brigham Young's pioneer company in 1847. While wintering at Council Bluffs that year, the Hogan family lost their three-year-old Margaret, but they nevertheless crossed the plains in 1848 in the company led by Brigham Young that year, and immediately settled in South Bountiful. My actual ancestor, however, was Goudy's young sister, Harriet, born in Illinois, the family's first American-born child, named for her mother. Harriet later married William Woodward, as mentioned above. While on missions in Denmark in 1853, Eric G. M. Hogan and Canute Peterson, who together had originally traveled to America on the same fishing boat from Norway, sailed together from Copenhagen to Oslo, Norway, and opened the Norwegian Mission.

ALEX: You mentioned Orin Hatch. Are you related to U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch?

MAX: Senator Orrin Hatch came from a different Hatch family out of Vernal, Utah, to whom we are not related. Later the young Orrin and his family moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The senator, of course, spelled his name differently.

ALEX: So you are not related to him.

MAX: Right, I am not, but mother spoke well of the senator. My mother, Florence Hatch, was the twelfth and last child of Orin Perry Hatch, son of our Orin Hatch. My grandparents, Orin Perry Hatch and Marinda Woodward Hatch, gave me a sense that I was very close to pioneer Utah. My grandmother, Marinda, whom I knew well, gave birth to her first child, my mother's oldest brother, Perry Orin Hatch, in South Bountiful in 1877, a week before Brigham Young died in Salt Lake City. My knowing these grandparents who knew Brigham Young helped give me this sense of closeness to the pioneer era.

ALEX: What are some of your early memories of growing up in Bountiful? Talk about the influence your parents, siblings, Church leaders, and teachers had on you during your childhood and youth.

MAX: I was the sixth son of seven boys. My parents raised their seven sons largely during the Great Depression and World War II. Both periods impacted our family and me personally. I remember those periods well and some of the difficulties they brought our family. The Great Depression was hard on us, as it was on many in Utah. In the late 1930s when jobs were still scarce, we received some government “relief,” and I remember going to Bountiful’s Stoker School with my younger brother, Bruce, dressed in government-issued clothes, which were a distinctive green-tinted khaki and were rough and itchy. Since only a few other boys in the school wore such clothes, I felt conspicuous, but I never sensed being harmfully singled out because of my clothes. Sometimes my dad, a mechanic, miner, and truck driver, got employment doing menial jobs, but it was hard for both parents. On a personal note, I remember one time mother was unable to cook dinner because she had no coal for the stove. She sent me out to the coal shed to rake up a little coal, but there was none. She next sent me to the distant railroad tracks with a pail to pick up any coal I could find that had fallen from the coal cars. We boys also worked on the local farms as day laborers. I remember that for years we were allowed almost daily during harvest time to bring home surplus vegetables which were not used for the market. Consequently, I grew up eating an abundance of vegetables, but little meat, except for the chickens we raised. Those are some of the memories I have of growing up.

Because of the lack of employment in Utah even in 1941, my oldest brother Kimball joined the U. S. Army, and another brother, Glenn, joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and then the U.S. Navy, all before the war started. In August that year, my father read a newspaper ad about the government needing civilian employees to work for the Navy Department in Hawaii for the attractive wage of \$1.27 an hour. He left for Honolulu and worked on war ships at Pearl Harbor, including my brother Glenn’s heavy cruiser when it was in port. Of course, both my father and brother were there on the eventful morning of December 7, 1941. That morning, a diving Japanese fighter pilot fired tracers at my father, and then saluted him as he turned his plane skyward. Falling to the ground but unharmed, my dad dug the fifty caliber shell out of the pavement after it had passed through his clothing. My brother Glenn arrived at Pearl Harbor from Barber’s Point that morning to help put out fires during the second wave of Japanese bombers.

At home, at age eleven, I remember that eventful Sunday and mother’s tearful reaction to the radio news from the islands. Because Hawaii was put under martial law and under extreme security, it was many days before she

learned of her family's safety. Altogether, five of my brothers joined the service during the war. Glenn later had two ships sunk under him in the Pacific by Japanese torpedoes and bombs. Following his second sinking, he went adrift for three days on a net raft in the Pacific Ocean, but survived with wounds. My brother Wallace, at age nineteen, had his leg amputated at the hip in France, and my twenty year-old brother George, the one next to me, was killed in an accident after receiving his orders to go overseas. As a young teenager, I remember mother receiving telegrams from the War Department, hearing shocking radio reports about battles her sons were in, receiving a letter from President Harry S. Truman about the death of her son, and getting other notices informing her of these family tragedies. Wars, like depressions, are hardest on mothers.

ALEX: So your father, having a hard time providing for your family, went to Hawaii to work. I'm guessing the rest of the family stayed in Bountiful?

MAX: That's right. But the older brothers, as I said, one by one went into the service.

ALEX: But your father eventually returned to Bountiful?

MAX: Yes. He returned before the war ended to help mother finish a house she had started building a year before he left for Hawaii. It was a modest cinder block house she struggled to build while he was away, located a few rods from the site of the Sessions' pioneer dugout. I say "struggled" because we dug the basement when I was nine years old with a horse and scraper and with pick and shovel, as people often did in those days; and mother built the house while low on funds and amidst war time shortages and government restrictions on building materials. We lived in the basement as we slowly built the house around us. Also, mother took in house cleaning jobs to help out. But unexpectedly and happily during the war, a brother occasionally arrived home on leave, which delighted our mother and thrilled us younger boys with their war stories. My brothers were my youthful heroes.

ALEX: So you grew up with your brother George during the early years of World War II?

MAX: Yes. When I was ten years old before the war started, I joined George as a day laborer on a local truck farm in West Bountiful, the main farming community nearest our home. I started by doing simple, tedious jobs, but as we worked together, I advanced in my farm skills. I worked for the same farmer with George until he finished high school and joined the U.S. Navy before the end of the war. Meanwhile, George and I labored together year after year, starting in the spring with the daily asparagus harvest in the cool mornings before school and continuing in the fields through the blistering summers, six days a week, until we finished the onion harvest after school in the fall. For me, haying was often the most unpleasant task because of the

heat and the wind. The farmers used horses to do the plowing, cultivating and haying, for I never saw a tractor in the field until after the war. The task most enjoyable to me was working together with George and other boys in the late afternoons, preparing the day's harvest for the merchants' market in Salt Lake City early the next morning. Together we would wash the newly harvested produce—bunched beets, turnips, and other vegetables—in a large water vat and later in the season harvest and crate cantaloupes, tomatoes and bell peppers, then load them on the farmer's truck for the next day's market. Sometimes earlier in the morning, my boss would take me with him to the growers' market; then in the back of the same farm truck, nearly every Saturday evening he would take us boys swimming at Wasatch Warm Springs in Salt Lake City.



Florence H. Parkin (left), George Parkin (center), and Max H. Parkin (right), age 11, Bountiful, Utah, April 1942.

These were good years growing up—hard years—but the work provided enough money to buy all my school clothes and lunches and otherwise take care of my needs. At age sixteen after George left, I also left the above farmer (then earning thirty-five cents an hour, having started years before at ten cents an hour) for an employer raising carnations and chrysanthemums. I was preparing soil beds there a year later when George was killed, which devastated my mother. The summer after my high school graduation, I packed potatoes and other produce in railroad cars for shipping which paid for my first year in college. During these years, my family never owned an automobile; for transportation, I used public transportation or my bicycle, which was assembled during the war from used parts.

ALEX: Do you have memories of any Church leaders, teachers, or others who may have influenced you at that early age, or left a lasting impression on you?

MAX: Since I was active in the Aaronic Priesthood, my teachers and bishops in my ward in the historic Bountiful Tabernacle played a normal wholesome influence in my life. To single someone out, I would name my aged ward teaching companion, Brother Nathan Rawson, whom I had for my entire Aaronic Priesthood years. Listening to him give messages in the homes, year after year, greatly influenced me. I also remember as a boy Bishop Thorpe B.

Isaacson and later Elder Richard L. Evans of the Seventy, visiting our stake conferences. The morning of his visit, Thorpe Isaacson stopped me on the stand and thanked me for a talk I had just given at the priesthood session that morning, and I thanked him for his thoughtfulness. But mainly, my mother, with a smoking, non-church going husband, had the greatest spiritual influence on me. My father, who had married mother in the Salt Lake Temple, supported our church attendance when he was home. My mother had a genuine testimony of the gospel, and her faith in the Book of Mormon prompted me to read it as a teenager, thereby gaining an early affection for the book and its prophets.

ALEX: Let's talk about your education. It sounds like not many of your family actually went to college.

MAX: My parents both finished junior high school in Bountiful, but went no further. My brothers Kimball and George finished high school at Davis, but the three brothers in between them did not. One of these brothers before joining the army had serious trouble with the law when dad was away at Pearl Harbor, which was another burden mother bore. My younger brother Bruce graduated from college in accounting and became the Bountiful City recorder and later city treasurer and the town's folk "historian."



Kimball M. and Florence H. Parkin family at the rear of the house that Florence built while her husband was at Pearl Harbor during WW II, Bountiful, Utah, March 1947. Back (l-r): Orin, Kimball (father), Florence (mother), Bruce, Wallace, and Kimball. Front (l-r): George (just before his death), Glenn, and Max.

At age fourteen I received a wonderful patriarchal blessing that influenced me. I remember my Sunday School teacher driving members of his class to Farmington, where the patriarch and stake president lived, to receive our blessings. Since mother talked a lot about the importance of education, a passage in my blessing greatly impressed me. The patriarch said, "Wisdom and knowledge shall flow unto you from the portals of heaven in answer to your humble petitions." I always felt inspired by that. As a serious boy, I seemed always to be interested in learning and gaining understanding, and for that reason my years in seminary were important to me. I enjoyed learning about the Bible and about spiritual things. (The Book of Mormon was not taught in our seminary until long after I left.) My interest in history began as a sophomore in high school, both in seminary and more particularly in a world history course.

ALEX: I'm guessing you attended Davis High School in Kaysville.

MAX: It was the only high school in the county at the time, and we were bused from Bountiful to Kaysville. Though a rural school, it provided what I still believe was an excellent education in the basics, possibly better in certain fundamentals than what my children later received. Most kids in our large school graduated from high school and from seminary. I was the first member of the family to go to college, and one of the first in the greater John Parkin family to receive a doctorate. However, Doctor James L. Parkin, a second cousin, and a well-known physician and teacher at the University of Utah Medical School with an international reputation who married Bonnie Dansie Parkin, later General Relief Society President, became the most prominent member professionally of the John Parkin descendants.

ALEX: When did you go on your mission?

MAX: I left for my mission two years after I ended my agriculture employment and just after two good years at BYU. After my first year at college, however, my funds were depleted, so my roommate at the Y, a Bountiful friend, and I flew to Alaska on a freight plane in June that year to earn money as construction laborers for college and our missions. At the time, Anchorage, Alaska, was a frontier town about the size of Bountiful. Unfortunately, when we arrived, my close friend and I were separated. He left for the interior and I worked on a construction site a few miles from Anchorage. Meanwhile, I met another BYU student from Utah who had just arrived after driving the Alcan Highway. Though we worked on separate jobs, my new friend, Don Beck, and I lived together in a little shack in the woods for its economy rather than in the more expensive construction camp. I walked two miles through the woods from our little dwelling to my job site. I attended church on Sunday in a little branch in Anchorage, held in a rented American Legion Hall, and attended priesthood there on Wednesday nights. My two friends both

returned to Utah in late August, and I returned in December. When I sailed from Seward across the Gulf of Alaska to Juneau in an old freighter, we were caught in a wretched storm, which for days not only made the few passengers and crew seasick, but also the seasoned captain. We then sailed down to Seattle, where my parents met me. I spent the rest of the school year at BYU before my mission the following September.

ALEX: Talk about your mission to Hawaii. Most people today would be pretty thrilled to go to Hawaii, and now I understand that your dad and brothers had been there.

MAX: It was a delight to go to Hawaii, where my father and two of my brothers had served during the war. I appreciated seeing places my father had talked about, particularly Pearl Harbor with some of the harbor's war rubble still in place, including the destroyed battleship the USS Utah, and the USS Arizona before it was memorialized. I arrived in Hawaii in 1950, just two months after the Church celebrated the centennial of Mormonism in the islands. During the celebration the two existing missions that had served the islands were combined, and the striking new Honolulu Stake Tabernacle was dedicated. My earliest companions spoke either Japanese or Hawaiian, having served there in their respective missions. The combined mission made learning a language no longer required. In Honolulu, the Japanese Saints had previously been segregated into their own mission and branches, and the branch segregation continued there after the missions were combined.

I first labored in Honolulu, housed at the mission headquarters next to the tabernacle, but I was soon transferred to a vibrant and friendly Japanese branch in the Kaimuki District, just inland from the Diamond Head crater and Waikiki. Race was never a problem with me, even with the war, and I quickly learned to love the Japanese people. We tracted our district and found an impressive Chinese woman, married to the University of Hawaii's football coach, a Hawaiian and an inactive Latter-day Saint. My companion baptized the woman and her children after I left the district. However, I did not have a



Max H. Parkin (left) and Donald Beck (right) at Mountain View, Alaska, working for construction companies to earn money for college and missions, July 1949.

highly productive mission, personally, in terms of baptisms, but from my first companion to the last, we applied ourselves to the work.

ALEX: Did you remain the whole time on Oahu?

MAX: No. I was later transferred to the Big Island of Hawaii and served in two districts, first in Puna and then at Hilo. Puna was a large district mainly of sugar cane plantations that extended from the ocean to the middle slopes of Mauna Loa, with just two missionaries to serve the area of several towns and villages. In Puna I got close to the Hawaiian people, and learned to eat poi, raw fish, and other strange things. In our district, we had one little branch of mixed nationalities that met in a small, rustic community hall a few miles from the Kilauea Crater. My companion was the Puna branch president and I was his first counselor. The second counselor was an illiterate man of mixed blood, whose Hawaiian wife helped him memorize the sacrament prayers. In the villages, we mainly taught Filipinos who had come to Hawaii to work in the sugar cane plantations and lived in company towns often with shanties for houses. They were usually the poorest workers in Hawaii, with food often so unpleasant to eat that at first it made me gag. My companion, however, ate it, so I learned to eat it too. We taught several Filipino women, but we could never get their husbands interested. The men were often a rough type, engaged in cock fighting and gambling.

ALEX: So, you didn't stay in Puna?

MAX: After a few months I was transferred to the Hilo District, a city area, and served there as the companion of the district president. This twenty-one year-old companion was an Idaho potato farmer who impressed me by how he managed district business, which seemed to occupy all of his time and energy. In Hilo, the missionary district president directed ecclesiastical affairs of the district and the missionaries, and I managed the district auxiliaries. Together we directed some wonderful programs because of the talent of the people. We also made some tough decisions, like not allowing some Hawaiian priesthood bearers to own consecrated oil because they would use it to bless a broken sewing machine, or for some other odd use. Additionally, my companion and I had some interesting and even strange experiences. One encounter was the casting out of an evil spirit from a sixteen-year-old Hawaiian girl, a



Max H. Parkin just prior to serving in the Hawaiian Mission, August 1950.



Elder Max H. Parkin (front left) and the Puna Branch, Hawaii, March 1951. Those pictured are mainly Hawaiians, although there are some mixed nationalities, and one Japanese sister.

branch president's daughter. It was a harrowing experience for both of us and for the girl's family. The unconscious or overcome girl, oblivious to the event, repeatedly lunged at us wildly with misshapen hands and distorted face. We spoke directly to the clearly malicious spirit within her for over an hour. After we gave her a second blessing, the evil spirit left begrudgingly.

Also, for several days the legendary Elder Matthew Cowley stayed at our Hilo mission home, a large plantation house with a huge yard, where ten elders (including myself) and four sister missionaries lived. I enjoyed becoming acquainted with Elder Cowley as he worked with my companion and me. Charismatic charm flowed from him as he related some of his interesting New Zealand Maori experiences. During the several months I was with my district president companion in Hilo, we did no proselytizing because of the way he handled his district schedule. Consequently, often being left alone, I had a lot of time to read church books.

ALEX: Did you finish your mission in Hilo?

MAX: No. For about ten months of my last year I was sent back to Oahu, where I became the district president of the West Oahu District, headquartered in Wahiawa in the middle of the island, amidst pineapple plantations. All ecclesiastical branches and wards on Oahu were administered by the Honolulu Stake, so my duties as district president applied only to directing the

missionaries in the district. The Hawaii Temple was in our large district, so some Sundays we guided tours there, and on other Sundays we held meetings for the lepers at the Pearl City leper sanatorium just behind Pearl Harbor. (This is not to be confused with the legendary leper colony on the Island of Molokai.) I was impressed when in our meetings, those afflicted with leprosy bore testimony of the goodness of God in their lives. In these meetings we were separated from the lepers in the room because instruction to us was that we should never let them touch us. (I believe this policy has since changed.) Outdoors after our last Sunday meeting, however, a few of them exuberantly rushed forward, grabbing and hugging us, and thanked us for the gospel and our love for them. Usually, however, we attended our own Wahiawa branch, where once a handsome, young naval officer, Jay Welch, who years later became the director of the Tabernacle Choir, organized a musical program for the missionaries to present to the congregation. After an audition, Jay appointed me not to sing, but to narrate the program.

ALEX: These are interesting experiences, but did you have any success in Wahiawa?

MAX: It was in Wahiawa that my companions and I had our most successful teaching results. We taught several wonderful, mainly Japanese people, often Buddhist women, whose husbands objected to their being baptized, or for some of them even being taught by us. For these, as the women requested, we met clandestinely in back rooms of their work places while we sat on bags of rice or other goods and gave them lessons. Though we never baptized any of them, some expressed their appreciation for their newly found Christian faith. In May, four months before I left the mission, I baptized a young Portuguese-Hawaiian woman, who attended our branch meetings, including a Sunday School class that I taught. Teaching this excellent young woman, Betty Nunes, in both my class and at her home during the week, and seeing her participate in branch activities and express her faith in the restoration, was the highlight of my mission. On the Sunday of her baptism, when my companion and I drove to the Honolulu Mission headquarters where we held our baptismal services, I felt that my mission was complete. After a short meeting at the mission home, we moved next door to the garden baptismal font at the beautiful Honolulu Tabernacle, and I baptized her. She was the only convert baptism I performed on my mission, but I was a happy missionary! Years later, her brother-in-law, Sammy Lowe, married to her Hawaiian half-sister Primrose, became a counselor in the Hawaii Temple presidency. We continued teaching others also, and about the first of September, shortly before the end of my mission, we found a new Japanese family that we taught and converted. We almost missed finding this family in their run-down house hidden behind an equally run-down and abandoned Buddhist temple. My last companion, Elder Therald Beckstrand,

an excellent elder with whom I had sailed to Hawaii, baptized the mother of the family, as the father and children waited for another day. I confirmed her a member of the Church. The next day, Elder Beckstrand and I left our missions and sailed for home.

ALEX: Did you have any other highlights on Oahu?

MAX: While I was president of the West Oahu District, President Ernest A. Nelson, the mission president, came from Honolulu one morning and picked me up to help fulfill an assignment from Salt Lake City. He had been asked to recommend a site for a new college campus in Hawaii that the Brethren were considering. We drove along Oahu's north shore and found one or two wild, but beautiful sites that we recommended. Church leaders in Salt Lake City, however, decided to use its own sugar cane plantation near the temple at Laie to build the school. Of course, that college later became BYU-Hawaii, with the Polynesian Cultural Center nearby, built to employ the students.

ALEX: To what extent did your mission lay another foundation for your life? Did it have a major impact in how you viewed Mormonism or the restored gospel?

MAX: I suppose any sensitive missionary would find his two years in the mission field impactful, and I did. But because I was a serious young man, my two years in the mission field—working hard, reading the major church books, *Jesus the Christ*, *The Articles of Faith*, and *The Great Apostasy*, all by James E. Talmage, and other books, as well as the scriptures, and while having much faith in the Church—served to strengthen me. At that time, I favored the writings of Joseph Fielding Smith and Orson Pratt and read their books. It was only well after my mission that I began to read the other works of Talmage and also those by John A. Widstoe, B. H. Roberts, and the scientist Henry Eyring, a board member of the Deseret Sunday School Union, all of which broadened my view. Years later I learned of the disparate views held by Elder Smith and Elder Roberts. Meanwhile, I matured, becoming more moderate, and appreciated my mission experience very much.

ALEX: I'm assuming you went right back to school after your mission. That's when you met Yvonne and started life together.



Elder Max H. Parkin baptizing Betty Nunes in the garden baptistery, Honolulu Stake Tabernacle, Honolulu, Hawaii, May 17, 1952.

MAX: When I left Hawaii, the Korean War was still going furiously. I returned in September 1952 and felt a need to get into college quickly, or else be drafted. My father had died while my younger brother Bruce and I were in the mission field, and mother was determined not to have another son in the service, at least without the benefit of a military commission. So I rapidly enrolled in the Air Force ROTC program at the University of Utah. Elder Beckstrand, who returned home with me, joined the air force to avoid being drafted and was soon sent to Japan. After attending the University of Utah fall quarter that year, I transferred to BYU to strengthen my relationship with a girl I knew there from Davis High. However, the relationship didn't develop, and I soon met Yvonne. She had been baptized into the Church in February 1953, just three weeks before I met her. She had come from Inglewood, California, to attend BYU at the invitation of a high school girlfriend. As non-members, both girls took a class from Professor B. West Belnap, director of undergraduate religion, who taught a religion course for non-Mormon students. Both young women were converted and baptized by Brother Belnap. Yvonne was a darling personality, and we talked a good deal, becoming close quickly. After waiting a year following her baptism, we were married in the spring in the Salt Lake Temple. Brother and Sister Belnap were present at our temple marriage, which was nice for Yvonne, since her family could not attend the temple. Yvonne's mother was an excellent Christian woman who had often listened to Elder Richard L. Evans and the Tabernacle Choir program on the radio in California. Consequently, we had Elder Evans marry us. Yvonne's mother sat on Temple Square pondering the events in the temple as Elder Evans performed the ceremony. (Unfortunately, despite our efforts, neither she nor any other member of the family joined the Church.)

ALEX: Talk about how you became interested in Church history, and the kind of direction your life took at the University of Utah and the LDS Institute of Religion there.

MAX: After one quarter at the Y, I returned to the University of Utah, courting Yvonne at a distance. Then, after marriage and two years in the ROTC, I left the latter undertaking. Being trained as a navigator, I failed my second year physical exam for color blindness and was dropped from the program. Then, as a senior at the University of Utah, and about to graduate in business administration and marketing, I was hired by Western Airlines as a station agent at the old Salt Lake City Airport. After receiving much training, I enjoyed my work there and considered making it a lifetime career. However, during my third year of employment, the airline pilots went on strike, forcing all employees at Western out of work for three months. This became a significant turning point in my life.

ALEX: What happened?

MAX: Since I was married with a little boy and Yvonne was not working, I secured temporary employment with the maintenance people at the University of Utah. While working in janitorial services, I sought for a break in the mornings to take an institute class. Although I had had two years of religion at BYU, I had not taken a class at the Institute of Religion at the U, even though I had attended many meetings in the institute building as a member of Delta Phi, the returned missionary fraternity. But now, for a morning diversion, I enrolled in a Church history class taught by T. Edgar Lyon. It was a marvelous class, and I became so interested in the subject that I soon enrolled in his other courses. After the pilot's strike ended, I continued taking courses from Brother Lyon because of the flexibility of my work schedule until I soon graduated from the Salt Lake Institute of Religion, as it was named then. It was his matter-

of-fact forthrightness and his abundant knowledge of Mormon history and the Doctrine and Covenants that attracted my attention.

ALEX: Did Professor Belnap have a role in your decision to leave Western Airlines?

MAX: He certainly did. Sometime after I returned to Western Airlines after the strike, West Belnap visited Yvonne and me in our apartment in Salt Lake. He said, "Max, you are the man that we need to enter the seminary program. Would you be interested?" I was indeed. These two events—the pilot's strike, which opened the door for me to take institute classes from Brother Lyon, and West Belnap's invitation to teach seminary—came together at an ideal time in my life. Later, that summer, 1957, Yvonne and I were interviewed by Brother Boyd K. Packer, a seminary supervisor, and I was assigned to teach seminary at Pocatello High School in Pocatello, Idaho.

ALEX: How do you account for the fact that all of a sudden West Belnap showed up at your door and offered you an invitation to teach in the seminary program? Do you think he and T. Edgar Lyon had communicated with each other about you?



Max H. Parkin in front of a Western Air Line DC 10, at Salt Lake Airport, just before he dispatched the flight to Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1956. A short time after this he was interviewed by Boyd K. Packer to be a seminary teacher.

MAX: I don't believe they communicated, but I did ask each of them to provide one of the two required letters of recommendation. I don't think they mutually knew what was happening in my life.

ALEX: I'm guessing that West Belnap just felt impressed that he needed to come see you and talk about this possibility.

MAX: That's what he told me. He said he felt impressed to do so. I appreciated his invitation very much, and I was pleased to use some of the information and enthusiasm that I had received from Brother Lyon. I was highly motivated and delighted with Professor Belnap's invitation. Over the next several years, we visited Brother Belnap, who was then the dean of Religious Instruction at BYU, at his home in Provo, and he visited us in ours in Salt Lake City after we returned from Idaho. In one such visit

he spoke at a ward fireside in our house in South Cottonwood, east of Murray. We loved him and were saddened with his death in 1967. We attended his funeral in Provo, where Elder Harold B. Lee was the principal speaker. Elder Lee appropriately cautioned the listeners that Brother Belnap had not died because the Lord needed him (a popular notion), because his wife and seven young children here needed him more.

ALEX: Did you pursue your master's at the same time you were teaching seminary?

MAX: Yes. I started my degree in 1958 when I was in Pocatello, immediately after my first year of teaching seminary and three years before I returned to Salt Lake City. I was accepted into BYU's College of Religious Instruction, recently established to provide graduate degrees for teachers in the seminaries and institutes of the Church. The new college was strengthened by a growing faculty of PhDs, and I enrolled in classes offered by the Department of Church History and Philosophy. While we were in Pocatello, I attended summer school at BYU and continued doing so for several summers after we moved back to Utah. Meantime, while teaching in Pocatello, I enrolled in two or three theology courses by the Catholic Church to strengthen



Dr. B. West Belnap, dean of Religious Instruction, BYU, ca. 1955. While attending BYU as a non-Latter-day Saint, Yvonne (Hobberstad), Max's future wife, enrolled in a religion class taught by Professor Belnap, who baptized her into the Church on February 8, 1953. Photograph courtesy Darlene Belnap.

my knowledge of theology, including a night class taught by the local Catholic priest, Father Carroll. I became rather friendly with him, and after class one evening, I told him the story of the First Vision, which evoked an interesting and friendly response.

After returning to Utah, I also attended afternoon and evening classes on BYU campus and night classes in Salt Lake as part of the university's extension program. I remember Drs. A. Burt Horsley, Milton V. Backman, Sidney B. Sperry, and others coming to Salt Lake to teach classes for many graduate students there, myself included. The BYU graduate religion professors, trained in various disciplines with high academic standards, were very accommodating in helping us get our degrees, as were the administrators of the seminaries and institutes. Some of my excellent graduate teachers at BYU, besides those I've named, were Richard Lloyd Anderson, Hyrum L. Andrus, David H. Yarn, Richard L. Bushman, Rodney Turner, Hugh W. Nibley, James R. Clark, Truman G. Madsen, and later Wilfred C. Griggs, and others, all recipients of doctorates at prestigious schools like Harvard, Cal-Berkeley, Columbia, and other respected institutions. I felt I had found a gold mine of scholastic excellence. A few of my fellow students—Dean C. Jessee, Larry C. Porter, LaMar C. Berrett, Monte S. Nyman, Edward J. Brandt, Kenneth W. Godfrey, Leland H. Gentry, and Robert J. Woodford—later made names for themselves. Also, to help acquire my Idaho and Utah state teaching certificates, I took several courses in education, including a teaching methods class on campus taught jointly and good-naturedly by Boyd K. Packer and A. Theodore Tuttle, our own two seminary supervisors. These two brethren were rather popular as teachers, and as a team they played off each other very well. I engaged in all my graduate courses while teaching full-time and trying to do my duty in various callings in the Church, and still spending ample time with my family, or so they told me. I learned that perseverance, balance, and moderation are the keys in meeting life's demands, and, of course, having the help of a cooperative wife.

ALEX: So after you completed your master's degree, you pursued your doctorate, but first tell us about your master's thesis.

MAX: I enjoyed my master's work very much and later also the work for my PhD at BYU. In fact, they were wonderful and challenging years for me. I enjoyed classes in philosophy, Christian and LDS Church history, world religions, and scripture and LDS doctrine from the professors I've named. Some of the names of the courses I took were "Christian History to the 4th Century," "Philosophy of Religion," "American Religious History," "History of the Papacy," "Paul's Life and Letters," "Documents of Mormon History," and a host of others. In 1976, the now prominent Stephen R. Covey and I were the last two candidates to receive doctor's degrees from our department

before the university closed the college. When I worked on my doctorate, my wife joined me on campus during the summers to get her bachelor's degree in elementary education, which our marriage had earlier cut short. We cherished those experiences at the Y together, and Yvonne later taught children at Woodstock Elementary School in South Cottonwood for twenty-seven years, and after retiring, an additional twelve years as a popular substitute teacher, mainly at Twin Peaks School, which our children had attended.

ALEX: Specifically, how did you progress on your master's thesis?

MAX: My master's thesis turned out to be somewhat of a problem. Dr. Hugh Nibley, a scholar at BYU with a reputation bigger than life, invited me to do a thesis on Fawn M. Brodie's book *No Man Knows My History*, a critical biography of Joseph Smith. Brother Nibley had written a booklet on the subject, which he told me was an inadequate piece of fluff, waiting for something more serious to be done. He wanted me to look at Brodie's book and examine all of the footnote references and citations for accuracy. His point was that he believed Brodie misquoted or otherwise misrepresented her sources and drew faulty conclusions accordingly. So my thesis was to compare her four hundred or so footnotes and citations with their original sources and see what I found. My year-long study was an enormous eye-opener for me, still being conservative in my thinking and in my faith, and being a young seminary teacher as well.

ALEX: Did you do the study?

MAX: Well, yes, in part. I asked Dr. Milton V. Backman, Jr., one of my excellent teachers, to chair my committee, and upon his approving my thesis topic, I began my research. I carefully read Brodie's book and examined the sources contained in its several hundred citations, and, surprisingly, verified that Brodie generally quoted her sources accurately. Consequently, on a personal note, I was troubled over some of the things I read both in her book and in the sources I checked. Some of them I had known earlier, but others were new and startling to me. As I wrestled with them, I sought counsel. I went to my former teacher, T. Edgar Lyon, to talk with him about them. He cautioned me about doing a study on Brodie's book. He said, "You have a tiger by the tail," and added little to encourage me. I talked with Alma P. Burton, assistant to William E. Berrett, administrator of Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, who had written something on Brodie. Brother Burton tried to discourage me from doing that subject, I supposed, because I was a seminary teacher under his leadership. I visited with Clair Noall, author of *Intimate Disciple*, an insightful and revealing work on Willard Richards and his close association with the Prophet Joseph at Nauvoo. Clair, an associate of Fawn Brodie, informed me that President Stephen L. Richards had given her full access to the Willard Richards papers in the Church Archives when such access was very rare, and

that I could trust her book, which contained stories and events similar to those in *No Man Knows My History*, but often with a different twist to their meaning. Hence, Clair cautioned me about Brodie's sometimes faulty conclusions drawn from the same original sources which she too had used. I also visited with Stan Ivins, son of deceased President Anthony W. Ivins. Stan, an aged man by this time and a bachelor, had spent a lifetime in researching Mormon history, and was believed to have clandestinely supplied Brodie with material from the Church Archives. The elderly William Lund, Assistant Church Historian, by hard lessons he had learned, confirmed this to me. Lastly, in June 1963, I twice visited President Joseph Fielding Smith, Church Historian. He proved to be the least helpful and disappointing in the sense that he didn't take Mrs. Brodie seriously, nor any of her more accusing disclosures about the Prophet Joseph Smith which Stan Ivins, Clair Noall and some of Brodie's sources had clearly confirmed to me. As the long-time Church Historian, President Smith didn't help, and his empty answers perplexed me. Though still anchored in faith, I went through a spiritual struggle with what I found, and was left without anyone to discuss them with meaningfully. Consequently, because of two growing concerns, I concluded not to finish the thesis.

ALEX: What were your concerns?

MAX: The first one was that I feared that once I completed the work, the university would reject it either for policy reasons, or for fear that critics somehow would use it to support Brodie's book. (About this time, I learned how school administrators sat on Dean Jessee's insightful master's thesis on the Manifesto, but which was finally made available to readers due to outside accreditation pressures.) Working through the issue, I went to see Dr. Sidney B. Sperry on campus for whom I had much esteem, knowing too that he was respected in Salt Lake City, and discussed my misgivings with him. He said that, if necessary, he would personally take my thesis, when completed, to President David O. McKay and get it approved, encouraging me to continue with it. I also consulted with Professors Nibley and Backman, both of whom were encouraging. Yet the approval factor still weighed on me.

ALEX: You said you also had a second concern.

MAX: My second concern related to the first. Inasmuch as I found and would report that Mrs. Brodie had cited the majority of her sources correctly—she misquoted only about three or four percent—I feared that my name might forever be linked to hers adversely. Did I want to risk this association? While Professor Nibley thought there was enough in my findings to take advantage of her errors, I believed that her small percentage of citation mistakes—my thesis's main focus—was not unusual for a book its size. However, I believed that she had made another, more serious mistake—namely, her biased selection of sources, and the way she used them. That is, she seemingly selected

the types of quotes that painted a preconceived lurid portrait of Joseph Smith. She used word hues in describing Joseph and selected sources that suited her coloring or point of view, and avoided using those that argued for a more balanced and, I believed, a more objective treatment of the Prophet. Therefore, even after receiving Professor Sperry's support, I realized that my name, indeed, might become unfavorably tied to Mrs. Brodie and her book. So, after spending the year on the thesis, I dropped it.

ALEX: Knowing you, I suppose you were strengthened by the experience.

MAX: I will say that in all that I passed through, I came out of the struggle with a greater understanding of Joseph Smith and with tougher spiritual convictions. In fact, that is the reason I share this story. I gained a resolve to be forthright and encouraging with any student of mine who might have his or her own issues with our religious heritage. I would also try to avoid building spiritual traps for students, as sometimes we teachers do, carelessly teaching things that later have to be untaught. This may be illustrated by events in some of the BYU graduate classes I took. Some graduate students—usually older seminary teachers or perhaps some rigid younger ones—would sometimes rebel forcefully in class, or sometimes in whispers, against some point of instruction of a well-intentioned professor. For example, on one occasion in a scripture class, a student stood up with clenched fists and railed against the faithful instructor. The student seemed to ignore the fact that our professors, too, were faithful members of the Church, who wanted only to help us separate the facts from our own occasionally poorly conceived traditions or misconceptions, however sincere they may be. Sometimes, things about our scriptures or about Joseph Smith were not as well understood by our people years ago as they are now. Sometimes, too, even our leaders, both ecclesiastical or educational, were slow in accepting new information and rarely supported the informed seminary or institute teacher when a complaint about his teachings arose. However, the poorly known subjects of my concerns of fifty years ago are now better understood by our people, or more easily can be. Hence, today, problems in our history are treated more transparently in faithful works about Joseph Smith, such as those by Mormon writers Donna Hill, Richard L. Bushman, and Leonard J. Arrington, and even by Dean C. Jessee or James Allen and Davis Bitton, the latter two who served as Assistant Church Historians; and by respectable non-Mormon historians such as the Jacksonian historian Robert Remini and the effervescent Jan Shipps. I believe that most questions or difficult issues can be discussed in a classroom if it is appropriate for the lesson and if they are taught in a context of faith.

ALEX: Talk about your early years in Church education.

MAX: I taught in four seminaries in the Pocatello area with several other fine teachers during the four years I was there. Yvonne and I also built a house, not knowing when we would return to Utah. But the transfer finally came and I was assigned to Olympus Seminary in Salt Lake City, where I taught for six years when the delightful, but older, Frank McGee was the principal. My students were great, I enjoyed them very much. I had the pleasure of teaching Elder Paul H. Dunn's daughter, Elder Thomas S. Monson's younger sister, and other fine young people. Sister Janice Farley, a fellow teacher, taught Steve Iba, an excellent young man and one of our student officers, who later served as a leader in the central office of Seminaries and Institutes. I also had the opportunity there to teach a year or two with my faithful Wahiwawa mission companion Therald Beckstrand, who also became a seminary and institute teacher. After that I taught a year at Sandy Seminary and Hillcrest Seminary in Midvale.

ALEX: Did you want to teach at the institute level?

MAX: I did indeed. That was my hope. I had a yearning to teach institute students, but Yvonne didn't want to leave Salt Lake City again and move to where that opportunity existed, while we were raising our children. The institute at the University of Utah, the small craft school that became Salt Lake Community College, and LDS Business College were the only schools that had Institutes of Religion in the Salt Lake Valley, and they were fully staffed. A visit with President William E. Berrett ended any hope I had to teach at the Institute of Religion at the University of Utah. He told me that he had a list of proven and deserving institute teachers in the field with their PhDs, waiting in line to teach at the Salt Lake Institute. Accordingly, in 1968 hoping for a change in my eleven-year teaching career, I contacted my Salt Lake Area seminary supervisor, Lyman Berrett, to be considered as a principal at one of the new seminaries coming on line at the new Salt Lake high schools at Alta, Brighton, and Cottonwood, but he said the principals had already been selected well in advance. Nevertheless, the interview with Lyman Berrett soon produced results. About a month later, he telephoned: "Max, would you be interested in teaching at the Salt Lake Institute? If you are," he added, "call Joe Christensen." Brother Berrett had responded to a late-in-the-summer request by Dr. Christensen to recommend someone to fill an unexpected opening. By this time, I had my master's degree and very happily made an appointment with Joe J. Christensen, who had been appointed director of the Salt Lake Institute of Religion at the University of Utah two years previously replacing Lowell Bennion. Brother Christensen wanted someone to open an institute at Stevens Henager Business College, a new half-time position, and the teacher could teach the other half at the university institute (which in two years be-

came full-time). I accepted it, and life took on a new vitality. I saw it as one of the greatest blessings of my life, and I am grateful to both men for their help.

At the time of Joe's visit to interview me, I was working on an assignment originated by President Hugh B. Brown. Wesley P. Walters, a Presbyterian minister in Illinois, had recently published a significant article in a ministerial journal, and it was republished as an anti-Mormon tract against Joseph Smith and the historical setting of the First Vision. The minister's ground-breaking research had alarmed President Brown, who had appointed Truman G. Madsen to organize a group of historians to counter the article by doing our own research on the subject, which the Church had not previously done. Truman appointed a few scholars—Milton V. Backman, Larry C. Porter, and one other—to go east, and for me to research the large collections of Stan Ivins and Dale Morgan on the early Mormon research they had collected which was housed in the Utah State Historical Society archives located in the governor's mansion on South Temple. From his trip to New York, Professor Backman produced a book, *Joseph Smith's First Vision*, which blunted Reverend Walters' criticisms and gave the Church such new insights on Joseph's early years in Palmyra that even B. H. Roberts in his *Comprehensive History of the Church* had incorrectly detailed. It was while I was working on this project in a regal-appearing room in that beautiful state building that Brother Christensen came to interview me. Meeting Joe in this circumstance may have helped my cause.

ALEX: Let's back up a bit. Could you talk about your master's degree, because you probably would not have received the opportunity to teach on the college level without first getting your masters, correct?

MAX: True. I was teaching at Olympus Seminary when I started working on my second thesis topic to complete my master's program. Because I felt that I wanted to make a contribution to church history writing, I selected a topic that I believed would fill a void. My question was: "What caused so much trouble for the church at Kirtland in the 1830s?" Of course, I knew about the Kirtland Safety Society problems from Brodie and from Brother Lyon's institute classes, but was that all? So I decided to do a more complete study on the nature and cause of Mormon conflict in Ohio during the years the Saints were there. I soon discovered that other troubles existed, ones that extended from Ezra Booth's complaints against the Prophet in letters to Edward Partridge in 1831; Joseph's reported affair with Fanny Alger in 1835; to the Kirtland bank problems and the Saints' speculative land difficulties in 1837, and more. My study was another eye-opener. I started my research on the new thesis in July 1964, again in the Church Archives located on the second floor of the Church Administration Building, next to Joseph Fielding Smith's office, where I had visited him twice the previous year. The faithful but old curmudgeon William

Lund, as keeper of the records, added to the tension of nearly everyone who did research there. He seemed to place all researchers under suspicion, and behaved accordingly, creating problems which I witnessed almost every day I was there. Perhaps his sternness arose from Stan Ivins's research there during the Brodie years. I also met Leonard Arrington, a fellow researcher and a member of the stake presidency and professor of economics at Utah State University. I later read his excellent book *Great Basin*



Max H. and Yvonne Parkin discussing Church history with Dean C. Jessee while returning from their church meetings, March 1966.

Kingdom and was impressed with his scholarship and with him personally. When my friend Dean Jessee arrived in the archives in November that year, I visited him in his wire-mesh, open-to-view, secure room, organizing and reading early historical manuscripts. President Smith, as Church historian, had recently hired Dean to read and catalogue early documents of the Church. Brother Jessee soon began here to build a foundation for his later monolith, the Joseph Smith Papers project. Dean, a former fellow graduate student and now for fifty years my neighbor and friend, has taught us a great deal about Joseph Smith's history and how it was written. Likewise, Howard C. Searle, my colleague at the Salt Lake Institute, has contributed to our understanding as well with his insightful UCLA dissertation on Joseph Smith's history and his descriptive articles in *BYU Studies* about the subject. From their work, we learned important things about how our history was written that we previously had not known.

ALEX: Talk about your thesis on Kirtland?

MAX: My thesis on Kirtland was probably the most professionally helpful thing I've done, and it gained some recognition. It took two or three years to do the research and writing. Professor Milton V. Backman, still my graduate chairman, was very helpful, but demanding. I had to rewrite much of the text three times for him. As I was finishing it, he thought it was too much for only a master's thesis and suggested that I petition for a doctorate instead, and skip my master's degree. I turned this down, believing I yet had little

hope of moving into the institute program in Salt Lake City. Also, since my coursework for my master's was all finished, I felt that I should quickly get that degree and then see what happened.

ALEX: I read your thesis in my own graduate program. That's when I first became acquainted with who you were, and some of the work you had done.

MAX: Thank you, Alex. Likewise, it was from your own insightful dissertation on the Mormon conflict in upper Missouri years later that I first heard of you. My thesis helped me in another way, too. Robert J. Matthews, a supervisor in the central office of Seminaries and Institutes, selected it for a limited publication for their school libraries. It was in this printing that I gave it the short title "Conflict at Kirtland." I was deeply honored by Brother Matthews's offer, since it gave the study an added lift. I tried to get the thesis published commercially, but the people at the University of Utah Press, who said they liked it, were short of funds that biennium, and both Deseret Book and Bookcraft said it was too controversial for them to publish. Today, since better works have been written about Kirtland, my study is out-of-date and is certainly no longer so controversial.

ALEX: So when did you consider getting a PhD?

MAX: Once I started teaching at the Salt Lake Institute I applied to the doctoral program at BYU, again in the field of history and philosophy of religion, with an emphasis on Mormon history and doctrine. A situation occurred that directed me in choosing my dissertation topic. At first, I considered expanding my master's thesis and doing a more complete history of the Saints at Kirtland, but Leonard Arrington, who became the new Church Historian in 1972, influenced a change of topic. Shortly after his appointment, Brother Arrington received approval from the Brethren to do a new sixteen-volume history of the Church. It was to be a comprehensive history of the Latter-day Saints and was to be completed by 1980, the Church's sesquicentennial. He selected sixteen separate historians to write the individual volumes. For some reason, he selected me as one of those sixteen historians. However, I was the only one without a doctor's degree. While I expected to be asked to expand my Kirtland thesis, he instead assigned Milt Backman to do the Ohio history. Although this sesquicentennial history was later aborted by the Church, Professor Backman used his research for *The Heaven's Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830–1838*. It's a fine book, and he was the right man to do the history of Kirtland. Meanwhile, Leonard Arrington had asked me to write the volume on Missouri. This prompted me quickly to get started on a dissertation associated with Mormonism in Missouri, and I subsequently completed my dissertation, "A History of the Latter-day Saints in Clay County, Missouri, from 1833–1837." The study, with Professor Backman again as my chair, also included an analysis of Church-owned lands in Jackson County

held by Bishop Edward Partridge and land privately owned by Mormons in Clay County, where the Church itself acquired no land.

ALEX: So the offer to write this history of Missouri led you to anticipate that you would use your dissertation as that volume?

MAX: Not as the Missouri volume itself, but as I said, it gave me direction to do a dissertation on some aspect of Missouri. Clay County was an important part of our history and the nearly three years the Saints were there proved to be troublesome ones. In fact, the Saints were eventually driven from Clay County as they had been from Jackson County, though not so dramatically. Violence erupted in 1836 when beatings by mobs began to occur, and our people knew they had to leave the county or face severe consequence.

ALEX: On a personal note, in my own doctoral experience, I read Warren Jennings's dissertation on the Jackson County period, Leland Gentry's dissertation on the northern Missouri period, and your dissertation on the Clay County episode. These three dissertations steered my course and ignited my interest in the Missouri period of LDS Church history.

MAX: I am honored that it made a contribution. In turn, your dissertation contributed to the better understanding of our history in upper Missouri. In the summer of 1977, I spent a few weeks in western Missouri with a team of BYU researchers, including Lyndon W. Cook, Leland H. Gentry, and Paul Anderson, who later became a director of BYU's art museum. The group was directed by Dr. LaMar C. Berrett, chair of the Church History Department, who also brought his graduate assistant, Stephen C. LeSueur, to work with us. Stephen later turned sour toward the Church and wrote his popular, but less friendly version of events in upper Missouri in his book *The 1838 Mormon War in Missouri*. This book needed an alternative voice, which you, Alex, appropriately provided with your dissertation.

ALEX: Tell us about some of your research experiences.

MAX: While I have related some experiences about my master's thesis, let me say something about my doctorate. I arrived in Independence, Missouri, in June 1973 to further my research for my dissertation. I quickly began getting acquainted with the broader Mormon community there, inasmuch as Independence was the headquarters of several churches of the restoration—the RLDS (now the Community of Christ), the Church of Christ (Temple Lot), sometimes called the Hedrickites, the Cutlerites, and a few others. I attended their churches, as well as my own, and got acquainted with their leaders. Soon, Maurice and June Russell, a faithful RLDS couple, invited me to stay with them during the summer, which I did. I had many long and cordial talks with "Russ" about the differences between the two churches, and a fond relationship grew between us. While at Independence, I researched in the archives of the Jackson County "Memorial" Courthouse on the square where Bishop

Edward Partridge had been tarred and feathered July 23, 1833. I spent considerable time researching in the Kansas City Library, in the huge courthouse in downtown Kansas City, and also in the courthouse at Liberty, Clay County. One day while researching in the courthouse in Independence, I met Bill Goff, a published historian on Jackson County's pioneers. In our conversation about the early settlers in Jackson County, he remarked, "The founding fathers of Jackson County were so damn crooked that the undertaker had to screw them in the ground to bury them." He gave this as a sympathetic and humorous explanation for the troubles the Saints experienced with those founding fathers in 1833. After I lived with the Russells all summer, they invited my family to visit them in Independence and to stay for a week in the Mesley home while the Mesleys were away on assignment at Kirtland, Ohio. Elder Carl Mesley was the presiding elder of the Stone Church congregation where RLDS President W. Wallace Smith worshiped, north of the Temple Lot dedicated by the Prophet Joseph in 1831. With concern about the beautiful and breakable glassware in the Mesley living room, Yvonne apologized to Sister Mesley for our little girls' (Christine and Julie's) youthful vigor, hoping they wouldn't break anything. While of course still expecting us to be careful, Sister Mesley replied, "People are more important than things." Both the Mesleys and the Russells trusted us and treated our children with warmth and friendship, and our family still talks about the kindness we received from them that summer.

We talked a great deal about history in our home, and during my years researching, I tried to give each of my five children experiences associated with my work. For example, on one occasion before his mission I took my son Steven with me to Missouri on an assignment to write an article for the *Ensign* magazine and showed him some of the sites usually passed over by Utah visitors. One site I took him to see was the place near Liberty where in 1958, Boyd Park discovered the skeletal remains of three members of Zion's Camp, who had died of cholera with others in June 1834. Heber C. Kimball said that some of the dead had been buried "in a little bluff by the side of a small stream that emptied into Rush Creek." This was the exact place where Boyd Park had found the skeletons, which his cattle had kicked up in his feed yard. The bones were later identified by the University of Missouri at Columbia and reinterred in the RLDS Mound Grove Cemetery in Independence. In October 1997, officers of the Missouri Mormon Frontier Foundation asked me to dedicate a monument in the cemetery where the skeletons rested, in honor of the fifteen Latter-day Saints who had died of cholera. In giving my children some special travel-to-an-important-place experience, I wanted these things to matter in their lives.

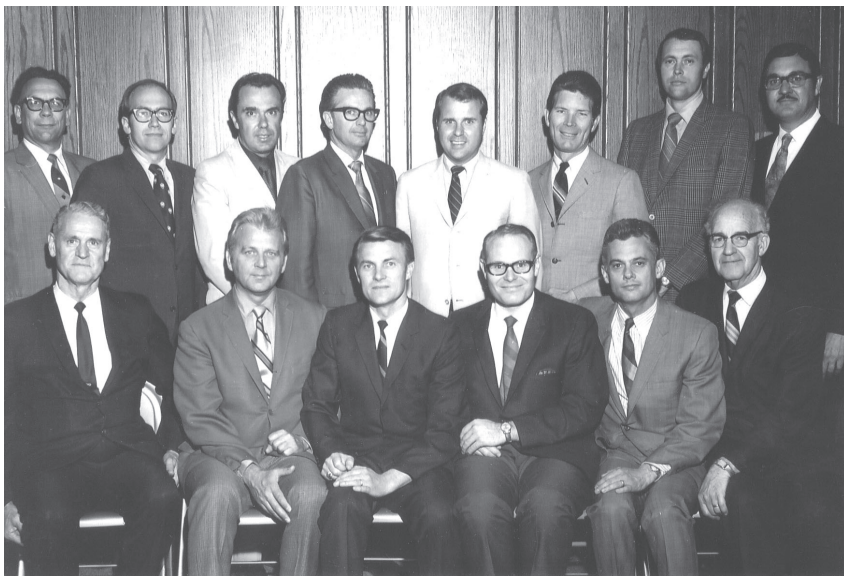
ALEX: Let's talk now about your years at the LDS Institute adjacent to the University of Utah. Talk about some of your colleagues and associates,



Max H. Parkin visiting with Boyd Park on his farm in Clay County, Missouri, September 1977. Park's cattle kicked up a number of human skeleton bones in 1958. The remains proved to be those of three Latter-day Saints who died of cholera in connection with Zion's Camp in June 1934. One skeleton was female, probably that of Betsy Parrish, wife of Warren Parrish, the only female who died of cholera on Zion's Camp. Heber C. Kimball wrote that the dead were buried "in a little bluff by the side of a small stream that emptied into Rush Creek." The image shows the little bluff in the rear of the photo, while the small stream is to the left, and Rush Creek is to the right (neither stream is shown in the picture). The site is just off Richfield Road, about two miles east of the Clay County Courthouse in Liberty, Missouri.

your ups and downs—anything you'd like to share along those lines. What were some of your sentiments about the faculty and your life at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion?

MAX: Those were happy years for me. I enjoyed teaching at the Salt Lake Institute with such good men; and learning from them continued my education. I took a few classes from T. Edgar Lyon, who taught for about ten more years after I arrived while he was working as the historian for Nauvoo Restoration. He taught at the Salt Lake Institute longer than any other teacher. (I understand that I may have followed him as second longest, with my twenty-seven years there, and my additional ten years as a volunteer teacher.) I also took several courses from Reed C. Durham, who succeeded Joe J. Christensen as director. Brother Durham was a superb teacher and a very popular one, who showed enormous breadth and depth in the wide range of subjects he taught. His most popular courses seemed to be specialty courses in LDS



Salt Lake LDS Institute of Religion faculty, May 1970. Front (l-r): Ray C. Colton, Fred Goldthrope, Joe J. Christensen (director), Reed C. Durham, Dale C. LeCheminant, T. Edgar Lyon. Back (l-r): Melvin Bitter, C. Kent Dunford, Gilbert W. Scharffs, Calvin P. Rudd, Dean Jarman, Max H. Parkin, U. Carlyle Hunsaker, Douglas Stott. Photograph courtesy Salt Lake LDS Institute of Religion.

Church history—keeping students informed of new papers being published by the Arrington team in the new Church Writing Division, and by others. I enjoyed attending his classes. He was also an excellent administrator, as Joe Christensen had been. Meanwhile, there was compatibility and mutual respect within the faculty. While members of our teaching staff changed a great deal over the years, the core faculty members from my early years there remained stable: Durham, Lyon, Dale C. LeCheminant, U. Carlyle Hunsaker, C. Kent Dunford, Gilbert W. Scharffs, Dean Jarman, and Calvin P. Rudd. Soon, a few other teachers who taught there for many years joined us, namely J. Lewis Taylor, Edward J. Brandt, Dee W. Hadley, Paul A. Hanks, Howard C. Searle, and a few others. I don't think the Church had a more faithful body of disciples than these brethren at the Salt Lake Institute of Religion; they respected the Church leaders and dearly loved the Lord, as I did. As directors of the Institute, besides Joe J. Christensen and Reed C. Durham, there were J. Lewis Taylor, Gilbert W. Scharffs, and then the highly popular David A. Christensen. Also, many other excellent teachers came later, such as S. Michael Wilcox, Robert J. Woodford, L. Dean Marriott, and others. But I want to make the point strongly of the faithfulness and good will of the faculty, because once

in a while a complaint circulated from downtown about this or that teacher. The rumors included sentiments that were little more than someone having a different opinion from the Brethren on something, but such rumors were never helpful.

ALEX: Give us some of the dynamics of the faculty at the Institute of Religion at the U.

MAX: First, I would say that I never heard a word of criticism from any of my fellow teachers against the General Authorities. In fact, over the years a number of our teachers themselves became General Authorities, including Joe J. Christensen, John M. Madsen, and Jeffery R. Holland, each of whom was called to the First Quorum of Seventy. Later, of course, Brother Holland became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve. Moreover, many of the teachers became bishops, stake presidents and mission presidents, and served the Church in the temple and in other ways. Over the years the faculty worked together smoothly with much brotherhood and spirituality, including attending the temple together each fall as we began the academic year. However, sometimes there were things that created competition and even a little tension. After Leonard Arrington was sustained Church Historian in 1972, he soon presented an agenda of books to the Brethren for publication by his History Writing Division in the newly organized Church Historical Department. As the books and articles were published, some of our faculty, including myself, favored their works for their increased understanding of our wonderful Church, but a few of the faculty members were critical of them. This was emphasized especially when certain General Authorities expressed cautious concerns about these writings. The same division occurred among us in partisan expressions about the Mormon History Association, an organization Arrington had established, which a few may have seen as a threat. Most of the faculty, however, seemed indifferent to these two issues because they had not been trained in history, or they taught in unrelated fields (scriptures, doctrine, courtship and marriage, teachings of the Prophets, student leadership principles, etc.); nor had they usually read the new publications or were interested in attending the MHA annual conferences. Eventually, years later, Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Seventy attended some of the annual history meetings, adding a tacit support for the organization. Later still, when LDS Church Historian Marlin K. Jensen began attending meetings, the reputation of the MHA seemed to improve as it continued to build a brotherhood among the Mormon historical community, the Community of Christ Church (RLDS), other restoration churches, and the wider Joseph Smith family. Even the attendance at MHA meetings by detractors like Reverend Wesley Walters, for example, helped to build friendship instead of animosity.

Some of the presidents of the MHA have been among the most faithful members of the Church. A few of its presidents, who served a one-year term, since its beginning in 1966, besides Arrington, T. Edgar Lyon and Reed C. Durham, were several from BYU, including Milton V. Backman, David J. Whittaker, Donald Q. Cannon, and others from our Church Historical Department, such as Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Ronald W. Walker, have led the association. Several Mormon-friendly historians from outside the Church have been elected as president, including Jan Shippo, Mario S. DePillis, and recently Bill MacKinnon. And some from the RLDS Church served as its head, including Roger D. Launius, a prominent historian, and Richard P. Howard, RLDS Church historian. Additionally, besides the friendly non-Mormon Jan Shippo, several other women have served as president, including Carol Cornwall Madsen and Jill Mulvay Derr, two level-headed and faithful Latter-day Saint historians and the authors of books on the Relief Society and on Utah pioneer women.

As Church Historian, Brother Arrington provided guidance and leadership to historians in other ways. Again, referring to my earlier days, he helped me in my dissertation research. He also gave approved researchers easier access to sources in the Church Archives than had been given previously. I spent a half-year sabbatical researching material for my dissertation a few years after Leonard was appointed Church Historian, and his friendly policies to us gave me dream access to documents previously restricted or difficult to get. This proved very beneficial not only to my dissertation, but also later in my work on the Joseph Smith papers. While I worked on the JS Papers project in the Church Archives, I also used some of the material in my own files at home that I had photo-copied years before. Without these files from early pioneer journals, my work on the JS Papers project would have been hampered. I will briefly note that after I retired, the University of Utah's Marriott Library asked me to contribute my research and teaching files to the school's Special Collection Library, and I was pleased to do so. After being catalogued, they filled ninety archival boxes. However, because I felt that my copies of the research documents from the Church Archives were restricted, I did not include them in my gift to the University of Utah.

Let me add an experience that I had with Brother Arrington, who expressed his attitude about his work in the History Writing Division of the Church. In January 1976, a few days before I began writing my dissertation, I visited Leonard in his office in the east wing of the Church's then new high-rise Office Building. He told me he felt keenly that his calling as Church Historian was a spiritual calling, and despite all of the complaints about his work, the Spirit supported him and his writers in what they were doing. "If I didn't feel the Spirit was with us," he said, "I don't think it would be worth

it.” I loved him for this candid statement. Some of the writers who helped him, besides Assistant Church Historians Davis Bitton and James B. Allen, were Dean C. Jessee, Ronald W. Walker, William G. Hartley, Glen M. Leonard, Jill Mulvay Derr, Carol Cornwall Madsen, and others—all faithful Saints, as far as I knew them over the years. Yet, with the good that Brother Arrington and his writing staff accomplished, they were mistrusted by a few of the General Authorities with whom I spoke or heard speak about them, and also by a few of my peers at the Salt Lake Institute, as I stated above. I believe that if the Brethren had been fully united behind President Spencer W. Kimball, who seemed supportive of the New Mormon History, my colleagues would also have been united. But with an atmosphere of misgivings, problems sometimes arose.

ALEX: Can you give some examples.

MAX: Perhaps the most dramatic one was an issue about our director, Reed C. Durham. Although it did not pertain directly to Leonard’s work, it reflected the spirit of the times. Dr. Durham was elected president of the Mormon History Association in 1973, and at the conference banquet held at Nauvoo, Illinois, the following year, he delivered his presidential address. It was titled “Is there no Help for the Widow’s Son,” a talk about Joseph Smith and Masonry. It was an intriguing paper, which I heard with my son Bradford, who was with me at the conference just before his mission. After the talk that evening, Brad and I discussed it late into the night, and I answered some of his questions. The next morning, near the end of the Sunday devotional hour after some had already left the conference to return home, time was provided for those who wanted to stand to express sentiments of faith or comments of brotherhood. At the end, my son surprisingly stood and expressed his appreciation for Reed Durham regarding his talk the night before. He thanked him for his knowledge and intelligence, while still believing in Joseph Smith as a Prophet. It was now clear to me that my son had been strengthened by Reed’s address and also by our late-hour conversation. Whether his comments influenced Reed, I don’t know, but after Bradford sat down, Reed instantly stood and bore his testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith, which he had not done the night before in his academic paper. It was a fitting end to the conference. However, upon returning home, we soon heard rumors that some at Ricks College and at BYU who had attended the conference didn’t approve of Durham’s address. Consequently, Brother Durham was soon interviewed by President Spencer W. Kimball in Salt Lake City. Although he remained perfectly silent with his colleagues about the interview and its repercussions, we noticed that Reed never again taught LDS Church history. What an unfortunate loss to the students. He did, however, continue to serve as director of the Institute.

Brother Joe Christensen helped me avoid a similar problem. A historian who wanted to publish a book on plural marriage using different authors for the chapters asked me if I would write the Kirtland chapter in the book. I expected no problem because in my thesis I had dealt with the Fanny Alger and Joseph Smith “marriage” in Kirtland. Moreover, a few years earlier, I had written a chapter on Kirtland in a Church history book for the RLDS Church’s Graceland College, at Lamoni, Iowa. An administrator at the school had asked Leonard Arrington to select several historians from our Church to help their historians write the volume. So I wrote the chapter on the Kirtland period of the Church and gave it an appropriate Utah Mormon perspective. The book was published under the title *The Restoration Movement* and used in the school’s religion classes at Graceland. Since my writing the chapter had created no complaint from Seminaries and Institutes, and I expected none, I naturally anticipated there would be no problem writing the Kirtland chapter on plural marriage. However, Joe J. Christensen, then administrator of the Church’s Seminaries and Institutes, came to my office and said, “If I were you, Max, I wouldn’t write that chapter.” I appreciated his council and understood the implications, so I didn’t write it. He was obviously trying to help me keep my slate clean, and I thanked him.

ALEX: Interesting, but did you ever have problems or complaints come your way?

MAX: Yes, I did. There were never any problems from my teachings in the classroom, or otherwise with my students. I always tried to teach the truth in a context of faith in whatever subject I taught, and to do the same in any public address I gave. I am a conservative, theologically, and a moderate to progressive in reporting history. However, a complaint was filed against me after a fireside talk I gave to an Orem high priests group. I apparently spoke on history in a way that upset a high priest who had been a former BYU librarian working in Salt Lake City. Consequently, I was asked by one of my downtown supervisors, who firmly reprimanded me, to report to President Spencer W. Kimball, which shocked me. Besides, I was embarrassed that the President of the Church had to spend time on what I thought, at worst, was a trivial matter, and I was apprehensive of the consequences. When I arrived at President Kimball’s office, his secretary, Arthur Haycock, interviewed me about the talk. Representing some of the material I had used, I referred to a quote that I had taken from Brother Haycock’s own recent address at the Institute; simply ignoring it, he wanted me to agree that I would not give the talk again, and then I could go. I agreed. He was kind. He gave some good advice, and that was the end of the matter.

Another complaint, one more serious, resulted from an interview by a history major at the University of Utah. The student, an honors student and a

returned missionary, was writing a senior paper on the New Mormon History and its historians. To help his paper, he interviewed Reed Durham, Calvin Rudd, and myself at the Institute. I responded to many questions the student posed to help him, and particularly to one about an address given by President Ezra Taft Benson, President of the Twelve, against Dr. Arrington and his team in the Historical Department. President Benson gave the talk in the Assembly Hall for seminary and institute teachers in the fall of 1976 at our annual "Night With a General Authority." The address was given about a month after the book *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* was published, which had been written by Arrington's two assistants, James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard. The book was to be our standard one volume history of the Church. Our director at the Institute had recently placed the book on our shelves for sale to our students, and our Church history teachers had begun to promote it, including me. The authors intended the book to be an informative, faith-promoting work for Latter-day Saint readers. President Benson, however, objected to some of its contents. (Later, a confirmed rumor said that his male secretary had read it and fed his own objections to President Benson.) At the meeting, President Benson articulated his protests with considerable feeling. James Allen later said that President Spencer W. Kimball read it and liked it, as did Wendell J. Ashton, president of Deseret Book, its publisher. I suggested to the senior student that perhaps many of the teachers in the audience were new or young and were not aware of the specific book, or of the historians the speaker was talking about, because he neither identified the book by name nor its authors. I suggested, too, that many in the audience may have thought the speaker was talking in the abstract against liberal historians generally; or to put it more directly, I said that many in the audience did not know specifically what he was talking about. Of course, many clearly did. My son Kevin, who had recently returned from his mission to France, and who had accompanied me that night, whispered to me after the address, "Dad, now what are you going to do?" He understood the significance of the address in my approval of the book and in my finding no fault, even in the specific examples to which the speaker had objected. Possibly the speaker was unfamiliar with certain realities of the early American culture referred to in the book.

The following morning, the book was removed from our institute's book shelves and from those at Deseret Book. After the student finished his senior paper, unfortunately it got into the hands of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, anti-Mormon publishers, who printed it. When the members of the Church Board of Education (that is, the First Presidency and Twelve) read the Tanner publication, as Brother Christensen told me they had, my job was on the line. Eventually, to resolve the issue and to get me away from the fish bowl of the Salt Lake Institute, I was offered a position to teach at BYU. This was a great

relief, but again, my wife did not want to move, so Brother Christensen as administrator suggested that a letter of apology from me to the Brethren might suffice, which it did. I knew that Joe Christensen had to work out such problems as best he could while not losing the trust of the Brethren, because the seminaries and institutes of the Church were highly regarded by the Church leaders and were valuable to the Church's growth. Consequently, it was important not to harm their reputation, or, if necessary, remove those who might be seen to do harm. Although President Benson took the position that the book should never be reprinted, it soon returned to the shelves of Deseret Book and was later reprinted, unedited, during his own later administration. The authors told me that they were always willing to make any changes that Elder Benson desired, but he never requested any.

Was this all just a tempest in a tea-pot? Nevertheless, we learned in 1982 that without ceremony Leonard Arrington had been released as Church Historian. We knew that some of my colleagues felt that they had won the contest against him.

ALEX: Would you like to talk about any other issues?

MAX: Yes, briefly. Following an MHA convention held at Snowbird, I was asked some questions by a reporter from *Christianity Today*, a weekly Protestant news magazine. When the magazine appeared on store shelves, my brief remarks upset some of the Quorum of the Twelve (on the Board of Education), and I was reprimanded by a downtown supervisor, not so much for what I'd said, but that I had said anything. I was told that such interviews should be left to the Church's Public Relations Department. This I understood and agreed to, but it had already created some consternation. But what's more important, however, was an issue with one of my faithful earliest colleagues at the institute. He was a very popular and thoughtful teacher who was taken to task for accepting an invitation to read a paper at Sunstone Symposium, which, like MHA at that time, was not held in the favor of some of our leaders; and I personally kept it at a distance. The teacher was told by the central office that he shouldn't give the paper, which counsel he accepted. However, he wanted to give the inviting host an explanation why he couldn't do it, but the supervisor said he could not give the reason. From this difficulty, the teacher's new contract transferred him away from Salt Lake, a transfer he could not accept; and regrettably, he left the system and struggled to build a new career for himself.

ALEX: Talk for a few moments about some of the classes you taught and some of your most enjoyable experiences at the institute.

MAX: I very much enjoyed teaching the Doctrine and Covenants and LDS Church history, but I enjoyed the D&C the most because I could present the doctrine in the context of its history. I also enjoyed teaching the Pearl of

Great Price because of its variety of themes, and of course I enjoyed teaching Christian history. In fact, for the last five years of my teaching at the institute, I largely taught Christian history, as I did during my ten years afterwards as a volunteer. As a teacher, I was not a heavy drawer of students, but I did my job to maintain a sufficient enrollment to avoid being transferred to the central office to write curriculum, which few of us wanted to do. Remember, all student attendance at the Institute was strictly voluntary. Some teachers like Reed Durham, John Madsen, Dee Hadley, and later David A. Christensen and S. Michael Wilcox and a few others, usually crowded their rooms with students. We liked this because it spoke well of our institute's popularity. For me, while my class sizes were satisfactory, the best compliments I received were from older students, who apparently liked my approach. A number of the townspeople who attended our classes, before policy excluded them, also seemed to approve of my teaching. This was particularly true with my secretary, an older woman who took my Christian history class, and then after repeating the course, said: "The best kept secret at the Institute is Brother Parkin's Christian history class." Another accolade came during a summer training course on Church history which I taught for seminary and institute teachers. The teachers ended our last meeting with a standing ovation. I was touched and even a bit overwhelmed by the gesture. On the other hand, one of my greatest embarrassments was when I substituted for Elder Marion D. Hanks. Elders Hanks, Hartman Rector Jr., A. Theodore Tuttle, and briefly Bruce McConkie taught at the institute during my early years there. When they were on assignment away from the city, we would teach their classes. They usually taught in the larger classrooms or in the chapel because of the size of their audience. One night as I began to speak at the podium and explained that Elder Hanks was out of town, some of the audience walked out. Nevertheless, when I taught a lesson, I tried to teach with the Spirit and with conviction—that is, teach with a tone that I believed what I was teaching, because I did.

As for pleasant experiences, I very much enjoyed our occasional fire-sides at the institute Sunday evenings. Infrequently they were in the Huntsman Center on campus, but usually they were in our own institute chapel. The faculty sat on the stand behind our institute director, stake priesthood leader, student leaders, and the guest speaker. Our speakers included Elders Paul H. Dunn, Boyd K. Packer, occasionally the university president, and others, with refreshments afterwards. I was proud to be associated with the Salt Lake Institute of Religion and enjoyed those evenings immensely.

ALEX: What were your responsibilities at the institute?

MAX: Each faculty member had various and many assignments over the years. Some duties that I performed included directing the medical seminars for our students at the university's school of medicine. Another one was ad-

ministering the extra faculty for our evening classes, which we did for a few years (otherwise the regular faculty taught those classes). Still another assignment, a big one, was organizing the Friday noon devotionals for several years. This entailed selecting weekly speakers, advertising the devotionals, conducting, and arranging for luncheons for our faculty and guests, afterwards. At first we had access to the General Authorities, but when that ended, I resorted to inviting prominent political and business leaders. Some of these included U.S. Senator Robert F. Bennett, Utah Governor Norm Bangerter, U.S. Congressman Gunn McKay, Utah Supreme Court Justice Dallin H. Oaks (before his call to the Twelve), and many others. Among the businessmen I invited were Larry H. Miller, about the time he bought the JAZZ NBA basketball team. He brought his young family with him to hear him speak. Another interesting but unlikely speaker was Monsignor Thomas Meersman, Roman Catholic priest at the Cathedral of the Madeleine and Father Confessor of Gary Gilmore. I knew Reverend Meersman, a prominent Sunday morning speaker on KSL Radio, who also spoke twice in my Christian denominations classes, so I asked him to speak at our devotional. He gave a fine sermon, calling for the students to follow the Brethren. He said he knew several of the General Authorities personally and met with them periodically; he instructed the audience to obey their leaders and keep the commandments they taught. Also, since he had been a prisoner of war in Germany as a young soldier, he spoke of some spiritual experiences he had had during his life as a prisoner. I might say that a couple of my colleagues (the same ones who disapproved of Leonard Arlington and who were also disciples of the sentiments about the Catholics expressed in the first edition of Elder McConkie's *Mormon Doctrine*) did not approve of his speaking at the devotional, and they hinted so to me accordingly. Father Meersman may be the only Catholic priest or clergyman of any denomination to have spoken at a devotional in the history of the Salt Lake Institute, but I thought his message was appropriate for our students, and encouraging.

ALEX: Talk for a moment about some of the callings you've had in the Church and which callings have you enjoyed the most.

MAX: I've always been active in the Church, and the Church has always meant everything to me. I was ordained a seventy by Elder Marion D. Hanks in Pocatello in my late twenties, and I was set apart as one of the presidents of the seventy in my South Cottonwood Stake in Salt Lake by Elder S. Dilworth Young of the First Council of the Seventy. As a seventy, I served on two stake missions and in the mission presidency, and I did much to support the missionary effort. I also served as superintendent of my ward Sunday School and later as president of the Young Men. I served on the high council under six stake presidents, four in my home stake and two at the University Stake. One of the student stake presidents was T. H. Bell, former U.S. Secretary of Educa-

tion in President Reagan's administration. A fellow high counselor that served with me in my home stake was Ben B. Banks, who later became a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy. Previously, when Brother Banks was serving as president of the South Cottonwood Stake, he called me to be bishop of our stake's singles ward. We had a robust and large singles ward of 350 young people. It was a wonderful ward, and I had superb counselors to help make it a successful experience.

ALEX: Have you had any teaching opportunities in the Church? You would think that someone with your teaching background would have plenty of opportunities to be instructing in the Church.

MAX: I have taught the Gospel Doctrine class from time to time. But earlier, I taught our ward's seventy's group for several years until I was ordained a high priest. Both President Banks and his predecessor, President C. Shirley Reynolds, father and grandfather of the BYU football family with that last name, called me to teach our respective high councils once a month on subjects of my choice. I did for several years. So I did some teaching. I might mention that Dean C. Jessee has been a long-term Gospel Doctrine teacher in our ward.

ALEX: You like to travel. Tell us some of your experiences.

MAX: When I was young, I did very little traveling, but I developed an early interest in geography. As a boy, I read a number of books on travel, including Richard Halliburton's *Book of Marvels* about foreign lands, and books on the seven wonders of the world. Also, using colored pencils, I drew a portfolio of maps of countries like Spain, England, and others for my own delight; and I drew a large world map, which my father liked, which filled a wall in my bedroom. Thus, I became interested in many peoples and places. My travel interest, of course, was first expressed by my trip to Alaska and my mission to Hawaii, both of which at the time were territories of the United States. Other opportunities followed. In 1974, I became a BYU Travel Study director for a few years, a position that took me to England, Greece, and Israel with my son Kevin (eventually visiting Jerusalem several times), and to many U.S. and LDS historical sites. Yvonne and I usually took members of our family with us when we visited places such as Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, and Salem and Plymouth, Massachusetts, and Church history sites. We traveled to Egypt, Morocco, Rome, and other Mediterranean places. Yvonne and I went to many wonderful American and foreign cities to attend MHA conferences, such as Canandaigua, New York (when Dean Jessee was MHA president), Honolulu, Hawaii; Montreal, Canada; Oxford, Liverpool, and London, England; Cardiff, Wales; Copenhagen, Denmark; and Oslo and Bergen, Norway, where Yvonne's father was born. On one MHA trip, Dean and June Jessee and I ate curry in an Indian Restaurant in Oslo, Norway; and Dean and I enjoyed



Max H. and Yvonne H. Parkin family, September, 1984. Front: Max and Yvonne. Back (l-r): Julie, Kevin, Bradford, Steven, and Christine.

a hamburger in what was at the time Russia's only McDonald's restaurant, located on the boulevard just north of Red Square in Moscow. I traveled with my son Steven to Hong Kong and Beijing, China, and with Yvonne to Tahiti, where Steven started his mission to the Maoris. I also had an informataive trip with BYU's John Sorenson to Guatemala. Finally, Yvonne and I took a multi-nation tour of Europe with others, ending in Romania, where we associated with a Latter-day Saint convert trying to be reconciled with her Greek Orthodox family in a village in the Carpathian Alps. We had a wonderful dinner with her Romanian family and peasant neighbors in their medieval farming village. While exchanging songs from each other's country and eating their different food, we hugged and shed tears of reconciliation with her previously estranged father. It was one of the fine spiritual experiences of our lives.

Another highlight journey occurred when Bill and DeAnn Sadleir organized Sea Trek in 2001. John Peterson of the Salt Lake Institute, one of Sea Trek's promoters and one of our more insightful Church history teachers, invited me to participate. Sea Trek was a sesquicentennial celebration of Latter-day Saint immigration from Scandinavia to Zion, symbolizing the historic earlier gathering by sea. We traveled in eight European tall sailing ships to ports in Denmark, Norway, Germany, and England. Before leaving, my stake president blessed me to serve as president of the Dutch sailing ves-

sel *Swan*, where I directed the branch and lectured daily on board about early Mormon immigration to America. Many early Saints began their voyages in various ports and sailed to Hull, England, then overland to Liverpool, England, and then across the Atlantic to Zion. Sea Trek tried to repeat and reenact those voyages. I organized the ship into an ecclesiastical branch and held LDS Church services on Sundays for the passengers and crew. The vessels sailed in formation on their two-week journey originating in the port of Esbjerg, Denmark, to the ports of Copenhagen, Oslo, Hamburg, Hull, Liverpool, and Portsmouth. From Portsmouth, England, the largest ship sailed across the Atlantic to New York City. Meanwhile, because of my seasick propensities, I tried to be well prepared, but the *Swan* became separated early from the other ships because of a terrible storm in the North Sea. We were en route to Copenhagen, Denmark, our first port, where preparations were being made for a glorious state reception. After a few days of the storm, the ship's captain suggested that we bypass Copenhagen and sail to Goteborg, Sweden, a closer port, to wait out the storm, which would mean that we would miss the group celebration enjoyed by the other tall ships as they ceremonially arrived at Copenhagen. I took a vote of my very sick passengers. The vote was unanimous in favor of the closer port. I remember one passenger, Elder Ronald A. Rasband, a member of the First Quorum of Seventy, slowly raising his hand from his sick bed in the ship's lounge to vote to go to Goteborg. Both of my sons served as counselors in our ship's branch. Steven participated on the first half of the journey during the storm, and Bradford sailed on the second half, finishing in Portsmouth, England. At the completion of Sea Trek, we did some sight-seeing in England. Bradford and I drove to Plymouth, where we located the inn where William Bradford and other *Mayflower* Pilgrims spent their last night in England in 1620 before they crossed the Atlantic to America. Elder John Hart and Sister Shawna Hart, of my South Cottonwood ward, who were serving as information missionaries in Hull, England, helped there with Sea Trek activities for the Church. Elder Hart ended his mission and sailed across the Atlantic in Sea Trek's largest tall ship on its last segment to New York City, to be greeted, not with ceremony as expected, but with the smoldering remains of the World Trade Center a few days after 9/11. Brother Hart is now serving as my first counselor in our high priests group in our South Cottonwood ward. I make reference to the above journeys because they so well helped fulfill my boyhood travel dreams.

ALEX: When did you retire?

MAX: I retired in 1995 at age sixty-five. Some of my colleagues retired earlier, which I never understood, because I loved to teach the students. After I retired, as mentioned earlier, I continued for more than a decade as a volunteer teacher at the institute.

ALEX: Following your official retirement from CES, you were asked to be a volume editor for the Joseph Smith Papers Project. How did that happen?

MAX: Yes, but first a word that led up to it. When I retired from full-time teaching, I talked with Yvonne about what I would do with my time. We agreed that I should take a course or two in water coloring and in golf and fill my free time with these activities. This, and teaching as a volunteer at the institute, however, did not fully occupy me, so I applied to be a service missionary at the LDS Church History Museum. I was put to work researching early Mormon land records in Kirtland to assist in the restoration of old Mormon Kirkland, a project underway by the Church. I spent a year-and-a-half working on this Kirtland research project while associating at the museum with Dr. Mark L. Staker, the lead Church anthropologist on the Kirtland restoration project. He was also working on his book about the early Saints at Kirkland (*Hearken O Ye People: The Historical Setting of Joseph Smith's Ohio Revelations*, 2009).

In May 2003, President Gordon B. Hinckley dedicated the restored Mormon Kirtland village in Ohio just before the MHA annual meeting held there the following week. I attended the dedication in the crowded Kirtland LDS



Max H. Parkin and Milton V. Backman Jr., at the Kirtland LDS meetinghouse following the dedication of “restored” Mormon Kirtland by LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, Kirtland, Ohio, May 23, 2003.

chapel and visited with Milt Bachman, my old mentor there on a mission, who was honored for his work on Kirtland the following week during an inspiring MHA session held in the Kirtland Temple, where he also addressed the packed temple audience as guests of the Community of Christ church.

Meanwhile, in August 2000, while on my Kirtland research mission in Salt Lake, Richard L. Bushman invited me to join him, Dean Jessee, and others to work on the Joseph Smith Papers project. Besides me, they asked Robert J. Woodford, also of the Salt Lake Institute, to help, but they soon teamed me with you [Alex Baugh]. Bushman and Jessee would serve as senior editors of the project, and you and I would serve as historians and volume editors on our part of the project. Ron Esplin succeeded Leonard Arlington as director of the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute of Latter-day Saint History at BYU, the institutional custodian of the Joseph Smith Papers project, and Dr. Esplin would serve as the Papers' managing director. In a few months, Jenny Lund of the Church History Museum released me from my mission to allow me more time in my new assignment. (Any time I had available for painting or golf quickly ended.) A year later, President Gordon B. Hinckley officially authorized the project under the Church Historical Department. Dean C. Jessee, Leonard J. Arlington, and now President Hinckley are the significant action heroes that made possible the miracle of what the Joseph Smith Papers project is fully becoming. The underwriting assistance to the project provided by Larry H. Miller is also very important. After so many years of struggle, Dean Jessee's long-held dream was to be realized. Former resistance to this new front in writing Mormon history seemed to fade in the face of President Hinckley's support and the dedication in 2009 of the new Church History Library in Salt Lake City, the project's new home.

The Joseph Smith Papers project is divided into several different groups—journals, revelations, histories, documents, and legal papers. When you, Alex, and I were paired, we were given the task of co-editing documents for volumes 3 and 4 (1834–1838) of the document series, and we have worked together for several years on the project. Our volumes now await final editing and eventual publication. And further, the Joseph Smith Papers documentary series produced by KJZZ-TV (owned by the Larry Miller Group) has given the project a popular television forum for programs about Joseph Smith's history. Numerous scholars have participated in the filming of the documentaries—you and I, along with many of our colleagues, such as Ron Esplin, Ron Barney, Richard Anderson, Gordon Madsen, and a host of others. Glenn Rawson is the narrator. As several volumes of the papers now have been published, interest continues. This says a lot about the vision and hope held by Dean Jessee and Leonard Arlington, which are now being realized!

ALEX: Talk to me about the book *Sacred Places Volume 4: Missouri*, which you worked on with LaMar C. Berrett.

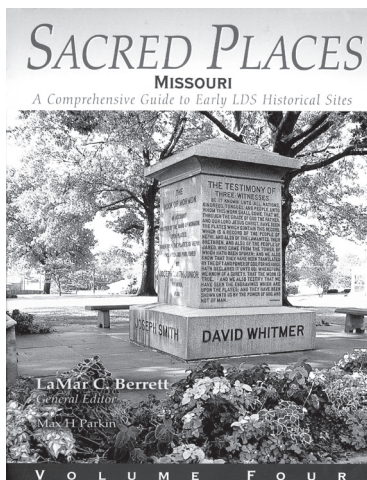
MAX: I spent several years with LaMar Berrett writing that book. It is one volume of LaMar's six-volume work on the sites and histories of early Mormon places. Our volume on Missouri is more than just a book on sites. It treats the history of the sites based on original research. Of the book's six hundred pages, I did the first half—the Lamanite Mission in Wyandotte County, Kansas; and Jackson, Clay, and Lafayette Counties, Missouri. LaMar did the second half—Mormon sites in Caldwell and Daviess Counties, Dewitt, and most of the Zion's Camp trail in Missouri. He coordinated the volume, but we each did our half of the book separately.

ALEX: I have to say, Max, that I felt LaMar could have given you a little more credit for the volume. As a co-authored, co-produced work, it is not entirely clear or evident to the reader that this is the case. I do not think you received the credit you deserved. Although he was the general editor of the six-volume series, I believe you should be listed as the co-author of the Missouri volume.

MAX: Well, thank you. We both made contributions to the volume and were, as you say, its co-authors. Perhaps it was the way Deseret Book, our publisher, presented the names on the cover and on the title page that leads to your concern. The wording format that we approved is different from what appears there now.

ALEX: What do you feel is your most important contribution to the field of Mormon history?

MAX: I have not been a major player in the writing of Mormon history because I have principally been a teacher, but I do respect those among my peers who have contributed to our historical literature in helping us better understand our great heritage. Of these writers, I note particularly Dean Jessee and his works. Others of my associates who wrote considerably include Ron Walker, who used to teach at the Salt Lake Institute and is one of our best writers. Other writers include Larry Porter, Ken Godfrey, Leland Gentry, Reed Durham, Lyndon Cook, Howard Searle, Gilbert Scharffs, Ed Brandt, Kent



Sacred Places, Volume 4: Missouri (Deseret Book, 2004), co-authored by LaMar C. Berrett and Max H. Parkin.

Dunford, John Peterson, and Robert Woodford. These writers all contributed to our historical or scriptural literature and were among the colleagues with whom I taught or had close academic roots. I have tried to do my part also. I have written several articles in professional journals, in books, in Church magazines, and in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. I also presented papers at BYU's Sperry Symposium and MHA conferences.

To answer your question about the most significant thing I have done is to name an article in *BYU Studies* on the United Firm. The article, "Joseph Smith and the United Firm: The Growth and Decline of the Church's First Master Plan of Business and Finance, Ohio and Missouri, 1832–1834" (*BYU Studies* 46, no. 3, 2007) and its ideas, I hope, will have an influence. Knowledge of the United Firm in Mormon history is not new with this article. But the marked differences which I make between that institution directed by the Prophet Joseph Smith which he named the United Firm, with that of the "fictitious" title and nonexistent United Order, is more than just a word. (It was Orson Pratt who used the word "fictitious.") The purpose of the United Firm is suggested in the title above. At a Joseph Smith Papers editors' meeting at Larry Miller's house in Salt Lake in 2008, Jack Welch, editor of *BYU Studies*, recommended the article to Larry Miller as an appropriate read for a person interested in Joseph Smith's early financial enterprises. At any rate, I would be pleased if it helps Mormon historians better understand that aspect of our past.

ALEX: Well, for one, I certainly do! The article grew out of your work on the Joseph Smith Papers Project. We needed some help with the D&C section 104 and an explanation of the revelation in terms of the context of the times. Your work on that, Max, is superb. It enlightened me. I'm glad you wrote it. In my opinion it is a landmark piece.

MAX: Thank you, Alex. I appreciate your kind words.

ALEX: If you could do something over again, if you could live life one more time, what would you do over? Any regrets? Overall, how do you feel about your life and the course it has taken?

MAX: That's a marvelous question, one that most thinking folks ask themselves. While there is always room for improvement, I have no serious regrets. I feel good about both my service in the Church and in the Church Educational System, and also the way I have tried to help my children appreciate their LDS heritage. But I do wish that I had done better in two academic areas. In my graduate program I studied biblical Hebrew and Greek. Proficiency tests only required translation skill for the languages, not conversational skills. I was able to use lexicons for both Greek and Hebrew languages successfully as an aid in my teaching the Old and New Testament. However, I always regretted not being able to speak those dead languages or to read them better. But

the demands of life, sufficient energy, and inadequate native ability interfered. My other regret was in writing—increasing its quality and its quantity.

ALEX: Any other final observations or comments?

MAX: I want to say once again that I am grateful to my wife, Yvonne, because if it had not been for her being baptized by West Belnap and the events of those early years, I probably would not have had a career in Church education with all of its blessings. I believe that heaven's wisdom and knowledge has indeed flown unto me from its portals, as the patriarch said. Something seemed to have been helping me along the way at important turning points and moved me through the journey I took in Church education. It has proven to be a good journey for Yvonne and me. Moreover, in traveling that path I have learned some essential things about our divine Church and about myself. Most significantly, I have learned that the most important things in life are values and relationships—that is, Godly values and noble relationships. These are supreme.

ALEX: No doubt you had key turning points in your life to help you achieve this.

MAX: Yes, those and subsequent developments that sprang from them have been a blessing.

ALEX: Thank you.