

*“I SUSTAIN HIM AS A PROPHET,
I LOVE HIM AS AN
AFFECTIONATE FATHER”*

AN INTERVIEW WITH EDWARD L. KIMBALL

In October 1978, Dialogue interviewed Edward L. Kimball, youngest son of President Spencer W. Kimball and co-author of the popular biography Spencer W. Kimball. Dr. Kimball is a law professor at Brigham Young University.

Dialogue: The biography of President Spencer W. Kimball by you and Andrew Kimball, published October, 1977, has already sold nearly one hundred fifty thousand copies. That has to be a runaway best seller in Mormon circles! Why is that, do you think?

Kimball: Because of its subject. Any book about President Kimball would sell well. So many members of the Church are eager to learn more about the man they accept as God’s special representative that they might buy even a bad book. But I think a second factor is the book’s readability. One young man, among the first to comment on it, said, “I read your book. And, you know, it was *interesting*.” His surprised tone said a lot about his expectations.

The book has had very warm reviews and excellent word-of-mouth advertising. It is already in its tenth printing; I will be interested to see how long sales hold up. I keep thinking we must be near the saturation point, but there is no slackening yet.

Dialogue: Have the reviewers expressed any reservation?

Kimball: James Allen, who published the first substantial review in *BYU Today*, thought the narrative style not particularly strong and pointed out the absence of issue analysis. Eugene Campbell, in *Sunstone*, felt we should have tried to explore Dad's motives and feelings more. Eugene England and Charles Tate, in *BYU Studies*, considered the organization a bit loose (especially in one chapter), the writing style occasionally flawed, the sources not varied enough, and the theme-versus-chronology challenge (common to biography) not always well resolved. But these criticisms appear almost as asides. The reviewers could hardly have been more kind. Of course they, along with a few others writing briefer reviews, have all been church members, prepared to give us the benefit of the doubt and pleased to see a church leader biography which was so candid. I would be interested to know how an outside reviewer would react.

One of my cousins praised the book as a fine family history, but commented, "Of course, it is not a biography." I suppose he would demand of a biography that it be analytical and that it have footnotes. The book is not analytical, but it was because we deliberately chose to let incident and journal entry tell their own story without interpretation. As for footnotes, while I pepper my professional work with footnotes, they seemed uncalled for here. The sources are almost all journal entries, personal letters, and interviews, none of which are presently accessible to other researchers, so it did not seem worthwhile to weigh down the book with citations.

Dialogue: Have you heard other criticisms?

Kimball: The only other real criticism has been from some relatives of people shown unfavorably in the book. We tried to avoid using names of people whose families might be embarrassed, but sometimes that could not be avoided. Richard R. Lyman's descendants were understandably disturbed by references to his problems and they felt that, in light of his posthumous restoration of blessings, the story as told was incomplete. Matthias Cowley's family correctly pointed out that the book implied his excommunication; whereas he had only been disfellowshipped and after some years had returned to full fellowship and to church service. Active church members named LeBaron regretted the identification of apostate LeBarons because some young people of that name have problems with stigmatization and self-concept. A number of women readers thought my mother's place in the book should have been larger. As to that, I can only say that we consciously tried to show how important she was all along and to reflect her presence and participation; but it was, after all, a book about Dad and (at least after he became an apostle) largely about his church activities. In that she shared less directly, though most importantly in her supporting role.

Dad criticized the fact that the other General Authorities hardly appear in the book except as background figures. One could get the mistaken impression that Spencer Kimball was moving the Church and its programs forward singlehandedly and that he was the only hard-working, dedicated church leader. In an earlier draft we did have more about other General Authorities, but that got squeezed out as we tried to tighten the structure. In the book he does appear a lot on center stage, alone, without wife, children, or co-workers.

Besides these criticisms there were a few typographical errors and a half-dozen minor factual mistakes. These have been corrected in later printings. The biggest change in later printings is the rewriting of the paragraph on the Third Convention (p. 231). That was written on the best information we had at the time, but I have since discovered at BYU Lamond Tullis' fascinating unpublished manuscript on the Third Convention which clarified the facts for us.

Dialogue: When did you begin the book, and why?

Kimball: Andrew and I conceived the idea independently and then joined forces. He began by collecting anecdotes from people who had known Dad. I began by taping interviews with my parents. At first my goal was just to preserve family history and to gather information about family events before my time. Publishing a book, beyond one privately printed for the family, was only a remote possibility. But in 1973 Andrew and I concluded that as long as we were going to write a book we might as well try to reach a wider audience. We knew a large group of people in the Church had been touched directly by Dad. And his position as president of the Quorum of the Twelve gave him the standing which added to the intrinsic interest his life held. In addition, we thought of it as a kind of memorial to him, since we didn't really expect to have it done until sometime after his death. So it was a personal project, not a commercial one. We would have done it even if there had been no profit in it. Actually, publishers said that biography does not sell well in the Church and that another book of his sermons like *Faith Precedes the Miracle* would be much better from a commercial standpoint.

We began to gather information and to do some preliminary writing. Then, when President Lee died in the last days of 1973, the picture suddenly changed. We knew that more people would immediately be interested in what we had to say. We kept on, now firmly committed to publication, but still part-time. Andrew was working on his master's degree in English at BYU, and I had my hands full teaching law. Finally in 1977, Andrew and I decided that the only way to finish the book in a reasonable time was for us to put nearly everything else aside for a while. We worked essentially full-time during that spring and summer; we were still working on the last chapter when the first chapters were in galleys.

Dialogue: What were your main sources?

Kimball: We had interviews or letters from dozens of people who had known Dad—schoolmates; neighbors and friends from the Arizona years; and missionaries, stake presidents and church members who had dealt with him. Then we had interviews with family members and with my parents themselves. We had correspondence, scrapbooks, photo albums and—best of all—we had journals. There were the journals of his parents, Andrew and Olive Kimball, and some useful though fragmentary journals from the childhood and Arizona years of both my parents. Beginning with 1943, we had a marvelous set of daily journal entries from Dad in thirty-three large ring binders; recounting, often in great detail, his activities and feelings during the whole period of his apostleship. I find it amazing

that such a busy man would take the time to write so extensively. It was as though he had a compulsion to record the events of his life from 1943 to 1974. Since the beginning of 1974, with the pressures of his calling, his journals have been less inclusive, but he still keeps them as best he can.

Dialogue: What are the individual journal entries like?

Kimball: They vary from a few lines to several pages of single spaced typescript. They tend to be factual, not introspective, but in the great volume of Dad's journals there are enough glimpses of feelings to give a pretty good idea of what is going on inside him. Sometimes he seems aware that others will read it: one note is addressed "to my readers" (p. 269), but at other times he seems quite unselfconscious. He doesn't seem to take much notice of the national scene—war and peace, boom and recession go on without explicit attention; they can appear as they affect the lives of people he is counseling, but they play little direct part in his life story. His calling is dominant, his family important but subordinate, and everything else more or less incidental.

As a reader of his journals, I appreciated the occasional recounting of all the events of a day in some detail, reminding me of the plain backdrop against which more dramatic scenes were played. His recording of dialogue adds to the liveliness of some incidents. His noting of personal reactions to events makes some entries especially interesting and helpful.

The sheer volume of his journals is intimidating, with the thirty-five years since his call taking up nine feet of shelf space in those large black binders. Most of what he has written is of no general interest, but with patience one can sift out the telling incidents. What interests one reader is not always what interests another, so a wide-ranging journal writer offers raw material for many kinds of readers. I would much rather work through a great volume for what I want than to have to hunt for and piece together scraps, and to speculate about what goes in the blank places.

Dialogue: Between the two authors, who wrote which parts of the book?

Kimball: That is almost impossible to remember. Our method was for each to write different segments, leapfrogging through the materials. Then the rough drafts were passed back and forth for revision—often for complete overhaul. Some parts went through many drafts. I don't remember having any important disagreements. We recognized that our joint product would be better because of our distinctive contributions. Andrew writes more colorfully, and I think I write more precisely. What you read is a blend of our styles. I am happy to call our relative contributions 50-50 and I believe he would agree.

Dialogue: Was your father reluctant to have the book published while he was alive?

Kimball: To my surprise, once the decision to publish had been made, he was

eager to see it published during his lifetime. I'm sure it was gratifying to have a biography published and I think he wanted to be around to deal with questions that might arise because of it; but the principal reason was his feeling that after he was gone, the book would be worth much less.

Since for most of his adult life, his involvement in church work has greatly reduced the estate he might otherwise have left to his family, he saw the biography as a tangible asset. He is fully aware that much of the deference accorded him is attributable to the office he holds. He is known and loved personally by thousands, but he is revered without personal acquaintance by hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—who have a testimony that he is the prophet of the Lord. What they can learn about the Prophet is more important to them than what they can learn about Spencer Kimball, the man. When he is gone, their attention will understandably and rightly shift to the one who takes his place.

I know he has been pleased about the book's warm reception. I think he felt some of the same amazement he has felt with the distribution of more than half a million copies of *The Miracle of Forgiveness*.

Dialogue: Did he read the manuscript? What was his reaction?

Kimball: Since his eyes are not as good as they used to be, he did not read it himself, but Mother read it to him. He seemed to feel good about the manuscript. He made a few factual corrections, asked us to delete some names where identification would serve no purpose, and grumbled a bit at a few items; but he allowed himself to be persuaded that we should be permitted to tell the whole story—that there was no need for cosmetics.

Dialogue: What are some of the things your father questioned?

Kimball: One was the excommunication of Richard R. Lyman. That was obviously a matter of some sensitivity that could painfully aggravate old wounds for the Lyman family. But I argued that the tragic and traumatic event had to be recounted for a true picture of Dad's first days as an apostle. It was after all, a matter of general knowledge and public record. Aside from Dad's part in it, I also thought it held important lessons for readers: position is no sure protection against temptation, wrong even in high places, will surely be dealt with when discovered and through humble repentance there is a way back.

He also worried about the incident involving missionaries who were excommunicated for immorality in Australia and New Zealand. Though Dad would rather it be unmentioned, in my mind the importance of that kind of warning and reminder to missionaries far outweighed the discomfort of acknowledging that missionaries can fail. I hoped that missionaries reading those events would be reinforced in their determination to stay morally clean. The agony felt by the young men and their families and by the leaders who took action should give them pause. And Dad noted, "Any one of at least twenty Elders could have saved the terrible thing which was to happen had they been courageous enough to have reported it to the Mission President before the condition became acute."

Still another item—he questioned our recounting the unhappy course of

events at the time of Mary Connelly's death. Though this was essentially a private family matter, it illuminated Dad's character in a significant way and those who appeared in a bad light had no descendants who might be embarrassed by our account.

Perhaps the most important problem was that the manuscript referred to a son who was inactive in the Church. No subject could be more distressing to parents for whom the Church meant everything; yet to ignore that stress in their life would deprive the story of one of its important dimensions. It is too easy for people to assume, despite all the scriptural examples to the contrary, that faithfulness of the parents will somehow guarantee faithfulness of the children. Many parents berate themselves unfairly as failures. I felt that the example of these faithful, concerned parents who suffered, loved and persisted might give solace to others in similar position. I am grateful Dad did not use his veto to override our judgment in these matters.

Dialogue: Could the book have been published without change if your father were not alive?

Kimball: I can't tell. At least Dad's chance to react to the manuscript offered protection against some critics. I would hope that church members and the Church as an institution are secure enough to allow the full story to be told without chagrin. Even so, I was glad there were no skeletons to deal with, both because it confirmed my impressions of my father and because it avoided any strain on our integrity as biographers.

Dialogue: One of the inevitable consequences of being a church president is that myths spring up. Has that been true of your father?

Kimball: One of the values in publishing a biography is that it tends to reduce the amount of myth-making. It provides a standard against which stories and rumors can be checked. Obviously, we could not include all the true anecdotes in the book, but we did characterize Dad in what we think is a fair, rounded way. If any story does not square with the book (either because it is less worthy or more miraculous) it is probably not true. Recently a man told me that a non-Mormon waitress described how Dad came into her cafe for lunch and she, not knowing him, said, "Would you like some Pabst Blue Ribbon?" He is supposed to have replied, teasingly, "No. Bud!" before he declined. The man telling me the story was delighted that Dad was willing to engage in that kind of repartee and that he would have known the nickname for Budweiser beer. When I asked Dad about the incident, he said, "What's Bud?" End of myth.

I am told that a speaker quoted Dad as saying that the Lord had revealed to him that Viña del Mar, Chile, was the Land Bountiful. Dad has said that Viña del Mar fits his mental picture of the Land Bountiful and that it could be the right place, but that falls well short of revelation.

Word-of-mouth accounts about the confirmation of his call to the apostleship which he received on the mountain above Boulder, Colorado, tend to grow bigger than the already-wonderful truth. One version portrays the snake he encountered

as unnaturally large, clearly implying that it was a devilish presence. Another version speaks of the ministering of angels. As I understand it, it was a dream-like experience, but not what I would call the ministering of angels. It was remarkable enough, in the peace and assurance which it gave to him, to need no exaggeration.

In 1976 rumor said that, upon being asked to speak in a sacrament meeting, Dad had asked for a show of hands of those who had stored a year's supply of food. Seeing a relatively few hands, he supposedly said, "If you have not listened to what I said before, there is no point in my saying more now," and then sat down. That never happened. It would have been a telling sermon, but it is out of character for him.

Dialogue: In a recent article on Susa Young Gates' biography of her father, Donald Moorman comments, "We do not see Brigham Young in his private moods of faith and despair, in his passionate righteousness or in his obstinate wrong-headedness; such full-figured portraits are possible only where there is a bold, arresting, total and truthful commitment to the figure in question." Do you feel you have managed a fairer portrait of your father than Susa Young did of hers?

Kimball: I hope so. There is ample attention to his private doubts and discouragements. There are indications of his mistakes—for example his pessimistic assessment of Franklin D. Roosevelt's bank moratorium and his impression that George F. Richards would live to succeed to the presidency of the Church. His reaction to the Utah centennial issue of *The Pen* magazine seems to have been rather extreme. In his youth he was a good boy, but he engaged in some foolishness. There are not a lot of illustrations of such things, because we simply did not learn of more.

I suppose our closeness to him and our strong affection could have blinded us to flaws or tendencies someone else could see, but our closeness also allowed us to see things, good and bad, others would miss. Readers have to judge for themselves, but I feel comfortable about the faithfulness of the portrait. You would hardly expect us to paint warts we could not see!

One of his admiring nonmember cousins once said to Arthur Haycock, "You know, they ought to make Spencer a saint, like St. Peter." When Brother Haycock reported that to Dad, he responded seriously, "Nobody can make you a saint; you have to do that yourself." Another time Dad said to Brother Haycock, "I resent the time it takes to fill the gas tank or pay the light bill." These private asides illustrate what we said in the preface, that this is a man of rare virtue and consistency.

Dialogue: Little is said about personal idiosyncrasies. Are there none?

Kimball: Of course there are. Some of them appeared in the first draft; but when deletions were made, they were the first to go because they did not seem very important.

Clothing is not very important to Dad. If his clothes are neat, he doesn't worry much about style; that is Mother's job. She helps him choose clothes and she sees that his suits are cleaned and pressed. She has to nag him to go shopping



President Kimball with Andrew E., Jr. and Edward L. Kimball.

when his clothes become shabby. His choice used to be to wear old clothes around the house; but if someone came to the house to see him, he would quickly change clothes if he could. He took seriously the advice of President George Albert Smith—that he owed it to his position to maintain a certain dignity in dress.

He likes his shoes shined. As a child, I could go to his closet and shine all his shoes at a nickel a pair any time I needed a little money.

Neckties have been almost a passion. He received them as gifts and bought them for himself until he had many dozens. He gave many new ones away again. He hates to tie his own tie. He likes the triangular Windsor knot but usually gets someone else to tie it for him. Then he slips the necktie on and off over his head. The knot, repeatedly pulled tight, gets smaller and smaller and the narrow end longer and longer. At least one time, rather than retie it, he just snipped off the long end of the necktie. He had a penchant for red ties, but as he grew older and more conservative in his dress, he moved to darker hues.

Mother once bought him a lounging jacket on sale to wear around home. When someone called it a “smoking jacket,” he stopped wearing it. He often wore a sweater around the house, even after the elbows wore out.

The book mentions his lifelong frustration at being so short. He says he is like the Woolleys: he sits tall but he stands short. He jokingly blames his brothers for stunting his growth by making him carry five gallon cans of swill to the hogs. And he stored up annoyance at a fellow apostle who said of a newly-called stake president, “He is a good man, but he is such a little runt.” Once Dad wrote home about how much he enjoyed riding on the elevator with two midgets because he so rarely got the chance to look down on anyone. Being short never kept him from anything important though. Even as a high school basketball player, his quickness and good shooting made him the star of the team, though he was the shortest member by several inches. His being short seems unimportant to me—but then I’m taller.

Dialogue: If you were doing the book over again, what you would change?

Kimball: I might look for ways to make Mother’s role show through more. And I might try to get more people on stage, though I am not sure how we could do it without lengthening the book.

I wish it were possible to be more analytical about Dad and about his place in the Church and the world, to set him more in the context of the political changes, economic fluctuations, even the war and peace swirling about him—but that would be another book.

Dialogue: What were your father’s greatest trials?

Kimball: Perhaps the greatest was the tremendous frustration he felt—when he suffered heart attacks, when he lost his voice to throat cancer and when he was totally exhausted before his open heart surgery—frustration about his inability to fulfill his calling completely. He reflected in his journals that he would prefer to die than to occupy a chair no one else could fill while he lived and be unable to carry out all his duties.

Another trial was the physical strain of pushing always to his limits, trying to give 100 percent, even when suffering from fatigue or boils or other illnesses. I always worried that his health would break under the pressure, but except for those three times, his health has held up remarkably well.

He has struggled against a sense of inadequacy. In proper proportion we call it humility; to excess we talk of an inferiority complex. Because the feelings of inadequacy have not interfered with his effectiveness but have been a spur to try harder, I think we can rightly say that he is a humble man. In his journals, I find evidence of pride in his ability to work hard, in his loyalty and in the success of some programs on which he labored. At the same time, he treasured up little compliments as though they mattered. It seems there has been a constant war between "Yes, I am doing well and doing all that can be expected," on the one hand, and "But if I were stronger or more talented I could do the job as it deserves to be done," on the other.

He has felt keen disappointment that some for whom he had high hopes failed to match his own great commitment to the Church.

And Dad has missed his own parents sorely. His mother died when he was eleven, his father when he was twenty-nine. In his journal, over and over, even as an old man, he notes their birthdays and muses about whether they approve of his life.

Dialogue: You dedicate your book to your mother as "equal partner."

Kimball: Yes. Dad would never have been as successful without the wife he had. From the beginning she was his strongest supporter, encouraging him to reach out and accept challenges, reassuring him when he had self-doubts, shouldering a major part of the family responsibilities without complaint, enjoying friends and travel and fun with him, yet being self-sufficient enough to find her own means of development. She has been a voracious reader; she loves plays, and until recently, she took courses at the University or at the LDS Institute of Religion.

She has always encouraged her children to stretch their minds. Though Dad is highly intelligent, Mother is more inquisitive. More than Dad, she is the one I used to argue with because it seemed that he could not comfortably debate things about which he felt deeply. She was my sounding board.

I also recall that we little children used to say before testimony meeting, "Mother, I hope you won't bear your testimony this time; you always cry."

She is a perfect complement for Dad.

Dialogue: Didn't having her husband gone so much ever cause her to feel lonely?

Kimball: She once wrote Dad while he was traveling in Canada:

Anyone who thinks being the wife of one of the General Authorities is a bed of roses should try it once, shouldn't they. . . . sometimes I selfishly feel it would be nice not to have to share my husband with a million others. I do love and appreciate you, dear, and admire your sterling qualities. I wouldn't have you be one whit less valiant in the pursuit of your duty . . . , but it is

comforting to be reassured once in a while that you realize I am standing by

The one recurring irritation I am aware of was his being so often late for dinner without calling to let her know. It seemed to her such an easy thing to call, but he repeatedly forgot. While attending to others' needs, he didn't think to telephone.

Dialogue: What are some of your father's outstanding characteristics?

Kimball: Don't hold me to any kind of order, but some of them are faithfulness, kindness, good humor, diligence, intelligence and loyalty.

Mother has said, "I don't think he has ever had any doubts." That may be overstatement, but it is certainly consistent with my observations. I can recall only one thing that even hints at hesitation—his statement in this letter about his missionary days:

I wanted to be very honest with myself and with the program and with the Lord. For a time I couched my words carefully to try to build up others without actually committing myself to a positive, unequivocal statement that *I knew*. When I approached a positive declaration it frightened me, and yet when I was wholly in tune and spiritually inspired, I wanted to so testify. I thought I was being honest, very honest, but finally decided that I was fooling myself to be reticent when the spirit moved me.

That was not to say he has not had times of discouragement—he has. But he seems to have the ability to banish gloom, at least most of the time. As I have said, his own ill health gave him good reason for depression, and occasionally it shows in his journals, but even then he kept up a relatively cheerful demeanor. There was occasional irritability, but much less than with anyone else I know. He was always kindly and slow to criticize—the sort who always did more than his share.

The characteristic most easily seen is his driving energy. I know of no one who works harder. In someone less eminent it might even be called neurotic. It seems in part motivated by great commitment and loyalty to whatever cause he espouses—whether religious, civic, family or business; he just does not know how to give less than his best effort. His drive may spring in part from a sense of inadequacy, but in my opinion, that feeling is irrational, since by any measure I know, he has always excelled in what he did.

Dialogue: Would you call your father an intellectual?

Kimball: I would, but *he* would resent the label.

If by *intellectual* you mean a person whose activities are largely those of the mind, pen and tongue, then surely he qualifies. When he scorns the label, he is thinking of the connotation "skeptic," which he would find offensive. He is a "positive thinker," believing that little is to be gained by stewing in doubt and looking for trouble or magnifying warts. He is in that sense a man of faith, not a man of "science."

He is a highly intelligent man and well-organized. As a result he has

accomplished a lot. His best conference addresses have memorable eloquence and power. Preparing them takes both talent and effort. Some of that ability comes out in the few poems he has written, mostly hidden away in a binder labeled “Verse and Worse.” If he had worked at it, I think he might have written some fine things, but he was never serious about poetry.

He reared four children, who have ten college degrees among them, in a home where discussion and sensitivity to careful word usage were part of the daily atmosphere. There was always a dictionary next to the table where we ate. Of course, Mother is just as much responsible for that environment as he. Neither finished college, but both are very well educated.

BYU and Utah State gave Dad honorary degrees, based on his public service as a churchman, but in my opinion the universities in no way diluted their intellectual standards in conferring their degrees on him.

Dialogue: What are some of the things you learned from your father?

Kimball: He taught me not to take myself too seriously—to have a sense of proportion and a sense of humor. Both are well illustrated in his delighted retelling of Evans Coleman’s coming into his office after Dad was called as an apostle. Other friends had streamed in to say how pleased they were and how inevitable it seemed. Evans said, “Well, Spencer, so you’re going to Salt Lake to be one of the Twelve Apostles, are you?” Dad replied, “Yes, Evans, I guess so.” Evans drawled out, “It’s clear the Lord must have called you— no one else would have thought of you.”

He taught me that our talents are given to us largely so that we may serve others. One of his main objectives in having his children learn to play the piano was for them to be able to play hymns in church meetings.

He taught me the virtues of thrift and hard work. He paid us for work around the home, but he expected it done. I had an account with him, and the dimes and quarters I saved, he invested for me in his business. Partly because he worked his own hours during my childhood. I had a sense for working as much as possible instead of setting limits. That makes it hard to be completely at ease because of a sense of guilt about work that always remains undone.

Loyalty was important. When we left Arizona, where he had lived for forty-five years, he said, “Now, boys, we have come to Salt Lake to live. We have left Arizona. From now on Utah is the best place in the world, the finest people, the best climate, the most wonderful schools.” I can’t imagine anyone I would rather have on my side, in anything. One or both parents almost always attended any performance their children participated in. They were high in expectation, generous in praise. They were intensely devoted to one another; they may have argued behind closed doors, for all I know, but not in my presence. They might state disagreement, but there was no rancor.

I learned from my parents how greatly children appreciate the time, attention and affection their parents give them. Though Dad was gone a lot, when he was home he spent the time working and playing with his family. We were partners in the family; it was not as though our parents “owned” us. There was a lot of physical closeness—hugging and kissing. He could express his disappointment

strongly, but I cannot recall a single incident of physical punishment. As a matter of fact, I can only remember seeing him really angry once, when the cow kicked the bucket over for the third time, and he kicked her. Other times there was annoyance, but not anger.

He tried to teach me something about the value of friends and that to develop friendship takes effort. When I was a teenager he once said that he would be happy with some B's in my school work if that were the consequence of my cultivating friendships.

He taught me something about kindness by his example of unfailing courtesy and attentiveness to the comfort of any guest. Though I might resent the way people sometimes seemed to impose on his good nature, he never showed any resentment; he always took time.

There are probably a hundred other things he taught so naturally that I am hardly aware of them.

Dialogue: Did your perceptions of your father change in the process of writing the book?

Kimball: Not very much. Our research simply confirmed the views I had held, but enriched them with a lot of illustrations. I learned a good deal about my parents' lives before my birth that I had known about only vaguely before and I did come to appreciate how much mental and physical anguish my father and mother had gone through at that time. Beyond that, I learned mostly new examples of kindness or dedication or wit to add to the ones I knew at firsthand.

Dialogue: What were your father's reactions to the event which brought him to the presidency—the death of President Lee?

Kimball: First, sorrow at losing a close friend of thirty years. Then, a feeling of inadequacy for the task! An unexpected and nearly overwhelming responsibility was thrust upon him. At the same time, he accepted unquestioningly that the succession to the presidency was in the Lord's hands and that he could rely on receiving the Lord's help and the help of able counselors. When I spent some time with my parents right after President Lee's death, I saw that Dad had not the slightest hesitation in going forward with the best he had to offer.

Dialogue: What would you say are the main events of your father's administration?

Kimball: A burst of new temples! The Washington Temple was being built when he became president, but since 1974, he has announced new temples in Brazil, Mexico, Japan, Samoa, Seattle and the Salt Lake Valley. This is a product of his determination to "take the Church to the people," as is also the increase in area conferences and in solemn assemblies.

He first used the phrase *lengthen our stride* in trying to drive home the need for increased numbers of worthy, well-prepared missionaries. He has wanted a larger share of these missionaries to come from other countries, and so native missionaries have greatly increased.

Church administration has been more open to change. Besides revision of the genealogy program, the First Quorum of Seventy has been organized and the Assistants to the Twelve have been reassigned.

Finally, there is for me, the single most exciting event—the revelation allowing all worthy men to hold the priesthood.

Dialogue: Can you give us any insight into that revelation?

Kimball: I was in Boston when I learned about it. I was overjoyed, both for the change itself, for the evidence of vitality in the principle of continuing revelation, and for the honor to my father to be at the center of so significant an event. When I returned to Utah I felt that as a biographer, I ought to talk with my father and some of the other General Authorities about it. Although some felt themselves under constraint, others discussed their experience rather freely.

I think one day the story will be told more fully, but I can summarize it now: for some months at least, Dad had been exercised about the question; he could not put it out of his mind. He wanted to know the Lord's will in the matter, and he prayed about it frequently. He spent hours alone in the temple and many sleepless nights turning it over in his mind. Gradually, most of his doubts and questions faded away. On June 1, after the monthly fast meeting of the General Authorities, he asked the apostles to stay for a special prayer circle with him. He prayed for revelation on the matter and during that prayer, the men in the circle experienced an outpouring of the spirit that left them with no doubt about the will of the Lord.

The only remaining question was how to make the announcement. A week later the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve decided to do it by a letter to local church leaders. On Friday, June 9, the letter was read to the other General Authorities and then released to the public. Instructions were to make no interpretations or elaborations beyond the text of the letter, to avoid a circus atmosphere.

I have not the slightest doubt about the authenticity of the revelation.

Perhaps it is easy for me to accept the revelation because it fits so nicely with my personal predispositions. I can only speculate about my reaction to a revelation that went against my grain. I have sympathy with members who find the revelation a trial to their faith, and I hope their testimony is equal to the challenge.

Dialogue: How does it feel to be the son of the prophet?

Kimball: That is the one question young people most often ask me. It is a hard question to answer. I don't think my regard for my father is increased in the slightest by his position. I love him for his great personal qualities and for the love he bears me.

In a way, his position is a kind of barrier. If he were a retired businessman, we could spend an evening together without my feeling guilty. As it is, I hate to use up his time and energy when I know how heavy and important his responsibilities to others are. Perhaps in the next life there will be more opportunity to be together.

Though I would not minimize his virtues, I don't believe he is unique. There are thousands of men and women out there with the same marvelous qualities, the same selfless devotion to the Lord and His church. But Spencer Kimball was called to this position and they were called to others. As President Clark said, "In the service of the Lord, it is not where you serve, but how. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, one takes the place to which one is duly called, which place one neither seeks nor declines."

I sustain Spencer Kimball as a prophet, but I love him as an affectionate father.