

# The Education of a BYU Professor

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IN THE FALL OF 1948 I BEGAN MY CAREER as a teacher of history at Brigham Young University and continued there until I resigned in the spring of 1954. During those six years I was an active participant in the beginning of an amazing transformation of a small liberal arts college with 4,000 students into what has become a large institution with 27,000 students and a nationally-acclaimed football team. The chief mover and shaker in this tremendous change was Ernest L. Wilkinson, a diminutive human dynamo, who would allow nothing to stand in his way of making BYU a well-known university while at the same time adding luster to the Wilkinson name. The following autobiographical essay may offer some insight and interest into those early formative years at the Provo school.

I was born in Magna, Utah, but grew up in Pocatello, Idaho, where I had all my schooling, including two years of college at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho, now Idaho State University. After serving an LDS mission to the Cumberland Mountains of east Tennessee and then along the eastern seaboard of North Carolina during the years 1934 to 1936, I finished my undergraduate program in history at the University of Utah, graduating in 1938. The next year I was employed as principal and teacher in a combined grade and high school at the small crossroads of Pingree, Idaho, seeking the experience of working in primary and secondary education before earning graduate degrees to prepare for university teaching.

Marriage to Betty McAllister of Salt Lake City followed in August 1939, after which we left at once for Berkeley, California, where I enrolled as a graduate student in history at the University of California. Awarded an M.A. degree in 1940, I started a Ph.D. program which was interrupted by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. I then became a member of the AFL-CIO Carpenter's Union in Oakland, California, and worked for over a year as a carpenter foreman of a crew of twenty men doing finish work

on shipyard housing at Richmond, California.

Uncle Sam called me in July 1943 to train as an infantryman in a rifle company at Camp Roberts, California. The following summer I was sent to Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, where I graduated first in my class of two hundred officer candidates. I was kept as a Training Officer at Fort Benning until the end of World War II when I was sent to Germany where I spent the last eight months of my three-year military career at the headquarters of the U.S. Third Army stationed at Bad Tolz and Heidelberg, the last four months as a first lieutenant and director of the Historical Division of the Third Army.

In August 1946 Betty and I, now with two children, returned to Berkeley where I was able to complete a Ph.D. by July 1948. During those two years I benefitted from the GI Bill, worked occasionally as a carpenter for a local contractor, and also was a teaching assistant for the Department of History at the university. Incidentally, when I accepted my first professorship at BYU I suffered a cut in pay. This brings the story of my life to the point when my autobiographical account can take over.

As my last semester at the University of California neared an end in the spring of 1948, I had to make a decision about a teaching job. Unlike the years before World War II, there were a number of positions available as GIs crowded the colleges and universities of the nation. The Department of History encouraged me to apply at Rutgers and Michigan State University, but eastern schools had little appeal for me. There was an opening at Humboldt State College in northern California which seemed attractive, but it was too far out of the beaten path. Another opportunity appeared at the new Sacramento State College which would have meant half-time teaching and half-time work in administration, but I wanted no part of academic management. As I look back, this last position would have been a great opportunity and I probably should have taken it. But my heart was in the Rocky Mountains where the University of Utah had just filled a position in my field with the selection of David E. Miller but where Brigham Young University was also advertising for two historians to teach in the field of U.S. history.

Richard D. Poll and I decided to apply for the BYU jobs and were interviewed by Apostle Albert E. Bowen while he was attending Oakland Stake conference. Because of my skepticism about religion, I was uncertain about whether to go through with the application and decided to postpone a decision until after I had seen how Elder Bowen conducted the interview. In other words, if he pressed me too closely and began asking personal questions about my beliefs, I was determined to look elsewhere for a job. To my surprise and relief, he turned out to be a temperate and common sense individual who merely pointed out to me that there were a lot of positions available and that if I felt I could not be comfort-

able at a church university, I should not consider BYU at all. With such general authorities in charge of the school, I could see nothing but a pleasant and profitable career at the Provo campus. Both Poll and I accepted when BYU president Howard S. McDonald offered us positions as assistant professors at a salary of \$3,500 a year. As an epilogue, we were both amused when we heard McDonald declare in a sermon before the Berkeley LDS Ward that although BYU had just lost the famous and accomplished composer LeRoy J. Robertson to the University of Utah, he had made up this loss by hiring professors Madsen and Poll.

Dick Poll and I were assigned an office to share in one of the World War II buildings on campus and looked forward to our first year of teaching. There were about 4,000 students at BYU in the fall of 1948, many of them ex-GIs whom I enjoyed teaching as members of a special fraternity of war veterans. Before becoming president of BYU in July 1954, Howard McDonald had worked in the public schools as deputy superintendent of schools in San Francisco and superintendent for the Salt Lake City District, which position he left to come to BYU. During his years as head of BYU, his most important contribution was to convince the Board of Trustees, made up of members of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, to continue the Y as a church university. Some trustees had considered selling the school to the State of Utah or withdrawing from it in some other way and allowing the church's Institute system to take care of the religious education of Mormon youth. McDonald added a number of new and young faculty members to take care of the burgeoning student population and continued the humane, enlightened, and academically-free spirit which had been representative of the school during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. But he never fully meshed with his trustees who expected to be involved in day-to-day decisions. His experience had been that a board set general policies while allowing the chief administrator to make the daily decisions and operate the institution within the established guidelines. McDonald and the board repeatedly clashed over this. It affected his administration because he was unable to get large enough appropriations to support faculty salaries properly and to run the school efficiently. Also, he seemed to be unable to shift gears from being a public school man to becoming the president of a university. His speeches to students and faculty were sometimes on such a level that all of us felt embarrassed both for him and ourselves. Nevertheless, he allowed his faculty great freedom to teach, and we liked this about him.

Poll and I moved into a combined Department of History and Political Science at the Y. The senior member, Christen Jensen, had been dean and for a few months acting president of the university. His field was political science, his teaching was dry but competent, and he had never published anything of consequence. Stewart Grow was a recent addition

in political science who had just started work on a Ph.D. at the University of Utah. He was a congenial colleague and a good teacher. The other political science man was William Carr, whom I had come to know at Berkeley where he was working on his Ph.D. Bill Carr was not an impressive teacher, too caught up in minutia to see the grand picture, but an amiable and friendly person. Russell Swenson, a Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago, chaired the department and was a man of very liberal tendencies and consummate good humor. Poll and I were assigned to handle classes in U.S. history.

The teaching load for each of us was four classes per quarter, a stupendous assignment for a first-year instructor who had to make preparations for classes he had never taught before. I worked night and day during the first year preparing lectures which often would take up only thirty to forty minutes of a fifty-minute period. But the students were understanding and joined in a discussion at the end of the hour to use up the time. I was forced to get up at 3:00 a.m. each morning, repair to my office, and write feverishly until classes started. For my first three years at BYU, and until a few new faculty members were appointed, I taught a two-quarter survey course in English history as well as a third quarter of English constitutional history, a two-quarter survey course in Latin American history with a third quarter devoted to the history of Mexico, a two-quarter survey course in U.S. history plus courses in the history of the American West, American historians, and a graduate seminar. It was not until the fall quarter of 1949 that I could stop to take a breath. Poll and I were recognized as good teachers and soon attracted a following among the students. I enjoyed teaching then and always have; I looked forward to my classes every Monday morning and marvelled that the administration was willing to pay me for doing something which was so much fun and which I would have gladly done for nothing if the little matter of making a living for a family had not been a factor.

The older faculty members were pleased to see the eager young teachers being added to their roster in the years after World War II and welcomed us to their mostly liberal and enlightened ranks. P. A. Christensen of the Department of English was the recognized intellectual leader on campus, supported by other outstanding scholars like geologist George Hansen, biologist Thomas Martin, English scholar Karl Young, and the old gadfly John C. Swenson. They all became special friends as they seemed to recognize a kindred spirit in me. There was also a good cadre of graduate students in these first years who went on to some prominence in their respective fields after completing doctoral degrees elsewhere. I remember especially Kent Fielding who earned an M.A. with me, and others like Irene Briggs and Carolyn Stucki, and three men who later joined the BYU faculty—Paul Hyer in Far Eastern history, DeLaMar

Jensen in medieval history, and George Addy in the Latin American field.

The chief liability to what was otherwise pleasant circumstances at BYU was the low salaries which President McDonald was unable to rectify because of his declining influence among his conservative board of trustees. In the spring of 1949, when I discovered that Bill Carr was receiving a salary of \$4,000, or \$500 more than I while not having a Ph.D. or being a dynamic teacher, I headed for the president's office, confronted him with the disparity, and demanded at least equal pay with Carr. McDonald assented to my request. Throughout my six years at BYU I was constantly struggling to meet the financial needs of a growing family. This meant that I was forced to do carpentry work on the side to supplement our income instead of spending my time researching and writing. I was soon involved in evening and weekend work for other faculty members who learned of my carpenter trade and who were struggling to build homes for themselves in the most economical way possible.

An outstanding scholarly event for me in the fall of 1949 was the invitation to represent BYU at the "First Congress of Historians of Mexico and the United States" held in Monterey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, 4-9 September. The school paid my expenses and I was able to associate with 125 prominent historians from the two countries for an entire week. I roomed with John Higham, a young, able historian from UCLA who was on the program. The first three days went as peaceful as a wedding bell, but on Thursday and Friday the Mexican professors reading papers blasted the North Americans whose ancestors had stolen the great Southwest from Mexico in the war of 1846. We American historians listened in pained silence to the tongue lashing given us. As far as I know, there has never been a "Second Congress." The meeting was a memorable one for us and, I suspect, for all of the other North Americans present.

Although unorthodox in some respects and a rather free thinker, I was still a committed Mormon when I joined the BYU faculty as evidenced by a short treatise I wrote for myself in January 1948, before accepting a teaching position there:

#### WHAT MY RELIGION MEANS TO ME

Religion is fundamentally concerned with ethics, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints especially emphasizes the importance of maintaining a high moral tone among its members. In this day of quick marriage and quicker divorce, of increasing juvenile delinquency, and of a general lowering of long-established social standards, the Word of Wisdom and the Thirteenth Article of Faith gain new meaning. Mormonism provides a culture in which youth can be nurtured and trained towards a future of accomplishment and well-being.

But the gospel as taught by Joseph Smith is more than just a guide for

this life; it encompasses time and space. The questions of every intelligent being about the reason for life, the nature of the Creator, and the prospect of future existence after death—all become understandable as the searching light of the Priesthood traces the eternal plan of salvation through the pages of scripture.

Within the organization of the Church, moreover, there is unceasing opportunity for growth and development. The principles of service to others and of participation in the ordinances of the Gospel both stem from the basic philosophy of "eternal progression," God's glory is intelligence, and the boundless opportunity of new worlds to conquer presents a neverending challenge to His children.

There were, however, disturbing incidents during my first years at BYU which challenged these noble concepts of my last year at Berkeley. In the spring of 1949 the student body officers asked permission of the administration to hire the black orchestra leader Dizzy Gillespie to play at the annual prom but were turned down because blacks were not allowed to hold the Mormon priesthood at the time and for other reasons I never learned.

Several younger faculty were outraged by what we discerned as a racist and discriminatory policy on the part of school officials, and two faculty members and I paid a visit to the office of the dean of students, Wesley P. Lloyd, to demand that the administration allow the Gillespie band to appear. Lloyd was sympathetic and understanding but convinced us there was nothing he could do to change the minds of members of the board of trustees. I became quite upset that a university would support such intolerance.

One other incident was even more dismaying. During the spring of 1950 the young son of a religion faculty member, whose family lived in one of the apartments in our Wymount Village building, wandered away from a baby-sitter and drowned in a nearby canal, finding access to it through a gate that had fallen into disrepair. The whole community was shocked by the tragedy, but at least a few of us were angered even more to hear another religion faculty member explain, in his sermon at the funeral, that the death of the little boy was probably a good thing because now he would not have to face the sinful temptations of life and would be forever in the arms of Jesus and destined for the highest degree of glory. To make matters worse, the following day as I was repairing the broken gate which had led to the accident, the deceased boy's father happened along and instructed me that I was wasting my time. According to him, if the Lord had determined to "call someone home" any efforts on my part or that of anyone else to repair a gate or whatever else would be a waste of time and energy. I couldn't believe it and, of course, convinced that the Lord helps those who help themselves, fixed the gate anyway.

This same member of the religion department later displayed his anti-intellectualism by assuring me that all that was necessary for a higher education was to study the four standard works of the church; one need not read any other literature. Attitudes and beliefs of people like this man were too common among some BYU faculty and seemed to belie that the school was a real university at all.

In June 1949 I first met the man who would take McDonald's place as president of BYU. The school planned to honor the long career of Christen Jensen by giving him a testimonial dinner, and Stewart Grow and I were appointed as co-chairs of the committee to make the arrangements. Grow and I decided to invite as speaker, Ernest L. Wilkinson, recently prominent for his successful \$32 million judgment in the land claims case of the Ute Indians against the U.S. government and the most prominent of Jensen's former students. Later some of our liberal friends and other more bitter Wilkinson-haters insisted that his later becoming president of BYU was all our fault. At the banquet J. Reuben Clark of the First Presidency was seated at the head table along with Christen Jensen, President McDonald, Stewart Grow, and me. In his hour-long speech, directed at Apostle Clark, Wilkinson spent about five minutes extolling the virtues of Jensen and then launched into a well-prepared exposition of what the future guidelines should be for BYU. He emphasized two objectives: the importance of theology and of history. He insisted that BYU would become the greatest educational institution in the world if it trained students to have the desire and knowledge to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. Revealed religion should not be separate and apart from education. He emphasized that there was no point in continuing the school unless it added truth to the gospel message to benefit all humanity.

But it was his declaration of the importance of teaching history that caught J. Reuben Clark's attention. Wilkinson asserted that every student at BYU should be required to take a fundamental course in the history and government of the United States because of the Mormon belief in the U.S. Constitution, the LDS concept of government, and the Mormon explanation of the rise and fall of governments. It was obvious to all present that Clark was delighted with the speech. Grow and I were convinced that it made Wilkinson president of BYU.

In my conversation with Wilkinson that evening, I told him of my interest in his Indian case and explained that I had written a Ph.D. dissertation on the history of the Bannock of Idaho. He was immediately alerted because his firm was then negotiating with the Shoshoni and Bannock at Fort Hall to become their tribal attorneys to fight a land claims case against the federal government similar to the successful suit for the Utes. The following spring he invited me to spend the day with him and his

partner, John Boyden, at the Hotel Utah with about fifty Shoshoni chiefs and subchiefs from Fort Hall and the Great Basin. Wilkinson wanted me there as a consultant to aid in the process, and I was asked to answer questions about some supposed Bannock who lived in eastern Oregon. A few weeks later Wilkinson asked to borrow my copy of my dissertation. I complied but then had a difficult time getting it back after it had been in his Washington, D.C., office for two years. It came back to me well-thumbed and obviously well-used.

In a final note about this relationship Wilkinson made arrangements through me to hire Kent Fielding, one of my M.A. candidates, for a summer to research the question of the valuation of western tribal lands during the mid-nineteenth century. Fielding agreed to do so and subsequently earned his master's degree with a thesis only a few pages long but which contained some priceless tables of land values. It was the shortest thesis I ever approved but one of the best.

By October 1949 Howard McDonald decided to get out of his deteriorating relationship with the board of trustees by taking a position as the new president of Los Angeles State College. The board accepted his resignation with alacrity, asked Christen Jensen to become acting president while a search was made for a new leader, and started the process, although it soon became obvious that the choice had already been made and that Wilkinson was the man. He was named to the position on 27 July 1950, but the faculty did not receive formal notification until September 1950. Jensen continued to serve until February 1951, when Wilkinson arrived from the successful conclusion of his Ute case to take over as head of BYU. All of us waited to see how this human buzz saw would change affairs at our Provo school.

The takeover of Brigham Young University by Ernest L. Wilkinson in February 1951 introduced immediate and dramatic changes to what had been a somnolent campus. He insisted to his board of trustees that all school matters go through him—no more run-arounds by faculty members with their complaints to favorite apostles. He also expected that "correct" economic doctrines (i.e., free enterprise) would be taught and practiced at BYU; that the university would continue to function as a marriage broker for Mormon students; and that the new administrative arrangements which made the president of the church the president of the board of trustees would assure Wilkinson direct access to the top hierarchy in the church.

With these concepts set, the new president plunged into a vigorous campaign to get more money for faculty salaries, for student housing, and for classroom and office buildings to provide for what the board thought would be a university of about 10,000 students. They didn't realize that their vigorous administrator had even larger ideas of expanding

the school. Every Wilkinson conference with the board of trustees was like a day in court, complete with dozens of charts, volumes of statistical information, and an overwhelming demonstration of his command of the programs he was championing. He was ruthless and indefatigable in gathering information to support his cases. In one instance, upon learning that I was engaged in writing the annual article on "Utah" for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and that I had certain classified information about the population figures of another university, he asked to see the statistics and then without my permission incorporated the facts into a presentation. I never allowed myself to be used by him again in this fashion.

With such tactics and a disregard of the means as long as he achieved his ends, it is little wonder that he and the older, more liberal faculty members clashed from the beginning. The confrontation started when P. A. Christensen was asked to preside as master of ceremonies at the faculty banquet in Wilkinson's honor in February 1951. Christensen introduced Wilkinson by saying that the Washington, D.C., lawyer was really John C. Swenson's second choice for president and that when someone asked who Swenson's first choice was, Swenson had said, "Almost anyone." Wilkinson laughed at the sally but not too heartily. The place of the faculty in helping to establish policies at the university came to a head early when Wilkinson unilaterally announced that instead of one campuswide devotional assembly held traditionally at 11:00 a.m. each Monday, there would now be three such meetings—on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 11:00 a.m. The faculty protested that this arrangement would cut too much into class time, but their pleas were ignored. Therefore, someone started a petition to Wilkinson which was signed by over a hundred faculty, including me, formally protesting his action. A staff member discovered the petition and delivered it to Wilkinson, who called a special faculty meeting. He rushed into Maeser Hall, flushed with anger, and denounced the petition signers as cowards who signed papers behind his back. Hugh Nibley, a former paratrooper, and I were the first on our feet to challenge him, but Hugh beat me to it by exploding back at Wilkinson. Then when I had a turn, I asked what part the faculty would have in formulating policies for the school. Wilkinson answered bluntly, "None whatever." I said, "Thanks. Now we know where we stand." We had not known before that the board of trustees had already agreed with their new president that we would not be allowed to be involved in administrative matters in any manner. As a footnote to this meeting, the faculty now determined to stay away from all faculty meetings as long as our voice was not to be heard anyway. At once Wilkinson directed that henceforth he would take the roll at the meetings and absent faculty would be punished. At the next meeting, with a fairly full house, when the roll reached P. A. Christensen he crumpled it up and put it in his

pocket. Wilkinson lost that skirmish, but few others.

A basic part of Wilkinson's program to win churchwide support for BYU and to make it a great university was his plan to select about thirty faculty to visit western stake conferences with various apostles. Church president David O. McKay agreed that each faculty member would have fifteen minutes to extol the virtues of BYU and to urge church members to send their sons and daughters to the Provo school. In the first phase of this campaign, from April 1951 to May 1952, visits were made to well over one hundred stake conferences. Opposition developed at once, especially from members and Mormon faculty at the University of Utah, Utah State University, Weber State College, and various junior colleges in Utah, about church influence being used to steal students from their institutions. A modified program was implemented the next year during which visiting BYU faculty were admonished to talk only in general terms about the value of higher education. After two years, the campaign was terminated, having achieved Wilkinson's objective when the BYU student population reached more than 10,000 by 1956.

As one of thirty or so speakers, I had some interesting experiences with several apostles and seventies. I went on two stake visits with Joseph L. Wirthlin, presiding bishop of the church, one to Oakley, Idaho, and one to a stake in Los Angeles. At Oakley in the Saturday evening priesthood meeting one sun-tanned farmer told Wirthlin in no uncertain terms that he and the other members of the ward were not going to follow certain recent directives from church headquarters about their MIA, or young people's program, because the instructions were designed for an urban population and not a rural community. Wirthlin agreed with the man. If he had not, there would have been open rebellion in the small Mormon town. I saw this drama repeated several times in other plain-spoken Mormon stakes in outlying districts. The independent pioneer spirit was still alive and functioning in the 1950s. On the way to Los Angeles by train, as the conversation lagged, I innocently asked Wirthlin what he thought of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal whereupon the good bishop stood in front of his seat and got so purple in the face that I was afraid he was about to have a stroke. I hurriedly got him a cup of water; the crisis passed; and I never mentioned politics and Democrats again. Wirthlin was, one might acknowledge, a devoted right-wing Republican, a predilection which nearly all of the general authorities have even today.

I had a delightful time at the Boise, Idaho, stake conference with Oscar Kirkham of the Council of Seventy who turned out to be as generous and friendly as his older brother, my mission president, James E. Kirkham. I traveled to Rigby, Idaho, with a member of the church's General Welfare Committee who told amusing stories about various general

authorities he had come to know. Evidently, all of them enjoyed stories at the expense of each other. He explained in one incident concerning the gregarious and open Apostle LeGrand R. Richards and the more precise and formal Stephen L. Richards that LeGrand had gone to visit a stake in the Uintah Basin where he stayed at the home of the new stake president, whose wife wanted to ensure that everything was perfect for the comfort of her first apostolic visitor. Unfortunately, the bed in the upper bedroom occupied by the church dignitary fell down during the night and the stake president had to help put the springs back in place. As Apostle Richards came down the stairs the next morning, he said to the discomfited lady of the house, "What did you think last night when you heard the bed fall down?" She answered, "I got out of bed, fell to my knees, and thanked the Lord that it was LeGrand R. and not Stephen L." At Rigby, just a few miles from Ricks College at Rexburg, Apostle Joseph L. Merrill warned me to be careful in my speech by not mentioning BYU but to talk about the glories of higher education. I rather liked Joseph Merrill.

In a trip to one of the stakes in Idaho Falls, Idaho, I rode up and back from Salt Lake City with Apostle Henry D. Moyle, a man of much egotism who spent the entire journey telling me his life story accentuated by all of his successes. He told me of one incident during his mission to Germany when he was asked to translate into German a sermon delivered by Apostle Rudger Clawson to a large congregation of Saints. Clawson evidently said some things which would have created enormous political problems for the church if Moyle had translated them verbatim. Instead, as Moyle put it, "Apostle Clawson gave one speech, and I gave another." Moyle was particularly sensitive over the fact that the new church president, David O. McKay, had just demoted J. Reuben Clark from first counselor in the First Presidency to second counselor. As a strong supporter of Clark, Moyle told me with some satisfaction that at the last Thursday council meeting of all the apostles, McKay had asked Clark to take care of some important financial matter. As Moyle put it, "J. Reuben Clark is still in charge." At Idaho Falls, Moyle launched into a strong rebuke of the Saints there because they had not supported a Mormon candidate for mayor in the recent city election and had allowed a free-wheeling gentile to become the city leader. Afterwards, the stake president rebuked Moyle and indicated that his speech would cause the Mormon people all kinds of difficulty. In a final note about my trip with Moyle, he had driven up to Idaho Falls in his new Cadillac at speeds up to one hundred miles an hour, so when he asked me to drive back on the return trip, I immediately pushed the car to 80 miles an hour, being careful to keep it well below 100. He said rather gently, "Please don't go over 70."

On two trips with Marion G. Romney and his wife I enjoyed traveling with them and appreciated their down-to-earth approach to things.

We went to Malad, Idaho, and to Kanab, Utah. At the latter place Romney was so taken with my speech that he asked for my address and phone number, saying he intended to write a letter to Wilkinson commending me for my performance. I went with another apostle to Malta, Idaho, but didn't fare as well. Spencer W. Kimball and his wife were gracious, but Kimball was critical of my speech. The place was Malta, Idaho, in the desert of the Snake River plains. The day was hot, and Kimball put a lot of people to sleep in the morning session of conference. In the afternoon meeting, I told the well-known story about Karl G. Maeser, first president of BYU, who, because of his manifold administrative duties, was often late to the class he taught. When he showed up tardy one day, he discovered that the students had tied a donkey to his desk. He immediately said, "I see that you have chosen one of your number to take my place during my absence." The congregation thought it was mildly amusing and listened to my talk. In the meeting with stake and priesthood leaders after the afternoon session, Kimball looked sternly at me and said, "There is no room for levity in the chapels of the Lord." I recovered on the ride home when I told Kimball that we must be related in some way because my great-grandfather, Hosea Cushing, was an adopted son of his grandfather, Heber C. Kimball. He made note of that fact for his family record.

In a final stake meeting, President Joseph Fielding Smith rode with me to Richmond, Cache County, Utah. It was a delightful weekend for me; I found him to be a pleasant companion with a strong Puritan bent. At the morning session of stake conference, he angered the congregation by announcing that he wanted them to go home and read a certain passage in the Bible but then added, "You probably never read your Bibles." Then he referred to a section of the Book of Mormon with the observation, "A lot of you probably don't even own a copy of the book." Finally, he said, "I see you have a baseball diamond just across the street from this chapel, and if I weren't here, most of you would be over there watching a ball game instead of being in church." After the meeting, the crowd just turned their backs on him and walked out. Only the stake presidency congratulated him on his sermon. I had the impression that he felt it was his mission to call the Saints to repentance, but the fact that he sermonized like Cotton Mather did not endear him to many people. Nevertheless, he was most gracious to me and everyone when away from the pulpit.

At the dinner served in the home of the stake president, all at once Smith looked sternly at me and demanded, "What's the matter with BYU?" When I asked what he meant, he explained that the Friday before, his daughter and grand-daughter had gone to Provo to arrange for housing for the latter so she could attend BYU, but there was none available. I

rather startled the local people around the table by saying, "As I remember, you are a member of the board of trustees of BYU." After he acknowledged that obvious fact, I told him that we would be happy to build sufficient student housing to avoid such problems as he had encountered with his grand-daughter if his board would grant us money for that purpose. He smiled and said no more about the subject. I hope it helped Wilkinson in his search for building funds.

In one other incident, on the trip home as the conversation faltered I asked him what he thought of Juanita Brooks's book on the Mountain Meadows massacre, which had just been published. He exploded, "Very bad, very bad!" That ended that conversation. He was a real gentleman, a Puritan of strong conservative religious convictions, but rather uninformed about matters outside his own field.

Wilkinson's campaign to preach BYU to the western states of Zion was a success and demanded an increased faculty to meet the learning needs of a growing student body. Under the new regime, recruiting new teachers did not involve members of a department at all. The dean of the college concerned would offer a preliminary list of candidates, and Wilkinson would then make the final choice by himself. One April day in 1954 when I was acting chair of the Department of History and Political Science, a man walked into my office, told me his name was Dr. Albert Fisher, and announced that he was a new member of the department. Al reminded me sometime later that I had responded by saying, "The hell you say." None of us in history and political science had ever heard of him or that the administration was even contemplating adding a new person to our ranks. Fisher thought we knew about his appointment, and both he and I were embarrassed by the situation. There is nothing like the direct approach. Fisher turned out to be a very competent teacher and scholar in his field of geography.

The faculty sensed Wilkinson's contempt for most of them as non-doers who probably couldn't earn a living in the "real world" that he knew. His attitude was sharply revealed to me one day at the conclusion of a meeting I had with him in his office. He said to his secretary, "Show in . . . oh, I've forgotten his name. You know, that anthropologist." It was Wells Jakeman, waiting in the outer office. The contempt in Wilkinson's voice was picked up by everyone in the room.

My salary was so low that when I was offered an opportunity to spend a spring quarter working at much higher wages with my father and brothers in their construction business in Salt Lake City, I made arrangements for other faculty to take over my teaching assignments and asked Wilkinson for a quarter's leave of absence. He refused and did so in such peremptory fashion that I fumed all day. By that evening at the annual faculty dance the news was all over campus that I had been

turned down but was not going to accept it. At the dance William F. Edwards, the poor Rigby, Idaho, farm boy who had made his fortune as a stock broker in New York and was now financial vice president at BYU, took me aside and pleaded with me to accept Wilkinson's decision because my determination not to would worsen relations between the president and the faculty. My answer was no! The next morning I was in Wilkinson's office to tell him that if I didn't get the leave, I was going to resign. He granted me the leave, and I was able to make enough extra money to buy a few items of furniture and help pay some hospital bills. Standing up to him was the only way to gain his respect. He was hard-nosed and ruthless.

Throughout my three and a half years of service with him, Wilkinson continued to give me practical assignments as one of the few faculty members that, in his judgment, had a pragmatic sense at all. One spring he asked me to direct the campuswide Y day activities during which students and faculty cleaned up the campus. The same quarter when high water caused flooding along the Provo River, school was declared out for one day while I directed students and faculty in sand-bagging the river bank. But the most illuminating incident, both in revealing his perception of me and in emphasizing his combative nature, was when he asked me during my last year at BYU to chair the scholarships committees which not only made financial grants to scholars but also to all the athletes. He had already received approval from the board of trustees that athletes were not to receive preference over other students. In his conference with me, he indicated that while he had been a poor student at BYU he had watched with some dismay and anger while athletes had received such comfortable jobs as distributing pillows at games, at high pay, while he and other students had to scramble for a living and tuition. He was not going to allow similar sinecures in his administration and said rather bluntly that I was the only faculty member with the intestinal fortitude to deny athletes scholarships they didn't deserve. I took the responsibility with deep reservations, knowing that he was attempting to fly in the face of American sports tradition and could not win in his attempts to destroy inter-collegiate athletics at BYU. Although I have always done my best to be loyal to my boss, in this instance, I was not and, in fact, refused to follow his instructions in what I considered to be the best interests of the school. I met with athletic director Eddie Kimball, told him what was going on, and made arrangements to help the athletes all I could. After I left BYU the next spring, I learned that Apostle Stephen L Richards heard that Wilkinson was trying to destroy the athletic program and put a stop to it. Wilkinson then decided that if you can't fight them you'd better join them and supported athletics from then on in his usual whirlwind fashion. The fact that BYU was selected as the number 1 football team of the

nation in the 1980s may be one of the results of this turnaround.

Not all of my attention focused on Ernest Wilkinson. I had a number of opportunities to represent BYU as a speaker at high school commencements and baccalaureates. Two which come to mind were at Park City, where the principal warned me that this was a mostly Catholic community, and at Parowan, where the principal apologized to me because three or four of the male graduates tottered down the aisle in an obvious drunken condition. He said that he could not stop the longtime macho practice which had held forth for some years at Parowan. A more memorable speech was one I gave at the San Juan County Annual Livestock Growers' Association banquet held in the Monticello High School gymnasium. Charley Redd, my neighbor and a good friend, was president of the organization that year and asked me to speak. When I inquired about a subject, he replied that he thought I was a man of good sense who would choose an appropriate topic. At the time Senator Joseph McCarthy was attacking "Communists" in the State Department and elsewhere, and I decided to attack him and his irresponsible character assassinations before the cattlemen and sheepgrowers of San Juan County. What I didn't realize was that this was perhaps the most politically conservative county in the state whose people admired McCarthy as a defender of the true Republican faith. As my speech progressed, the atmosphere in the gym became colder and colder. At the end, there was no applause at all as everyone glared at me. I have always thought it was one of the best speeches of my life but delivered to the wrong crowd (or perhaps it was to the right group after all). Charley joked that he had better get me out of the county before they lynched me.

During the banquet I listened to some enjoyable western stories as each stockman told a tale on the neighbor sitting next to him. Apparently, it was an established custom at these annual get-togethers as each rancher saved an especially interesting yarn to tell on one of his friends. I remember one. Bill had been out on the spring round-up, rubbing shoulders with other cowhands in the rough give-and-take of campfire conversation, and not yet prepared to settle down to civilized life when he rode into town on his way home. He stopped, astride his horse, at the fence of the leading society matron who was pruning and spraying her flowers. During the conversation in which Bill was having difficulty holding up his end, the lady suddenly turned to him and said, "Bill, have you ever had any aphids in your delphinium?" Taken aback, Bill answered, "I don't rightly believe so, but I once had a wood tick in my navel." This story gives the flavor of the other western stories of the evening. Charley Redd chose me as being the most likely conveyer of free enterprise doctrine in the Department of History at BYU and decreed that his eldest child, Katherine, should take her American history from me who would

be most likely to teach her correct economic principles. Kathy was very bright and easily earned an "A" in the class. One summer Betty and I were invited to spend a weekend at his ranch along with a few other faculty couples. Charley Redd was a man of substance, character, intelligence, and culture, and a real cowman. It was a privilege to know him.

Teaching remained my most enjoyable occupation at BYU. There were no awards at the time for outstanding teaching, but I believe I was recognized as one of the better instructors by both peers and students. Because of the heavy teaching load and my extracurricular building activities, there was little time for research and writing. Further, the academic climate at BYU was not conducive to publication. Faculty members spent most of their spare time gossiping about the latest outrage from Wilkinson or what the apostles were saying. At Betty's urging, in 1952 I sent a copy of my Ph.D. dissertation to Caxton Printers Ltd. of Caldwell, Idaho, and asked if they would be interested in publishing it. To my amazement they answered that with a few revisions they would consider printing it. Betty then undertook the task of retyping the whole manuscript for their consideration, and I hired a former BYU graduate student now living in Washington, D.C., to do some extra research for me at the National Archives. To make this long story short, the Caxton Press finally published the work as *The Bannock of Idaho* in 1952, when I was a full-time builder. The reviews were mostly favorable; the book is now out of print.

During my years at BYU I became a member of the "Swearing Elders," an informal organization founded by Sterling McMurrin and William Mulder, both on the faculty of the University of Utah. The purpose of the group of about forty men was to meet monthly to listen to speakers who had something of interest to say about Mormonism or the Mormon church. Several other BYU faculty were participants and traveled each month to the University of Utah where the meetings were held. One outstanding meeting featured historian Whitney Cross, author of *The Burned-Over District*, which discussed the religious revivals which swept upper New York State in the early 1800s when Joseph Smith was producing the Book of Mormon. While a few in the audience were attacking Joseph Smith as a doubtful prophet, Cross, although a non-Mormon, defended him as a man of ability. A second memorable get-together was to listen to Melvin Cook defend his concepts of the age of the earth with Bruce McConkie supporting him and Jennings Olsen, a philosopher from Weber State College, criticizing his ideas. The meeting degenerated into a heated argument. Church authorities seemed apprehensive about what was going on in the "Swearing Elders," but the group continued to meet.

There was an underground but small and discreet group of faculty at BYU who had for years been investigating historical aspects of the

church, especially the origin of the Book of Mormon. Foremost among them was Wilford Poulson who had spent a number of summers over a period of thirty years traveling through the areas of Vermont and upper New York where Joseph Smith had lived and collecting books which he might have owned or used and in other ways checking his history. As I began to question my own beliefs more and more, I decided to ask Poulson to share his discoveries with me, so that during part of my last year at BYU, 1953-54, I went to school with Poulson for an hour each week when both of us should have been attending a devotional assembly. He informed me of his belief that Joseph Smith had written the Book of Mormon himself using as a guide an 1825 book, *View of the Hebrews*, written by the Reverend Ethan Smith and published in Vermont near Joseph Smith's boyhood home. Poulson had a well-annotated copy of *View of the Hebrews* with numerous similarities to the Book of Mormon carefully marked. Ethan Smith's book had a theme similar to that of the Book of Mormon, that the American Indians were of Israelite descent, perhaps from the Ten Lost Tribes in Ethan Smith's opinion, and both attempted to prove that thesis by examining Indian beliefs, traditions, customs, and especially the ancient ruins of the Americas. Poulson seemed convinced that there were no visions, no angels, no gold plates, and that Joseph Smith had used his fertile imagination to write the Book of Mormon and had then organized his church. Poulson's arguments were persuasive to me as a professional historian who had been trained to examine evidence critically.

But the program which helped transform me into the agnostic I am today was Wilkinson's insistence in 1953-54 that starting that year members of the Department of History would be expected to teach a class in Mormon History in addition to their other classes. We were instructed to use Joseph Fielding Smith's *Essentials of Church History* as a text, perhaps the most juvenile and inappropriate survey of the history of the church ever written. I began to read B. H. Roberts's six-volume *Comprehensive History* as a basis for my lectures instead of Smith's book. I had never read Roberts before, and his approach and honest narration of facts were a revelation to me. As I progressed through the first volume in the office I shared with Dick Poll, I came to the "First Miracle of the Church," the story of the "levitation" of Newell Knight who found himself floating above his sick bed, hovering near the ceiling of his room. I slammed the book shut, turned to Dick Poll, told him what I had just read, and announced, "This whole thing is a lot of baloney."

From that time on I felt more and more uncomfortable and guilty that I was accepting tithing money for my salary while teaching Mormon students basic beliefs which were in opposition to traditional Mormon doctrine. I came to the conclusion that I could no longer continue to teach at

BYU. In addition, I became convinced then and still hold the conviction that Brigham Young University is not, has never been, and never can be a true university with proper academic freedom to teach students in the various disciplines and with all the room for free thought necessary in the educational process as long as the institution is controlled by the LDS church. There is subtle and sometimes not so subtle pressure to conform to the beliefs of the "True Gospel," whatever that is. If a faculty member steps over the line, doesn't attend church, or pay his tithing, or in any other way indicates that he is not completely orthodox and perhaps even engages in "bootleg" teaching of students in the privacy of his office, then he comes under close scrutiny, may not receive proper salary raises or promotions, and finally is given the word that he is no longer wanted. In my own field of history, perhaps the worst sin is omitting historical incidents which might embarrass the church or bring its doctrine into question and which then results in "faithful" or apologetic history. As a consequence, outsiders do not always know if they can trust histories written by some scholars who are on the church payroll.

My troubles with my conscience and with the absence of freedom to teach as I pleased with no fear of consequence came to a head in May 1954, about a week before the end of school. I sat down and wrote a brief letter of resignation to Wilkinson. My friends on the faculty were astonished at my decision to leave. I had no prospects of teaching at another school and knew I would have to work as a carpenter to support my family. When I talked to P. A. Christensen, he urged me to reconsider, saying that if I left it would start an exodus of other young liberal faculty away from the campus. He was right, because over the next two or three years a number of some of the most able left because of the tightened control exercised by Wilkinson and church authorities and the growing lack of academic freedom. Christensen finally said at the end of our conversation, "By damn, if I were as young as you, I'd leave too." My best friend, Dick Poll, was so upset that he accused me of "taking out intellectual bankruptcy" by giving up the degree I had worked so hard for to enter the materialistic world of business. He argued that I should remain with him and others to fight the creeping dictatorship from within. My answer was that it was a no-win situation, and I would not be on a faculty where I did not have the freedom to teach as I pleased. Further, I argued that he too would eventually be forced out, as he was some years later. It is interesting to contrast his convictions about "intellectual bankruptcy" with the point of view of an attorney that a builder friend and I had to consult about a legal problem just two years later. When the other builder introduced me as a former college professor now in the construction business, the lawyer ran around his desk, grabbed me by the hand, and exclaimed, "I'd like to shake hands with a man who has had the guts to leave teach-

ing and to venture out into the real world." Perhaps town and gown will never understand one another; I have learned to live in both worlds and have come to appreciate the values of each.

In my short note of resignation, I gave no reason for leaving. After school was out and I had already begun driving daily to Salt Lake City to make a living as a carpenter, President Wilkinson wrote me a letter demanding that I come to his office and explain my sudden decision to leave. I just threw the letter in the wastebasket. Two weeks later I received a second and more conciliatory note asking me to see him at my convenience. I threw it away, too. I only saw Wilkinson one other time, at dinner in a Washington, D.C., hotel on my first evening there just before I went to work for the Peace Corps in the summer of 1963. He spent the time during the meal denouncing the corps, while I defended the idea of voluntary service for America. He wrote me a couple of letters later in Salt Lake City disagreeing with ideas I had expressed in interviews with newspaper reporters. I could never hate him as some faculty at BYU did. In fact, I don't find it in my nature to hate anyone. Perhaps my experiences with a rough element in construction and the military gave me a better understanding of the man and his methods. I believe impartial thinkers must acknowledge his tremendous contribution to BYU in building a great physical plant, in raising student population to its present level, and in committing the church to make BYU into a great institution. If controls over the faculty and teaching have tightened, as they have, it is a natural consequence of the church wanting a firmer grip on an institution into which the general authorities are pouring a lot of money and attention.

When I visit the BYU campus occasionally these days, I come away feeling ill at ease at the precise order and strict controls which can be observed in the campus layout and student dress. I am much more comfortable with the democratic atmosphere of the University of Utah which tends to be a bit untidy but is much freer. If we make mistakes here, at least we faculty and students make them ourselves and are not under the domination of a rigid church hierarchy.

With my connections at BYU severed, I now turned my attention to a building business which was to occupy my time for the next seven years. Although I enjoyed the competition of work as a general contractor, I had not wanted to leave the academic world and did so only because, with my independent nature, I refused to stay any longer at an institution where academic freedom did not exist. During the following seven years of my self-imposed absence from university teaching, I continued to apply for positions in the academic field but without success. Finally in early 1961 an opening appeared on the history faculty at Utah State University. I applied for the job and was hired to teach U.S. history and the

history of the American West. I was once again teaching students and was pleased to be at a university where academic freedom was real and not an illusion.