

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### *Mormons and the Arts*

We think the definition of artistic or scholastic success in the article by John and Kirsten Rector ("What Is the Challenge for LDS Scholars and Artists?" *Dialogue* 37, no. 2 [Summer 2003]: 33-46) is too narrowly defined.

We are converts to the Church. I serve on the high council and my wife is second counselor in the Relief Society. My wife has a master's degree in art history from the University of Illinois, School of Fine and Applied Arts. I was a Ph.D. candidate in economics, dropped out of that program, and graduated with a degree in economics from the University of Illinois, College of Commerce and Business Administration, the equivalent of a master's degree in business.

We are struck by the significant number of LDS households with pianos and people who play and sing. All our nonmember friends are college graduates. Out of the hundred or so we still regularly see or talk to, none is musically inclined. I can think of only one nonmember friend who has a piano.

We agree that the orientation of the Church would discourage an individual from applying the time needed to "achieve" greatness. Limiting your definition of success to

the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes creates an inaccurate model of success. Both these prizes have a significant political element. Hundreds of deserving scientists and writers will never receive one of these prizes. It is akin to the statistically abstruse attempt to look only at hand-gun deaths and not all the other non-fatal experiences in analyzing gun control measures. By registering only the very pinnacle, the Rectors miss the immense balance of the iceberg just below the surface.

It is also curious that the Rectors discount "action-oriented" success. Business is about the truth and about solving problems. Liars do not last long in business. They always need fresh dupes. Solving real problems creates enormous good in the free market and rewards many people in ways not measurable in dollars alone.

We live near Northwestern University in Evanston. This gives us the opportunity to interact with many LDS scholars. They consistently seem to be at the pinnacle of their respective sciences whether they be metallurgists or psychologists. A broader measure might be more difficult to measure, but the scholarly achievements of average members, much of which is done as a hobby and not a career, are enormous. Placed