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## ADVANCE AMBASSADOTS

(A Spiritual Travlogue)

By: Carol Thompson

Great-Great-Great Granddaughter

of Hyrum Smith

Note: The Joseph Smith, Sr. Family Reunion was held July 28 – 31, 1983 at “Graceland College. “This is a Re-Organized Church College at Lamoni, Iowa. The bus for the four East left Prove July 26 with a few Prove Smiths. It stopped across from Temple Square in Salt Lake City to pick up the main body of the tour. Smiths from as far west as California, as far South as Arizona, and as far North as Canada.

### I.

As our driver pulled into the Hotel Loading Zone I scanned the strangers faces. “Which of you resemble Joseph; whom resembles Hyrum”? One chiseled face stood far above the others, Joseph Smith Dudley’s six-three stature stood as a monument. “This is the place--- to meet the buss--- for the Smith Family Reunion,” This Joseph Smith Sr look-alike announced.

“I got up at 4:30 this morning to work at the Church Office building before I came....”

“California....” Oh, look, there’s Frankie. We haven’t seen her since we were eleven...”

“Canada? My you’re true and faithful ...”

Ivor Jones, Garcia’s new husband asked that “Thy spirit be with us” and the bus turned South on “State”.

### II.

Ten minutes down the road, Bernice, one of the Bubbles’ sisters (as they later became known as) locked herself in the bus John. Cheap shots and cute jokes, Buddy Youngreen’s rendition of “What, Oh, what can the matter be---one of the lady’s locked herself in the lavatory.” D.J. Bawden, maker of brazen images, used his sculptures touch to pry the lock. The ice broke and the family began to laugh.

### III.

The evening stained the bus with shadows, hushed whispers, lullabies accompanied by Buddy's Melodeon. Jared Youngreen burrowed into his tied quilt up in the hat rack and dreamed 10-year-old dreams as we highwayed through Colorado – Kansas night.

### IV.

Balloons, bingo and mint bars. The lovely "Bubbles sisters" throw a birthday bash for cousin Marie. "howdy, cousins", Bernice calls. Shyly, a handful of Smiths blurt, "Howdy, cousins". "Hey aren't you glad to see us ... again, Howdy, cousins". This time 39 Smiths shouts return.

### V.

The flat circular Kansas sky, the lazy flapping leaves tempt The Family from the confines of the air-conditioned bus to a rest stop. It was hotter than the blazes of "that place down there". "Buddy, where have you brought us", questioned a wry passenger. D.J., molder of words as well as clay, quipped, "I dunno, ask that red-suited guy over there with the pitch fork".

Topeka welcomed with blow-torch winds and a flatbed for the travel worn bed-seekers the second night out.

Independence, Missouri. Books, pillows, and snow peas are stored away. Buddy beseeches that we "come in the spirit of learning".

The Cathedral reverberates brash sounds and domed echoes. An organ recital accompanies a beautiful woman's explanations of the Auditorium. 6000 organ pipes threaten to drown her description of beautiful headquarters of the Re-Organize Church. Appropriate that the seal of the Church is the lamb and the lion laying together: Peace and goodwill are what we, the Utah family desire.

A bible-thumping octonaries searches out answers simple faith and prayer could discover. "Who carved the inscriptions on the stones?" Corner markers for the temple, the Temple Lot waits, enfolded in realm of peace.

An awesome opposite is felt as a rush of cousins enter the LDS visitor's center. Jesus, arms open welcomes all who enter; cloak of stain stone. Angels fluttering folds lead the eye to Heaven. Neither pomp nor show of import hasten.

## VI.

Liberty jail, incarcerated within the slabs of concrete walls, still a gathering place of the Saints. I have felt the quiet building of the Spirit as we have coasted the land of Joseph and Hyrum – the land of our Fathers. Here, in the cocoon of peace and serenity I partake of the profoundness of this spot. I almost hear Joseph beseeching for understanding. Cold penetrates my soul as the taped monologue describes the “Missoura Misery” of Liberty jail. Someone points out the holes the chain rings left in the stone floor. I feel your companionship and tears threaten to invade my view of the jail. My flesh prickles as spirits touch.

As Patriarch Smith leads our family back to our bus, we begin to know that we really “soul-see” the brothers, advance ambassadors for us—their future family. I sense the love among the cousins as we walk the paths they trod and commune spiritually. The love of brother Hyrum, Joseph, a balm, a brother-gift from God. Willing to sacrifice his life, Hyrum disobeyed Joseph and followed in gentle love to a martyr’s grave. I sense this growth of feeling growing and bond eternally linked but terrestrially broken begins strengthen. We, Hyrum’s posterity, now advanced ambassadors to brother Joseph’s kin, begin to stand as one in spirit as the bus weaves its way towards the North and the family there.

## VII.

Richmond’s sunbaked pioneer cemetery monuments a hill. The heat-stroke leary cousins pant their way, lead by the ever-untiring Buddy, to the spot of David Whitmer’s grave. To our amazement, David Whitmer, and all other David Whitmer’s sleep below Richmond’s granite headboards. The tree to proclaim the site of the David Whitmore we are looking for, has vanished. “If you’re going to mark your grave with a tree – make sure it is a ‘Family Tree’, quips Buddy.

Alexander Doniphen’s heroism is commemorated before a County Building; a pillar to compassion.

Oliver Cowdery, “bears solemn witness” – a pinnacle amid a field of granite slabs of pioneer slumbers.

Richmond, Missouri cradles the heart of our family in martyr soil.

## VIII

Buddy brings the family genealogy to life. Captain “Fear-not,” Patton seems to lurking in the round trees ready to charge the Davis County Militia. The suffering at Hans Mill, Saints tired and driven he weaves the tapestry of our story as the bus threads its way to Far West. Nature foreshadows the monologue as Buddy sets the scene and I sense the spirit of our early fathers. The trees huddle in bunc’es, the cornstalks are swaying markers. Far West, a Mormon Reservation, once a city, now just four corner stones huddle in the brush-cut grass awaiting the return of the apostles who set them in haunting moonlight. Reverently we file back on to the bus and ready ourselves for Adam Ondi Ahman.

## IX.

“Welcome to the Garden of Eden,” Adam in the presence of/with God, Doctrine and Covenants 116. In trepidation or quaking of spirit, I stand at the pulpit of Adam Ondi Ahman. The natural amphitheater is surrounded by thick sentinel trees. I wonder of the masses of people who will fulfill prophecy by meeting at this altar. Moses, Noah, John the Baptist, Isiah, Elijah, Joseph; heeding the call of the master to retreat to his secluded sacred spot. Today I walked where Adam walked . . . and I did feel his presence there.

The rest of the family is seven miles away. Buddy eulogizes the division. He speaks of injustices tossed back and forth and misunderstandings passed from generation to generation. Jan 17,1844, the blessing, Father’s only, would come pass if division had not wedged the families apart. They await us at Lamoni, probably being urged to be ambassadors to us. If we could bridge the gap how pleased our Father Hyrum and Brother Joseph, who are surely with us in spirit, would be. With family bond Buddy threads, the spirit of unity through the hearts of each line. Pied Piper, that he is, he begins to knot the ends to join the family in the circle of eternal love.

## X.

Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa. Dan and Lenore Larsen welcome the road-weary family with supper and lodging for the next four days. Too tired to eat we collected our linen and fans and rested for well-planned days ahead.

Through the next days we learned that the three degrees of glory may not be what we’ve been taught. We were billeted on the third floor and it was the hottest. We expected to wake up every morning just puddles of spirituality. I affectionately call Lamoni “The land of boiling blood and the Bubbles sisters (three of the light-hearted sister who kept the bus free of travel strain).

Friday's program began with prayer that we might be mindful of fellowship. Gracia Denning Jones beseeched the family to be one for this is a time of tribulations and our family must be one of stableness. Lenore Larson welcomed the women of the family. Toni Youngreen a knowledge the blessing of friendship with the Joseph Smith Senior's family. Alma Blair gave history of Lamoni. As each speaker took the stand the theme of the reunion came through strong, "The spirit of this family is the 20<sup>th</sup> Century force". We began of forever relationships with our cousins and the feeling of strangers slipped away on words of love flowing from the pulpit. Kindred spirit penetrates our hearts.

Patriarch Eldred G. Smith brought family heirlooms. What a thrill to touch the box that Alvin Smith gave to Hyrum for Joseph to put the plates in. I felt the tingle of truth as I ran my fingers over the carved letters of his name on the art box. Hyrum's Carthage-riddled shirt, wounded my heart with stark reality.

Buddy Youngreen's film "Seeds of Greatness" entwined the words of Father's blessings and "ten" becomes "now" with phrases; "Stood by father", Hyrum's blessing "Generation to generation. . .thy memory".

Samuel, forgotten martyr, we hear your struggles and feel your strength. You shall not be forgotten in our family, you gave your life for our father's you brothers. The strength of the brothers is being reborn this day.

The talent show, a family affair, our Family Home Evening. A sharing of laughter, talents, and love directed by Lorena Normandeau, family talent scout.

Saturday's sunrise promised another steaming day as the Smiths met in the cool peace of the Shaw Center. Today we learned of Alexander Hale and David Hyrum Smith. We hear the words "gentle" and "Genial" sprinkled among phrases of "Zeal for ministry" and Love of family". We, the audience begins to search for the spirit of family that it will never, never again be divided.

Gracia Normandeau Denning Jones, Great-granddaughter of Alexander Hale Smith delved into the division, that the family might understand the misunderstandings. The rift, so great would take a miracle to bridge is now being bridged, at this moment. We are witnessing this miracle this day, through the bonding of our families at this reunion.

Lynn E. Smith, Patriarch of the R.L.D.S. church, and his lovely wife, Lorene lead their son Eric and daughter-in-law Linda in beautiful presentation of David Hyrum Smith's life. David Hyrum, named after "my brother, who will not desert me", Joseph declared. David Hyrum, the poet, the artist, the musician. As Garland Tickemyer's heavenly voice sung the song of our David we begin to sense the greatness of Joseph's son born five months after his Father's death. The beautiful Tenor voice, like David's rung through the auditorium and reverberated in our souls, the special messages David sought to portray ..." that we might forget our slights and become one unit to show in strength, our love of God".

Sunday morning brought a sadness. The Utah families felt a tearing of the heart strings. Today was the final day and the bus would leave after lunch. "The spirit of God" was sung and like a fire was burning. Each family member was invited to give their feelings of the reunion. A spiritual feast ensued. The cloak of love enveloped and drew the family closer, yet. Tears and smiles were shared in testimonies spiritually spent. We shared our hearts and hearts desired. The love of our Father in Heaven shone through the faces of those who stood and bared their souls. Joseph Sr., Joseph JR, Hyrum, and the members of our families who have gone on before were attending at this great event...the bonding of the families of Joseph and Hyrum, and Catherine. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that the Lord had his hand in this reunion. And, as tears coursed down Lynn G. Smith's face we knew that the family would stand together through the test of times "To meet us again in the gathering, when we stand before His throne" (from David Hyrum Smith's song, Greeting P.M. 1903).

So many loved faces would not be seen until next reunion but none would be forgotten. The family picture that was taken on the first day passed to each member to help us recall names that matched the faces we had grown to love. Hugs and tears of parting combined with promises of next reunion in Nauvoo, Illinois.

## XI.

Winters Quarters. The picture shows row upon row of tents in waist-high snow. Oh Father, never call upon me. I am so thankful for coming forth in these days. I could not be a pioneer as of old. Let me never taste the pain, the loss of babies brings. I could not bear the winters cold --- maybe I could, thou wouldst know. I have felt the icy cold cutting through a winter's warm coat and been uncomfortable. This is but physical discomfort with noon to fear for myself. How did the broken-hearted mothers bear the severing of dead babies from their breast, to be buried, unknown, in Winter Quarter's Cemetery? How the strength of testimony of Eternal Reunion must have softened the blow of departure of Winter Quarters and the lost loved one's mortal beings. Thank you, Father, for my seven colicky, preemie, asthmatic babies and the miracles I have seen as a Mother of Zion in these times of comfort and medical miracles.

## XII.

The culmination of our tour is nigh. I feel as if I am forgetting something, leaving something behind. Of course, we are. The security of final togetherness is unraveling. Many of us will not be able to come in 1985. We still have the remnants of the joy and love we have partaken of. We also have the hope of the "gathering" to come at Adam Ondi Ahman. The bus spokes its way through Nebraska. Lorena gives family prayer and blesses these final hours.

Buddy bears his testimony of the drawin' together of the family, his conversion. A man of humble servitude, Heaven sent to the Smith family. Gracia shares her conversion and special moments of her life. Gracia, my heart cries that we, Hyrum's family have not drawn closer unto Joseph's family in a martyr's support. I weep that the brother's love has been so forgotten and we had set ourselves so far apart. Father forgive us. As she closes, we are weeping yet, we have a strong drive to draw unto our whole family as a mother draws her young to her at time of adversity. We understand how besieged Joseph's family is and each quietly covenants to draw unto them. The Father's hand has been felt. Bless us, that are the descendants of the brothers and sisters, that we may be as one and give spiritual and prayerful aid. For will we not ALL be blessed.

Each member settles into a cocoon of thoughts. The night draws star sprinkled curtains. Morning threatens to break as we pull up on the South side of the Salt Lake Temple. The angel trumps to all the land. We trump up fresh courage and stand as one before we separate for home, Ambassadors to the rest of our family for Unity, Eternally.