

LETTERS

AN UPDATE FROM NAUVOO

Gloria & Alyn Andrus—Missionaries, Joseph Smith Academy

According to the *Nauvoo Temple Times*, December 2001, “Progress continues on the interior construction of the temple. Millwork and painting proceed throughout the building, while specialty decorative painting [and gold leafing] in the Instruction, Assembly, and Celestial rooms provides striking artistic detail. The wooden columns in the Assembly room, for example, have been treated with several different finishes to resemble marble. Another historic replication, the rostrums installed in either end of the assembly room, represent both the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood offices.” These rostrums (or pulpits) closely resemble those found in the Kirtland Temple, although the initials differ slightly.

While work on the outside of the temple has neared completion, temple missionary homes on the “flats” have continued to multiply. As a result, a little city on the flats has flowered. The flats probably look more like Old Nauvoo all the time. However, houses that have been built are all brick—no log houses. So what we see today would not be what we might have seen in 1845. But all this activity reminds us of a report in the *Times and Seasons*, December 15, 1842:

The Temple is progressing steadily. The walls of that noble edifice continue to rise, and its completion is looked forward to with great interest and anxiety by many.

All kinds of improvement[s] are going on rapidly in Nauvoo and vicinity. Houses are going up in every direction in the city, and farms are being enclosed without. ‘The wilderness will’ soon ‘blossom as the rose.’

How remarkably applicable this 160-year-old quote is for today’s Nauvoo. As Brigham Young predicted, the Mormons are back. The temple rises over a university (Joseph Smith Academy) and a growing city. Surely, Joseph’s dream is becoming reality.

Another development in preparation for the temple “open house” and dedication is the removal of St. Mary’s Monastery. Crews currently are engaged in asbestos abatement and “tying off” electrical and water/sewer systems between the Academy which will be left standing and the monastery. The Monastery is expected to be razed by early February. After that, the sloping hill will be re graded and landscaped, providing an unobstructed view of the temple from the Mississippi River and adjacent land.

When the Benedictine nuns moved from Nauvoo to Rock Island, the Catholic Father invited four evangelical (or proselyting) nuns to come to Nauvoo. These sisters will arrive some time this month. This brings to mind two statements from the Prophet Joseph on religious freedom and tolerance. In a Proclamation of the First Presidency, Nauvoo, 15 January 1841, the Prophet wrote:

We wish it likewise to be distinctly understood, that we claim no privilege but what we feel cheerfully disposed to share with our fellow citizens of every denomination, and every sentiment of religion; and therefore say, that so far from being restricted to our own faith, let all those who desire to locate themselves in this place, or the vicinity, come, and we will hail them as citizens and friends, and shall feel it not only a duty, but a privilege, to reciprocate the kindness we have received from the benevolent and kind-hearted citizens of the state of Illinois (HC 4:273).

This same sentiment was expressed by the Prophet in a Sunday sermon on 9 July 1843:

The Saints can testify whether I am willing to lay down my life for my brethren. If it has been demonstrated that I have been willing to die for a “Mormon,” I am bold to declare before Heaven that I am just as ready to die in defending the rights of a Presbyterian, a Baptist, or a good man of any other denomination; for the same principle which would trample upon the rights of the Latter-day Saints would trample upon the rights of the Roman Catholics, or of any other denomination who may be unpopular and too weak to defend themselves.

It is a love of liberty which inspires my soul—civil and religious liberty to the whole of the human race. Love of liberty was diffused into my soul by my grandfathers while they dandled me on their knees (HC 5:498).

Incidentally, Alyn and I drove to Rock Island on January 3 to visit Sister Denise and the other nuns at their new retirement center. It is a lovely building, exhibiting a great deal of thought in its design. They were able to purchase an 80-acre farm which the owner did not want subdivided. The monastery sits on a slight hill surrounded by ponds and numerous trees. They are happy there—and lunch was very tasty! When the last nun passes from this life, of course, we don’t know what will happen to the monastery, but it would make a fine senior citizen retirement center.



COMMENTS ON “WATERCOLOR AND MY WORLD”
Allen Hackworth—Department of English

Richard E. Bird makes me happy whenever his life touches my own. This was certainly true as I read his words and observed his prints in *Perspective* (Fall 2001). I, too, believe that it is God within which stimulates the creation of art, music, and literature. We move to the nudging and intimations of our spiritual and physical genetics.

Additionally, Dick accurately described the creative process for essays, poem, photography, sculpture, painting, landscape architecture, etc., when he writes, “It takes form as a concept, an idea, a feeling or a desire. It requires pondering, incubation, and ultimately the physical, hands-on action, until fruition is achieved.”

Just as we thrill in nature to the infinite varieties of life, shape, color, action, and reaction, so do we thrill to the unique styles of different artists as they capture numerous truths from the ever-fluid, kaleidoscopic movements of earth and men. There is delight in various approaches; there is delight in the way Richard E. Bird creates with watercolors. His pictures reflect a heart filled with love for the earth and for the people who, in beauty, struggle to prevail upon it. For example, in *Red Hat* we see the clean elegance of Italian women who care about fashion in a world where money is scarce. Their desire for beauty is an admirable, noble trait; and Dick translated this moment of truth and emotion into shape and color. Of course, this principle is true with all of his *Perspective* images.

Like any picture, we always have our favorites. I like those that are most colorful. In most of the prints, the colors are vivid, making the old look new. In a few of the prints, the colors are bland, making the grand seem small. For example, before I read the title, *Notre Dame*, I assumed the cathedral was in Mexico. I assumed it was in ruin, and I assumed it reflected a dying culture. When I read the title, I was disappointed because I am familiar with the grandeur of Notre Dame Cathedral. My favorite was *Bahama Mama*. What a great title. What strong colors. What sensitive blending and arranging of plants, houses, and people.

Many times I have wished to understand more about art. Yet with my subjective view, I am convinced that Richard E. Bird is a first-rate artist. I enjoyed seeing samples of his inspiring works in *Perspective*.



THINGS I LIKE ABOUT BYU-IDAHO (AND THE SPIRIT OF RICKS)
John Bonner—Department of English

There are several things I particularly like about BYU-Idaho and the Spirit of Ricks. Before coming here in 1969, my only prior teaching experience was in the seventh and eighth grades at a school in Nevada. When I arrived in Rexburg, there were about 4,000 students enrolled at Ricks College. My office was downtown in a former girls' dormitory known as T-30. Because of these beginnings, I enjoy the occasional (and increasingly rare) student who signs only his or her first name to a test or paper. It reminds me of a time when this institution was much smaller and of an even earlier time when I taught younger students. More importantly, it calls to mind that each student is important, that I should know each of my students by name.

Something else I appreciate about our students then as now is their willingness to spontaneously help anyone in need. As the current winter semester began, I noticed a young woman with two large and apparently heavy suitcases walking toward the dorms. Two young men walking from the opposite direction cheerfully asked if they could assist her. She assured them that she was okay, just waiting for her roommates; but I was touched by their kindness. A day or so later I saw another young man carrying a cardboard box for the young woman walking beside him. And finally, at an early morning hour while it was still dark, I drove into the Smith Annex parking lot with a wooden typewriter stand in my back seat. I opened the back door of the car and then stood wondering how I would get the heavy stand across the ice-covered lot to the sidewalk. At that moment a young jogger in black sweats offered to help. He carried the burden across the lot and to my office door.

I like campus services and the people who make them actual. Several kind ladies in white dresses, some with white hair, were among the first people I met when visiting here in April 1968. Thirty-three years later I still marvel at their ability to prepare wonderful meals for a large group or just one person in a gracious and hospitable way.

I also appreciate custodians, student and full-time, who cheerfully clean buildings at an early hour so that we may enjoy a comfortable atmosphere throughout the day. The same can be said of those who clear sidewalks and parking lots and who care for flower beds and lawns. This didn't become such a beautiful place by accident!

A respected teacher here said it is well to write your own assignments. I don't always, but it is worthwhile when I do. For example, I put an essay question about Native American creation tales on a recent test. I responded to a native story about a man who became a woman and then, miraculously, the first mother. It seemed far-fetched, but as I wrote my

response many insights came to mind. I thought of the scriptural account that Eve came from Adam and not the other way around. I considered phrases such as, “mother of all living” (Eve) and “giver of life” (father). As I wrote, the native creation tale no longer seemed so unreasonable. I like the opportunity to be a learner as well as a teacher.

I appreciate secretaries who are so wise, so kind, who do so many things, including the keeping of confidences. I am grateful for administrators who are former teachers and who retain the spirit of teaching as they perform their many administrative duties. I thank those who greet me by name, from students to the president. I am strengthened by the direction of a prophetic board. Especially I notice the warm, edifying Spirit which is ever present here. Last, I am thankful for a courtesy so small as holding a door.

