At this writing (1970) Simpson Melvin Woolf will be 91 years of age this coming 22 Oct. 1970. He is cheerful, alert and amazingly young at heart. He maintains a hopeful outlook and interest in others, with whom he shares a fine sense of humor, which is a great portion of his identity. To this day, his voice is strong and vibrant and his keen wit is still dominant in his conversation.

Simpson Melvin Woolf was born in Hyde Park, Cache County, Utah in 1879. He moved to Canada with his parents at the age of 7. His early life in Canada was spend among cattle and horses and doing farm work. In the early twenties, he filled a successful mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Eastern States.

He married Harriet Celestia Stoddard 22 Aug 1902 in the Salt Lake Temple. They were blessed with 6 daughters: Idonna, Joyce, Ruth, Winnifred, Zola and Mary. 4 have passed away. Joyce and Zola are living (1970)-Joyce, residing in Seattle, Washington and Zola in Providence, Utah, a neighboring city of Hyde Park.

After his marriage, Sim was engaged in ranching and farming. His farm was one of the finest in the country. The Alberta government was at that time advertising in the states to attract farmers. It bought his wheat crop in the sheaf and sent samples to thousands of farmers. Tags attached to the samples, showing the yield of wheat per acre and the cost of land per acre, were a strong lure and an effective factor in bringing farmers into the Alberta Province.

He was postmaster, member of the town council, member of the school board and manager of the fair board in Cardston, Alberta, Canada. In 1902, when only 25 years of age, he was set apart as a member of the high council of Alberta Stake by Pres. Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund and Reed Smoot, serving in that capacity for 9 years.

He left Canada for the sake of his wife’s health, and after residing in Salt Lake City for 2 years, located in Metropolis, Nevada, in 1913. Harriet passed away in 1916 following a 6 year affliction with tuberculosis. Everyone loved her for her cheerfully sweet and courageous spirit throughout her long illness.

On 19 June 1918, Simpson was married to Miss Norma Tanner in the Salt Lake Temple. They were blessed with 4 sons and a daughter; Molen, Melvin, Eugene, Norman and Josephine (Mrs. Dow Townsend). Molen, a Colonel and Judge Advocate General of the Third Air Force Base is stationed in England, where he has spent the last 3 years. Melvin is Area Personnel Representative for the Federal Aviation Administration’s Salt Lake City Office with jurisdiction in the states of Utah, Idaho, and Nevada. Eugene is Dean of the School of Arts and Letters of the College of Southern Utah at Cedar City. Norman is a Doctor of Medicine, practicing in Redding, California.

Sim’s daughter, Zola, recalls, “Father was ordained bishop of the Metropolis Ward in Nevada by Francis M. Lyman and David O. McKay in 1916 and served in that capacity about 10 years. While he was serving as bishop, I remember so well how ward members expressed their delight in hearing him speak. He also was endowed with a beautiful singing voice and often sang solos in the ward programs. He sang many duets with his brother, Milton. Milton lived in Midvale and at the age of 85, is an admirable man, delightfully cheerful and pleasant to be with, in spite of having had more than his share of life’s trials. These 2 brothers were always very
close and are a great comfort to each other.” (Melvin died 27 June 1986)

Though not a large man, Simpson has always been wiry and energetic. He is a man of big heart and integrity and has displayed a stout will in living by his convictions.

In his younger days, he was known for his ability as a side-hold wrestler. In this wrestling, a man was “down” if his knees touched the ground, that is, if he had lost his footing. Sim was very quick and able to throw men much larger than he, which he often did. Zola remembers her concern over his welfare, when as a child she heard that he was to wrestle a much larger man at a 4th of July celebration. She worried for fear he might be hurt; but he won the match, much to her relief and pride. He was 41 at that time and she thought he was much too old for that sort of thing. He would sometimes challenge a larger opponent, as he had the traits of courage and confidence, which, coupled with his skill and speed, were the necessary ingredients to win. This quality of confidence never held a note of audacity or cockiness, but rather was part of his innate eagerness for fun, adventure, and sportsmanship with friends. He loved and enjoyed people and always a gentleman, he was popular in return.

His characteristic impulsiveness was indulged at times. A group of men were sitting on large oil barrels discussing the news of the day in the large building of Consolidated Wagon and Machine Company (Con Wagon). He had just purchased a new automobile and wanted to show it off to his friends. He was not yet too adept in handling the beautiful Franklin automobile and already had a reputation for his “original” mode of driving. He managed to steer it straightway into the building at a high speed for that time, heading straight for the group of men and barrels that scattered wide and fast; upon seeing his sudden approach they yelled, “Here comes the bishop—jump for your lives.”

Sim used to be quite an actor, and in one play he acted the part of “Strongheart,” an Indian brave in love with a white woman. This performance was so professional, Zola felt she was watching a play straight from Hollywood and felt in awe of his beautiful rendition of the role that lingers with her yet. Tears were shed by those in the audience, because he had so firmly identified with the strong, but alien, character he was portraying.

He moved from Nevada to Salt Lake City in 1924 where he engaged in real estate, investment securities, mining, and ranching. In the Forest Dale Ward he was a member of the ward choir, served as a ward teacher, chairman of the finance committee, counselor in MIA, Sunday School and High Priest group. He spent many years as class teacher in the ward organizations. The word “educate” means to “lead forth.” In this light, he was a leader among teachers of religious instruction, having the ability to impart reverence and emphasis to the essential, and humor where it would appropriately brighten or accentuate a point.

For the past 10 years he has been interested in a cattle ranch at Gandy, Utah, owned by Ward Leasing Company, a Utah corporation which he organized in 1939. This company stockpiled 12,000 tons of manganese ore for Uncle Sam during World War II and shipped a like tonnage of florspar ore.

Ninety years has not completely whitened his hair. There are still more brown strands than gray. When asked about it, he answers, “Oh, I just could never see any percentage in it.” The loyal and wonderful care and companionship from his beloved wife, Norma, has had a great deal to do with it. If there ever was a woman who asked little and gave all, it is she.

Sim’s testimony of faith and trust in God and His beautiful and perfect gospel plan is an inspiration to all. He has an enviable knowledge of Church doctrine and Church History. He has written and compiled papers for his family and has just finished a writing entitled, “What Should
the True Church of Christ do for all Mankind?” This is a fine work of compiled information taken from the minds of many of the world’s greatest thinking men. It is coordinated in an interesting and informative manner which has filled many hours of this time in review, research and contemplative study. How fortunate his family is to be recipients of a part of his knowledge by which they may remember and enjoy him. How marvelous it is that he is blessed to the extent that he is still studying and writing at 90 years.

Recently, he was engaged in conversation with an old business acquaintance when his friend remarked, “How I love you, Sim.” This statement completely surprised him as he was totally unaware of the man’s feeling for him. His little crooked, charming smile haloing around words of cheer and hope has led many unsuspecting individuals into the recesses of his heart.

He has always had an optimistic viewpoint toward life and all its finer joys and verities, which was often acknowledged. He taught his family by example to embrace and appreciate the truth in spite of sorrows ans setbacks which beset them along the way. Someone has defined the optimist and the pessimist as follows: The optimistic man gives hope. The pessimistic, Warning. The former says, “Good morning, Lord.” The latter, “Good Lord, Morning.

Simpson was always the former, gratefully saying, “Good morning, Lord.” The Master Optimist must have appreciated his fine spirit and courage, for he seemed to have answered his cheerful situation each morning in like manner, and in countless ways, blessed him—and others through him.

Zola Woolf Bringhurst, Daughter


Typed into the computer 26 Oct 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf Idaho Falls, Idaho
Information from book JOHN ANTHONY WOOLF FAMILY Publ. 1986