

Voices from the Past

BLIND OF EASTERN IDAHO

By Alma B. Larson

September 1962

Tape #5

Oral interview conducted by Harold Forbush

Transcribed by Louis Clements

Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society

INTRODUCTION

The Library of the Upper Snake River Historical Society in the Teton Flood Museum contains over 600 video, cassette, and reel to reel tapes. These oral interviews have been gathered to over the past years from individuals throughout the Snake River Valley. I had the opportunity to catalogue this collection over the past couple of years and was amazed at the information containing therein.

I decided that it was unfair to the public to have all of this historical information on a tape and only available to a few who had the time to come to the library and listen to them. The library does provide a service in which copies of the tapes can be made, and during the past few years many have come in and obtained a copy of a particular tape. The collection has a lot of family stories, some pioneer experiences, a few individual reminiscences of particular parts of history, and some recorded individuals have a personal knowledge of a historical event.

I spent a lot of time trying to come up with a name for this series of stories that would describe the overall text of the message contained herein. Since they are transcribed from the actual voices of those who experienced the history the name Voices From The Past seemed appropriate. The oral history in this volume of Voices From The Past has been taken from the interviewer with it being recorded on tape. Since Idaho's history is so young in year, the oral history becomes greater in importance. Eyewitness accounts rank high in reliability of the truth of events, although the reliability suffers as they interviewee ages or the time between the event and the interview grows. As the age of some of the cassette is progressing into the time period of deterioration of tapes, all are currently (2002) being copied onto audio discs (CD's) for preservation.

I have selected this event as one that occurred in Eastern Idaho which was experienced by the person or persons being interviewed. There was such a vast amount of information available in the library; I had to reserve many of the tapes for inclusion in future volumes. The tapes are being transcribed in order of importance according to my thinking.

Transcribing from a tape to written word is a new experience for me. I have done this on a very small scale before but to attempt to put the contents of a conversation down on a paper requires a great amount of concentration. I have taken the liberty of editing out the many "a's" that occur in an interview as well as other conversational comments. Then comes the problem of the book a challenge from the point of view of making a correct transcription and yet an interesting story. I have made a few editorial changes in view of this problem.

I would like thank the many people who have taken the time to arrange for the oral recording of an individuals story. The information obtained in this manner is, in many cases, not available from any other source. One of the pioneers of oral history in Eastern Idaho is Harold Forbush. Despite the handicap of being blind, he travels around the whole Snake River Valley visiting with people and taping their responses. He began his career of taping while living Teton Valley and serving as the prosecuting attorney there.

His lifetime interest in history got him started and since then he has been a major contributor to the collection of stories in the library. He continued his oral history recording after moving to Rexburg. After retiring from being Madison Counties' magistrate, he moved to Idaho Falls for a time and now has returned to Rexburg to continue as occasional taping session. He is to be congratulated for his lifetime commitment to the preservation of Idaho's history.

There are many others who have done some taping including several Madison High School students. Most of the student tapes are not of the same sound quality as the professional oral history collector, but the stories they have gathered over the years have provided a special look at the Depression, war experiences, farming experience, and many other subjects which can't be found anywhere else. Many thanks to them.

There are some tapes in which the interviewer did not identify themselves. These unknown records have provided several stories which have helped make up the overall history of the Snake River Valley and I thank them even if I cannot acknowledge them personally.

I hope that as you read the following stories you will be inspired to keep a record of your own either in written or tape form so that your opinion of what has happened in the world or in your life can be preserved. Many think their life has been insignificant and others would not want the years and find each other to have its own contribution to my knowledge of what has happened. Idaho is an exciting place to live and is full of stories which are unique to our area. Share them with others.

Louis J. Clements.

How the Blind of Eastern Idaho See the Experience of Life

Harod Forbush: This is the first in a series of tape recorded interview with the blind persons who have lived in this area of Idaho all of their adult lives or were born here and continued living here, or who have moved here. These people have and accomplished much in the way of service among their sighted fellow workers and citizens of Eastern Idaho. Many years ago I interviewed Alma B. Larson, the subject of this taped interview. Though it was done then, I feel that I should like to copy from that tape done in 1962 and include that interview in this particular series. Because Brother Larsen's influence for good in a spiritual way was so profound and so wide spread in Eastern Idaho.

HF: Today is the 22nd day of September, 1962. I am privileged to be sitting in the presence of Brother Alma B. Larsen of Rexburg, the Stake Patriarch for many, many years. This is a realization to me of the privilege and blessing of interview him this day. An opportunity of which I have looked forward for a number of years. Now it's coming into fruition. I am grateful this afternoon to have this privilege of interviewing this good man. Who in 1938, as a matter of fact, it was on the 18th of July, 1938, gave me a Patriarchal Blessing which has been a source of inspiration to me in my life during the ensuing years. I am sure a means of stabilizing my footsteps and guiding me in those paths which have brought the greatest joy. To this good man I owe that blessing and, of course, our Heavenly Father. And so it is with mixed emotions on this day I am here at his home in Rexburg to interview him and to have him to tell us his story. Let us call it a saga of courage, a saga of faith, one of spiritual contribution in the lives of so many hundreds and possibly thousands of the Saints not only of this stake but of the surrounding stakes whose children have come to him from time to time. Whose Saints have come to him from time to time with the purpose of having him bestow upon them a Patriarchal Blessing? Now Brother Larsen, I should like to ask you a little something about your genealogy, for example, your age, where you were born, something about your parents on both sides? Something about where they were born and when they came to the country and the circumstances under which they came? What brought them to this blessed land of America?

AL: My father and mother were born in Norway. My father was called on a mission a few days after he joined the church. The missionaries came over from Sweden into Norway into a little town called Tistdal(?) where my father was a foreman of a little cotton factory. When he heard the Gospel, he accepted it. The owners of the cotton factory that he worked for called him in. Right straight they said they'd heard he joined the Mormon Church. He said, yes sir I have. SO they gave him his choice, his job or the Church. He accepted the Church and he lost his job. That's when he was called on a mission, immediately. He served for eight and a half years traveling by foot. He had no other way of going. He had no other money. He traveled those many years without purse or script. From Tristidal, the south end of Norway to way up north in to Trondheim and Bergen and back. To attend one conference he walked with hundred miles. He was always provided for the Saints. In that mission he met my mother and converted her to the Gospel. Her people were very bitter. She joined against their wishes. At the end of the eight and half years, when he received his release, he received a passport for him and his

sweetheart. They left Norway early in April, 1863; I think I have that right. They were six weeks crossing the ocean in a sailing ship. Then they took a train to, I forget the point exactly now. They were assigned to William Prestons's company to cross the Plains, an ox team. They were young people, of course. They walked across the Plains because the wagons were heavily laden with immigrants and all of their belongings. They arrived in Salk Lake in September, sometime in September. They were married in the Endowment house. The temple wasn't finished. Then they were assigned to make their first home. Their furniture was made out of Quaken Asp poles. It was in this cellar that my oldest sister was born. They named her Carline after her mother. Her mother's name was Karen, interpreted in to English, Carline.

HF: How many children were there in your family, then? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

AL: There were eight children, however, the one died. I think it was a stillborn baby. But seven of them all lived. I can give you the names of the family.

HF: Well, I don't think that will be necessary. Now let's see, your were which one in the family, the fifth?

AL: I was the fifth child.

HF: And where were you born?

AL: I was born in Cache Valley in Hyrum, the 18th Day of October, 1975.

HF: After your birth, your parents moved in toe Upper Snake River Valley, did they?

AL: Yes, I was nine years old in 1884 when my father and mother and family moved up in to Idaho, the Snake River Valley locating in Salem.

HF: What were conditions like when they arrived?

AL: Well, my father and mother came up first and my brother, Ed. They filed on a homestead there. The high water came up and they couldn't get out. So they were there for during the high water season. My mother was the only woman there at that particular time. There were others that come later. Some had been there before and had gone back to Cache Valley. She was there and one day, Bob Tarter, an outlaw and hi wife, who were well known in the early days. They came a riding there and they met them. When the water went down so that they could get out, of course, there were other neighbors that came in right straight. But our first winter here, we came in the fall of 1884. They built a big log house out of Quaken Asp logs. They placed willows on the roof and then cut grass, hay as best they could and covered it with that. And then they put dirt on that. It was a big room but it wasn't large enough for the whole family. So my sister, Carline, she was about twenty years old at that time, took my sister younger than myself, two years younger than myself, my sister, Tillie, and myself and went over a half a mile to a cabin.

There had been a family by the name of Hoken Anderson had built the summer before. We made that trip every night and back in the morning. They went over to the river and got a bunch of willows and stuck in the snow as the snow came and got deep. One willow on one side and another willow on the other side so that we wouldn't get lost. It was easy to follow the trail then. Father always hung a lantern on the corner of the house. This little cabin just had a little window cut, I guess, an eight by ten window pane put in there for the window. But it was quite comfortable in there. There was a stove. That was our bedroom for the winter.

HF: Who were some of the names, what were some of the pioneer names at that time, as early as 1884 that you recall in the Salem/Rexburg area?

AL: Well, in the Salem area there was a family by the name of Bill Judy. They had one boy and four or five girls here. There was Harvey Dillie. Then the Hoken Anderson family came. George P. Ward came from Afton, Wyoming, and they lived in Harlem. Ross Jensen.

HF: Who was the Bishop in Salem at that time?

AL: The ward was organized in George P. Ward's home. George H. B. Harris was chosen as Bishop with Dave Nelson as 1st Counselor and a man by the name of Henry Wilson as 2nd Counselor. Henry Wilson was a brother Nick Wilson, who lived with the Indians and lived in Salem with his family. He later went to Jackson and the little town of Wilson is named after him. He lived with the Indians when he was a young man. He wrote a book. But he lived in Salem at that time with his whole family and associated with them. Well, that some of the families.

HF: Well, now in the Rexburg area? Who was the Stake President, his counselors?

AL: Thomas E. Ricks, came in to the Valley, was sent up here by the authorities of the Church. He presided over this whole country north of Cache Valley, Oxford. His counselors at that particular time were, I don't remember their names at this time. Gunnell, Frank Gunnell was one of them.

HF: Rigby was one of them, wasn't he?

AL: He came in a little later.

HF: Do you remember Thomas E. Ricks personally?

AL: Yes, I should say I do. Very, very well. The first store we had here in Rexburg, they called it the little Coop Store. I remember a Garner, who still alive was a clerk in that store. He lived in Sugar City. I guess he's about 90 years old.

HF: What were some of the activities in which you engaged in as a young man in order to make your livelihood?

AL: Well, I was a good sized boy. When I was twelve years old, of course, I was ordained a Deacon. Our job, as Deacons, was to cut the wood and make fires for Sunday school and the meetings. Hebe Ward, who lived a mile west of us, was another Deacon. Louis Kanderson and Aaron Judy, we grew up together and came up through the Priesthood activities. My first job that I remember anything about was then the Belnaps came in. They entered homesteads where my son, Gerald, now lives. Jess Belnaps 160 was a mile long and Amnesty Belnap's was a mile long. Where the highway goes now, it was cut up into several farms at the present time. Amnesty Belnap had two teams and tired me to work for him for, I think it was, fifty cents a day. I helped plow the sage brush. I followed his with a hand plow. Helped clear the sage brush of piece of ground that is owned by Charlie Hansen at the present time. It's just across the Teton Bridge going north on the east side of the road. It is a little flat there. The sage brush was very heavy on it. That was the first job, I think I ever had. However, I'd like to go back now and relate the experience my father and family had when they firs came in. We just had three horses. There was a man by the name of Benson who had a band of horses on the place that Jack Willard owned is now owned by one of the Harris boys. It is right down to the west end, just a mile west of there of the Country Road. WE got acquainted with him during the winter, very well acquainted with him. He used to come to our house, Mr. Benson did, because of the young people that we had. So the told them that you are welcome to use some of these horses if you want to come down and beak they. Some of them are broke. You can work them in the spring. IT was very handy and very nice of him. It helped out. The first move that was made by the first settler that came in was to fence a school section off. It was easy to get water out on. So they divided that school section up into pieces. My father and the boys had about better than forty acres that we cleared the sage brush off... (portion mission on tape) We made laterals out of it to water the ground. Other neighbors had a part of that school section ground too. It was nearly all farmed. The squirrels were just a thick as they could be. We had to kill them by the thousand. In irrigating the ground, we had to irrigate every foot of it. When we found squirrel holes here and we'd stand there with s shovel and kill them when they came out. It was a regular war that we had to fight. They were so numerous that they took the crops around the edges of the farms before we could do away with them. We had two enemies. The squirrels and the mosquitoes. We had to fight them the first summer or two that we were here.

HF: Did the Indians bother you in the slightest way in those early years?

AL: No, we were always concerned about hem. The Indians came up through here but not like they did in Cache Valley. My first memories n Cache Valley was the Indians came in tribes, begging from the Saints. My first experience up in this country was, I guess I was about twelve years old, thirteen maybe. When the people first went into Jackson Hole, white people. The government had to step in. There were shootings that took place. Some men were shot and killed, the Indians were. Then the government stepped in and sent two companies from Fort Douglas, in Salt Lake. They came on trains as far as Market Lake, now Roberts. There they unloaded. The first company was an infantry. They were whites. They wee on foot. They had large wagons with six horses or

mules with their supplies. I suppose all the people in the valley came here at Rexburg to see them come through here. The city ditch came down out of the Tetons and came through the city. I remember so well, as us young fellow rode by and saw those boys sitting on the bank and washing their feet. It was a large company. Then following those whites the cavalry came a couple of three days later. They were all colored people from Fort Douglass. They were on horses. It was a real thrill. They were on their way to Jackson Hole where the Indians had gathered and declared war. They got as Teton Basin, at that time, these companies of soldiers. When the Indians discovered that they would have to fight these large companies they sued for peace. The soldiers never got over into Jackson Hole. Some of the officers might have, I don't know.

HF: Now in the act of growing up in the Salem town site, did you have a chance to attend any schooling in those years?

AL: Yes, a little. Very little. The question of public schools came in at that time. The first schooling that I had was a private school that the neighbors made up. Albert Ward, a crippled boy, George P. Ward's boy taught school a little. He never got out of the fourth reader. He got into what we called the fourth reader. It didn't go by grades. It went by readers. My brothers, Joseph, taught school a little while. They picked them up where they could get them. That was the first schooling that we had. That we had. That was the second winter that we were here. Then public schools came into being. The enemies. The enemies of the Mormons in 1888 passed a law in Boise disenfranchising the Mormons. They interpreted the law, the word celestial, as meaning polygamy. Fred T. Dubois was the Senator from the Territory of Idaho in Washington D. C. and had a lot of influence. He fought our people and then came back to meet with the legislature in the Territory of Idaho that met in Boise. They enacted this law disenfranchising the Mormons. The Church fought that law. A young man by the name of Davis from Bear Lake volunteered to go make a test of it. He was a single man. He went and demanded the right to vote and id vote. Then he was arrested. They fought that case all through the courts here in Idaho and lost every case. Then the Church took it to the Supreme Court and they lost it there. The Supreme Court upheld the local courts where the case had been tried.

HF: Do you personally remember then talking very much about eh question of polygamy during those days of 1880's?

AL: Yes, yes I remember all about it. My father was a not a polygamist. Whether they were polygamists or were not polygamists they were in hiding because they were members of the Mormon Church. They summoned George H. B. Harris, the Bishop of the Salem Ward. The United States Marshals came up and arrested him and told him to take his books and take them down to Blackfoot. Well, they took him down. When they got to Blackfoot they told him to appear in court the next day. He said what are you going to do with me? Where am I going to get something to eat? That's your business. So he made it his business. There were always wagons coming through because of the pioneers coming up to this country to settle. The first wagon that was coming up this way, he, the same day within the hour, he started back home. He came home. About a week later they came back and arrested him and took him back down to Blackfoot. They put him in jail

this time. He appeared before the judge. The judge fined him \$35. He said well, I don't have any money. Well then you can work it out. They took him down and put him in one of the cells down under the courthouse. Barney Lavery, who lived in Salem at the time, heard of it. He was in the railroad business, as well as, ranching. Barney had a ranch in Salem. He heard them talking about this Mormon Bishop who had been sent to jail. He got interested. He went and found out that it was true and went right down and saw the bishop. He said, Bishop, I'll go and pay your fine. And he did. He paid \$35. And he brought the bishop back home.

HF: He was a Catholic, wasn't he?

AL: Strong Catholic, but a good friend of Mormons. He lived with us there. There were five brothers in the Lavery family. There was Luke, Hue, Barney, Will, and one other.

HF: This Barney Lavery lived in Salem for a number of years. I remember him as a little kid.

AL: Yes, he died her just two or three years ago. He did that fine act. When Fritz Post died, I was asked to speak at his funeral and I related in his funeral this incident that had taken place. Barney Lavery was sitting on the stand and his daughter was down in the audience. I paid tribute to Barney Lavery for that kind act. Course, he was paid back the \$35. I think the Saints helped George H. B. Harris pay the bill back. So he didn't lose any money. But I well remember Barney Lavery getting up and testifying to the truth of the story that I had told. His daughter came to me and thanked me very kindly for paying such a fine tribute to his father who was a Catholic.

HF: Now this brings us to a point where, perhaps, we should talk about when you were married, and the lady of your choice, and when that event occurred?

AL: I'll have to enlarge a little upon this incident, this very important incident. The most important of my whole life was choosing a helpmate and companion. I knew it was. I had been working for a man by the name of Pete Wilson. I had worked in the timber a great deal as a young man. My brother, Joseph, he worked for a different saw mill companies. Then I went out on my own and contracted, a logging contract with Pete Wilson to furnish logs for his sawmill. After one winter of work logging for him, I had four or five men working form. I had four teams. Then he hired me to run his mill. He paid me so much. I don't remember what the salary was now. He turned the mill right over to me. He said I want you to run it. They came from Mexico and had no children. They had some cattle. He said I'll like you to take care of my cattle. I'll put on what they called Loon Creek at the time. I was working there. I met a beautiful girl and fell in love with her. My first acquaintance with her, however, I had an occasion to go see Dr. Rich. He was unmarried at the time. He was a young doctor who had come into Rexburg. She was his office girl. I went to see that I guess I have even seen in my life. I dated her and became engaged to her while I was working for Pete Wilson. We got married. We were married in the Logan Temple. It was just Thanksgiving time. I guess I should have prepared myself a little on the dates. We got married and I had to go right back up. I had left my

work with my folks. I went right back up there cause I had to move the sawmill from up on Fall River down to Marysville. I had some men with me. We tore the mill all up. I put that big boiler on a pair of bobs with four horses. There we had two or three other bobsleds. We moved the mill down. We got to Pete Wilson's home there in Marysville and stayed overnight. I'd sent word and had them bring my young wife up to Wilson's at that time.

AL: The next morning, real early, went down to the river. The boys were with me. I had one man with the boiler on one bob sled. The mush ice was running as thick as it could run in the Snake River. I thought I had everything packed so solid, the chains and the leaders. When they got into the mush ice the horses had to fight that mush ice. They were jerking and jerked one of the chains loose with the leaders. There we were out in the middle of the river. There was only one man that could get into the water and get that chain. That was me. I never asked a man to do anything that I wouldn't do myself. So I handed the line to the man that was with me and I got in the river in front. The water was up to my waist. I felt around and found the chain with my foot. I got a hold of it. I reached down in with my head sticking out and got it fastened onto the front roller. I got it hooked and took a piece of wire and tied it so that it would be solid again. Then I hollered and asked the man, while I was still in the water, the water was warmer than the air was even with all that ice. I asked him to get one of the horses ready for me so that I could get on it and go back to Marysville about three miles. They had the horse ready for me. I jumped on the horse as wet as I was and beat it to Marysville where my wife was at Pete Wilson's home. She pretty near fainted when she saw me come in. My clothes were as stiff as they could be. I was bare headed. Pete Wilson said wouldn't do that do the best man that ever lived. I said, would you have left those horses and outfit out in the river? I don't know what I would have done. Well, I said, you would have done the same thing that I've done. They soon got dry clothes for me. My wife brought my best clothes up, some changes for me anyway. So that was her first experience at pioneering at the saw mill. We set the mill up over there and ruin it. I learned to run the saw, the ratchet, take the engine and then things began to change. Pete Wilson wanted to go back to Mexico. He wanted my wife and me to go with him. He said we haven't any children and we'd like to adopt you. When we go back there, I want to go into the cattle business. You'll have everything we've got if you go with us. Of course, we wouldn't go. Well, I worked for him that summer and then the mill had to be moved again. I made another move with the mill and then he sold it. Sold the mill to Axe Landerson, a neighbor of ours. We had a baby come to us. We had been married thirteen or fourteen months. Our first child was name Gerald. That's when I received it in the fall the year. It was a call to go the Scandinavian mission. That consisted of Denmark and Norway. The Swedish mission was to itself. I took the letter and went to my brother, Joseph. I said how shall I answer this. He said there is only one way to answer Almy and that's to say yes. I said I have a wife and a baby, what about them? He said I'll take care of you. I'll finance you and see that you are taken care of. His wife had died and left him three children. Those children had lived with my wife and me while we lived in their home and took care of them. They were very much attached to us. A little before Christmas I came down with appendicitis. I had suffered with chronic appendicitis for years. I didn't know it was that but I'd had cramps trouble. This time the appendices broke. Dr. Rich, a young man still, fixed up a

room in his office about where Graham Hardware is. On one ever expected me to get over that. It was a stoppage of the bowels. It tuned into what they call perinitus. Dr. Rich made eight trips out to Salem hiring a livery outfit to come out to see me. He said we'll have to take you into town. They couldn't operate, he know that. SO Bishop Harris and my brother, Joseph, bundled me up. I started the hiccups as soon as they moved me. By the time we got to Rexburg I was hiccupping so loud they could hear me from blocks. The doctor was standing outside. He said this sounds like the last. They carried me upstairs and the hiccups stopped. I laid there the rest of the winter. My call was to leave Boston on the 3rd of April. I had sold a team of horses in the fall, the best team I ever had to Fred Klingler. I think he gave me \$300 and that was my money to go on a mission. So I was prepared to go on my mission. I never doubted that I would go when that appointed time came. I never saw my father's faith failing but once in his life. He came in along in the middle of March. I was still laying there. He suggested to me that I have my wife, Liddy, write to President Josephs F. Smith and explain the conditions. He said to ask for a little time. He says you're week, you're poor, you're thin, and you've lost all the weight you've got. I said, father, it's up to the Lord. I'm not going to make the decision. I'm not going to ask for an extension of the time. If the Lord wants me to go He will arrange for me to go. If He doesn't He can arrange His own time. My father couldn't talk. The tears falling down his face. He gripped my hand and walked out. Along about the third of March, the doctor said, well, I'm going to take you home. I said that's fine. I'm glad to go. I'm feeling fine but I hadn't walked out of the room yet. I'd been a little on my feet a few times in the room. The doctor was very careful about seeing that I kept off of my feet. When he couldn't be around, Dr. Hyde took over. But he took me home. Our baby was then thirteen months old. Course his mother and the baby had been in to see me a lot of times. One experience happened that winter that I will never forget. Jacob Brenner, a good friend of mine, had a bunch of chickens and ran blacksmith shop on Main Street. While he was feeding his chickens early one morning before daylight, this is his story, according to his, Jacob Brenner's words now. He said, some voice said to me, you go up and administer to Brother Larsen. He said he laid his pan down, walked into the house, and changed his clothes. It was still dark. When he got up the stairway, there stood George H. B. Harris, my Bishop. Jacob Brenner, in broken language, said, what are you doing here? He said, I couldn't sleep so I got up and got on my horse and came into town to see if he was alive. He said, he alive. The Lord has sent you here to help me to administer to him. Those two men came up and administered to me. I don't remember anything about it. I was unconscious. I don't know how long I was unconscious. I don't think the r told me that. But I did rally and they took me home about the third of March. I left Salem on the 17th of March for Salt Lake. Thank God for a true wife, young as she was. She was eight years younger than I was. But she was true blue. She never raised her voice against me on that mission. Not one word. I got on the train and went to Salt Lake. I reported to the Church office. Seymour B. Young was a doctor, one of seven presidents. He told him. He said you're sure. Many bones were sticking out. You've got faith to go on a mission. That's what I am here for if you'll let me go. He examined my heart and went all oven me and oked me. My wife was from Bountiful, Utah. She was staying with her sister. She came early that morning and we had taken my luggage to Salt Lake the day before. The train came along at just daylight. We had quite a little walk. Between us we carried the baby. It took a lot of courage on the part of her and me. I think more on

her part. We stopped at the station for only a moment of time. I was the only passenger. But the man came down for the mail; he was a relative of my wife. He said he would take Liddy home. As I kissed her goodbye, the brakeman helped me up into the car. I tried to be a man and keep the tears back. John Stevens was on the train from Rexburg going on a mission. He met me at the door. A young boy from Provo by name of Jacobson. There was the three of us together and four women going to England. One of them was a teacher who had taught in the Church school. Taught language. She became interested in me right straight. They saw that I was kind of frail. Francis M. Lyman was on that train that morning. He was president of the Quorum of the Twelve. Well, that was the beginning of my missionary work.

HF: Do you recall what year this was that you commenced your mission?

AL: Yes, it was 1907.

HF: And that mission took you to Norway?

AL: That mission finally took me to Norway.

HF: How long a mission was it?

AL: Well, I filled twenty-eight months but there were a lot of things that happened during that twenty-eight months. When we got on board ship Boston, John Stevens, became seasick right straight and several others. The seas seemed to be rough. We were on a great big boat. They had almost seven hundred live steers on that ship down in the hold. Hundred of tons of hay and grain and all these steers and it was a passenger. They were taking these steers to England and they said there was a car load, or two or three carloads of beef besides that, on that ship. John Stevens became seasick and my appetite got good, I was glad that he was seasick. I was always hungry. I never say a sick day on the way over. I must have gained a pound a day, at least, and maybe more. John Stevens got poor. The women took good care of me. We went down to see all those steers. There was a good young girl with them, about eighteen years old, I guess. Somebody down there got away with her money purse. She lost her handbag, lost it all. They never did find that, I guess. Her ticket wasn't in it. But that one lady, the richer, taught me more. She said, you'll have to do a lot of speaking on your mission. In those days they did. I said, I don't know what I'll do. She taught me how to stand before the public, how to handle my hands, how to keep calm, she taught me more about public speaking. Well, I never knew anything about it before, not a thing. I'll always be thankful that the Lord provided a good teacher for me because that came in handy for me. When I arrived in Denmark, they kept me there for little over a week in Copenhagen. The mission president was out. I never did see him. His name was Christiansen. The mission clerk met us missionaries. They liked me there at the headquarters and wanted me to stay in Copenhagen, Denmark, on a mission. But when the mission first reported it to the mission president wherever he was. I don't know where he was now. He assigned me up to Christiansen, now Oslo, as my mission.

HF: Did you have the opportunity to go back to labor in the hometown of your parents?

AL: Yes I did. I'll give it to you brief. This is a long story but I'll have to cut it short because time is going. When the conference president at Oslo met me, he took a liking to me right straight. He was a fine man. He said I don't think we will send you out into the country. I think we'll keep you here till conference time. We'll have conference in a couple or three months. The presiding elder there was a man by the name of Peter Anderson from Provo. He would be released at that conference to come home. He'd finished his mission. But he was the presiding elder. Christianua was the largest branch in the Scandinavian mission. They had over six hundred saints there. One of the finest choirs in the Scandinavian mission and the Swedish mission. A wonderful choir. Brother Anderson took me, best known to myself. I had to learn the language. I realized that. The next day, the first day in Christianua, I went up and bought an ABC book. They have two more letters in their alphabet than we do in English. So I went up and bought an ABC book. I began to study. I prayed and I studied and I prayed and I studied to get that language. And it did come. Peter Anderson was released to come home at that conference. I was appointed to take his place, to take charge of all the meetings. The gift of tongues came to me. They said they never saw anybody get the language as quick I did. I was one of the younger missionaries. There were a lot of older men could have been my father there, men of experience. It was a rich experience. Form that time till this I carried a bottle of oil in my pocket. My calling was to minister and bless the sick. Form the beginning when I was called into that position the Saints began to have a feeling of the young man that I had a gift of some kind. They didn't know and I didn't know. I didn't realize. I don't realize to this day. But I have been blessing people ever since. Well it went on for about seven months and then our conference president was called to preside over the Scandinavian mission and was sent up to Denmark. Another man by the name of, oh, I forget his name now, was appointed to take his place. But he'd been there and he as going to be released. He presided for just a little while and then his released was made and then I was made conference president. This covered the southern part of Norway. That's when the trouble began.

HF: A lot more responsibility?

AL: Yes, I received word that my brother, Joseph, had taken sick and been taken to Salt Lake. The next letter I got, he had died. He was to take care of me, finance me, take care of my wife and the three orphaned children who were there to live with us. She needed for me to come home. My brother and I had bought fifteen or twenty head of cattle and signed a note at the bank for three hundred dollars. It hadn't been paid and the bank wanted their money. Well, to make a long story short, I received a letter from my mission president. It said I just received a letter from President Joseph F. Smith instruction me to release you, to give you an honorable released and send you home right straight. You were needed. He said I want you to call all the missionaries in by the end of this week. There will be a boat leaving Christianua this Tuesday and I have made arrangements for you to leave on that boat. It is short notice I know but he said, that you are needed at home and I must follow instructions. Call the missionaries in and we will have a special priesthood meeting. I'll be up on Friday, up in there so we can have a priesthood meeting

on Saturday. All the missionaries, I think 36 of them, all were called in and instructed to meet at the office for prayer at 8:00 the next morning. I spent the evening with the president of the mission. The man who was chosen to take my place. The next morning he handed me my release. We met the missionaries. They were all in the room, a happy bunch. They didn't know what was going to happen. I had only confided in one man about my troubles. They didn't know what was going to happen. I had only confided in one man about my troubles. That was a man by the name of James O. Worland. We had charge of the office there together, slept in the same room. We'd prayed together. We'd tracked together. I had borrowed money of him. He had money, a little money. He was financing me. We'd just had prayer and the mailman came in with a handful of letters. Trod his way up to the desk. All the mail for the missionaries came there to the office and was then sent out to them. He checked the letters over and found the one addressed to me. He tuned to me and said Mr. Larsen here's one of you and then he handed it to me. I looked at it and saw it was from my Bishop. I turned to my president and said that this is from my Bishop. I wished you'd open it and read it to these missionaries. He said, don't you think you should take it and go up yourself and read it. No, I said, I have no secrets. I think I know what's in it. He hesitated. I had to ask him two or three times. Things have taken a change on your behalf here at home. If this gets to you on time, as far as thins here are concerned, you'll not need to come home. President read that letter about the sickness and deaths in my Father's family and my sickness, the condition under which I left home. There wasn't a dry eye, I'll tell you. The president stopped two or three time to wipe the tears out of his eyes as he read that letter. The Bishop told us about what time it was. It was about two o'clock at night when he was writing this letter. When president got done he turned to me and asked where the release was that he had handed me that morning. I took it out of my pocket and handed it to him. He red it to the missionaries. What a shock it was to them. But hey all thought a lot of me. I had a lot of friends. Then when the missionaries all left, I took the president into the office. I said, now president, I think you'd better go ahead and put in a new president send me out into one of the branches where I can work without any money. I said I haven't got any money. I have borrowed money right now. I'm in debt. I told him I was getting money from Brother Ware. I said my father filled a mission here for eight and half years without purse or script and then he filled his second mission here for twenty-eight months. I'm following in his footsteps. I told the Lord many times that if He would let me stay here I would be willing to work with worn out shoes and thread bare clothes. I couldn't feel like the Lord would call me to come on that mission some eight thousand miles from home only to be released because of trouble at home. I couldn't help the troubles. I couldn't bring my brother back. I had faith that my wife would be taken care of some way. I did receive one letter that pretty near brought me home, however. My wife wrote and said, well I found a job. She said, one of my relatives found me a job cooking on a dry farm out west of Malad for three dollars and fifty cents a week. She and her baby. Gosh, I had to swallow my faith and everything else. She aid, I'll send you what I can. I told the president this. He said, President Larsen, the Lord's opened up a way for you to stay. I don't know how you will get the money but as sure as He has opened up the way for you to stay. He will open up the way for you to get money. I know that. He bore a strong testimony to me. Course I was down in the dumps yet. I said I would take his word for it and do as he said. About three weeks later I got a letter form my wife. She said she had an old maid who

lived in Bountiful who had never married. When she did and they went into her papers, the only piece of property she had in the world was a city lot. It was just one block off of Main Street in Bountiful. My wife had a cousin who wanted that lot. He wrote to her and said, Liddy, I'd like to have that lot. I have been wanting it. I tried to buy it for our aunt but she wouldn't sell it. She had deeded it to my wife unbeknown to any of us. He said I'll give you \$600 for it. My wife said that I would have money right straight s soon as they could fix papers up. She took fifteen dollars out of it and bought that bookcase, you see standing there in the corner. You see it. That's all she ever got out of that six hundred dollars. Every dollar that was sent to me, I paid all my debts up and sure enough I had a new mission president, Andrew Jensen, Church Historian. He was my new mission president. He released me. I had to borrow five dollars to come home on.

HF: Well, isn't that amazing. That's a successful story. Talk about a faithful wife.

AL: God bless her sweet heart.

HF: Because of the time element we better move along. Those are very, very faith promoting stories. Now you returned home. Will you tell us some of the experiences after that?

AL: Yes, I'll make it short. I arrived home the 1st of July. I was happy to get home, of course. I went right up to the 168 acre farm between Conant and Squirrel. My wife and I went right up to that. I bought a forty acre place in Salem and built a home on it. I left my wife in when I went on my mission. We went up there to get ready to plant some crop on that land. A land dup there, a big cattle company. My. Baureman, the banker in St. Anthony who I had done business with when I was with Pete Wilson. I had built up a good credit for Pete Wilson, not for myself, because, I wasn't making enough. But I was making enough but I made some of that land. Dry farming was just beginning to come, Victor Hegsted had been my bishop, the 2nd Bishop of the Salem Ward, and was running an equipment place herein Rexburg for the Church. It was a machine company. He drove clear up to Squirrel and Conant and said, I've had a talk with Bauerman and we'll have to refinance you on this. However, I'd like to go back just a little. When I came home I n July the first priesthood meeting we had was in August. It was held up here in the college. In that priesthood meeting I was called into the High Council. I was an Elder and I was ordained a High Priest and called into the High Council in August, 1909.

HF: Let's see, you would be about twenty-five, thirty, about thirty-four years old?

AL: It was in 1909. I was made an alternative member of the High Council and shortly after that there was an opening. One of the members of the High Council moved to Pocatello, Brother Briggs' father. I was called in to the High Council. We considered seriously these offers made to me by Hegsted and Bauerman. We talked it over and we talked over with my parents and my bishop. They thought it was a fine opportunity for me. I got up one morning in the 1st of November and something had happened to my right eye during the night. I didn't know what it was. It looked like the hull of a nolt right in the pupil. It was red. I went to doctor in Sugar City, the doctors in Rexburg. They

couldn't see anything wrong with it wasn't long before I began seeing floating objects in the other eye. Then my eyes began to get dim. The 3rd of February, 1910, I went to Salt Lake to a specialist. As soon as they looked into my eye they said you've had hemorrhages, inward bleeding. The cavities of your eyes are full of blood. We'll have to sweat you and get that out. So they did. They could sweat that blood out of the cavities of the eyes but I would go back home and have another hemorrhage. It kept on coming. Every time I had a bleeding it would create a scar in the retinas. The retina is like the back of a looking glass. Wherever you scratch that, the doctors explained, it's called a looking glass. Every time I had a hemorrhage it would be in a new place. Well, the World War came along. I was in the dark, of course, right straight. Pretty poor. June Conference. Rodney Callis was here to visit. I was the senior member of the High Council at that time. Twenty-five years that I had belonged to the High Council now. At the Saturday evening session of our Conference, they called me up to pen the meeting. That wasn't anything new. I'd opened a good many meetings. But something happened. A revelation came. I hadn't much more than started opening that meeting until, I didn't hear a voice, or course. But something said to me, you've going to be ordained a Patriarch. Immediately every fiber of my being began to sweat. I think it was one of the shortest prayers I have ever offered, I offered that night. I said, Amen. I was shaking all over when I sat down. The next morning was a special priesthood meeting. Brother Callis took over and said, I've come authorized by the President of the Church to ordain Brother Alma Larsen as Patriarch. Well, I knew it the night before. I knew it was going to happen. No one else knew it. Hyrum Manwaring was the first man on his feet and bore testimony. He said what a thrill. He said I've known this man. One after another of the High council arose as quickly as they could and endorsed and approved. I was thrilled with it. Well, I'll never forget some of the words Brother Callis said. A few of them, one thing he said was, Brother Larsen, you've stood the test. The Lord has tried you, He's tested you. Well, he didn't know I'd been tested. When he presented my name in conference that afternoon and that morning, he said he never saw such a feeling of approval in any conference that he had ever attended. The good will of this people. I'm still a member of the High Council. I meet with them once a month with the other patriarch of the stake. We go out once a month with the High Council. It's going on 52 years now and I am still welcome in every ward. The young people, I believe, love me and I love them. I'm so grateful. I'm indebted to this people. They have been patient. They have been true. They have been loyal. I want to leave my testimony that I know that the Gospel is true. I know that prayers are answered. I know that no matter what the handicap is I felt if any man was disqualified for Patriarch it was me. I wouldn't be able to see those who I was to give blessings to, whether it was white, black, or yellow. I'd have to depend upon the spirit of the Lord. He's come to my rescue. I've given over three thousand, nearly thirty-three hundred record blessings. I think I'm filling my tenth book. I've got it here just ten the other day. Nice leather bound books in Salt Lake I think my father and mother would feel well paid for walking across the Plains if I can just be true to the Faith. I enjoy good health. I leave my blessings with you in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

AL: This is Brother Larsen speaking again. I'm going to have my line authority read by my grandson, Val Clark. He read it to me and I think it's wonderful tracing my line of

authority right back to the Savior. Val's going to read it now and the next voice you hear will be Val Clark's voice reading my line of authority.

Clark: Alan B. Larsen was ordained a Patriarch June 24, 1934, by Charles A. Callis who was ordained an Apostle October 12, 1933 by Herber J. Grant who was ordained an Apostle October 16, 1882 by George Q. Cannon who was ordained an Apostle August 26, 1860 by Brigham Young who was ordained an Apostle February 14, 1835 under the hand of The Three Witnesses, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris who were called by revelation to choose the Twelve Apostles and were blessed February 14, 1835, to ordain the Twelve Apostles by Joseph Smith and his counselors in the 1st Presidency. Joseph Smith received the Melchizedek Priesthood in 1829 from Peter, James, and John who were ordained Apostles by the Lord, Jesus Christ.

HF: It is appropriate that as we close the interview of Alma B. Larsen that we have Sister Cleo Johnson read the obituary which she presented at his funeral on the 30th of December, 1966, in the Rexburg Stake of Zion. She is reading this obituary here in my office on the 26th day of May, 1968.

Johnson: I feel greatly blessed this day for the privilege of giving a few thoughts, a life sketch of Brother Alma B. Larsen. I, like all of you, feel the loneliness of this hour but I know with assurance that he lives and that if we endure we shall share with him again and I am grateful of my testimony and knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. My first acquaintance with Brother Larsen came when I was a child. We lived neighbors to the Larsen family on South Center Street. I remember him coming to our home, my father reading to him and their long discussions. I attended school with his daughters, Velma and Margie, and sometimes played in their home. I remember his good wife and how kind she was to me. But it wasn't until years later that I began to appreciate the stature of this man, Alma B. Larsen. I was like the hundreds, no, the thousands that came to him when illness and heartaches sent me seeking a blessing and an understanding. Brother Larsen gave me both. I sought his strength and comfort more than once. Then some little more than ten years ago he extended another blessing to me. He asked if I would help him in the recording of his Patriarchal Blessings. I was happy. Perhaps I felt a need to repay in part his kindness and love and understanding but it wasn't long before I realized that I wasn't giving so much as I was receiving. During these years I spent many precious hours with Brother Larsen both in his home and in mine and in some of yours. Many times as the people of this Valley came to him for a blessing and he inquired into their parentage and found that their parents or grandparents or even great-grandparents were old friends or acquaintances of his, he would take a moment or two to relate an incident or experience from the past. His ninety-one years covered the entire history of settlement in this area. He was pleased to carry the little of pioneer. I was favored to hear these stories, some of them many times. Some only once. But many of them I remember. Of his parentage he was very proud. Many times he bore testimony of his faith in Jesus Christ and told his own father who spent eight years as a missionary preaching the Gospel to the people of Norway. I think he said, when the release finally came, it contained two

tickets and he was able to bring his bride to the Promised Land Zion. They settled in Cache Valley and it was a Hyrum, Utah, on the 18th of October, in the year 1875, that Alma Benjamin was born, one of eight children. He often mentioned that he was named for two great Book of Mormon prophets, Alma Benjamin was born, one of eight children. He often mentioned that he was named for two great Book of Mormon prophets, Alma and King Benjamin, and that he had lived in the lifetime of all the presidents of the Church except the Prophet Joseph. He had a great love for President David O. McKay and sometimes told of their friendship when he was a new member of the Rexburg Stake High Council and President McKay, a newly appointed Apostle. They walked arm in arm up to the 1st Ward Church to meetings. In the fall of 1884, when Alma was nine years old, his family moved to Idaho to this area. His father, mother, and oldest brother had come earlier in the year and homesteaded a farm in North Salem. But when they returned in the fall with the rest of the children, there was not empty cabin which the Anderson family had built on a homestead. Each evening his older sister, Carolyn, took Alma and a little sister and they trudged through the snow to sleep in this neighboring cabin. He aid his older brother stood willows along the trail so that the children would not get lost. There was always lantern hung outside the Larsen cabin to guide them in case of storm. His sister upon reaching their lonely destination would se a light in the cabin window to let their anxious mother know they had arrived safely. Finally another room was built. By making beds on the dirt floor they managed to house all their children under one roof. The families in Salem got together and formed a tuition school. His brother, Joseph, was one of the first teachers there. Not long after public school was established Salem. But this represented one of the most serious problems the settlers had to face. The legislature of the Territory of Idaho had passed a law in their Session of 1884 and '84, disfranchising the Mormon people and making it illegal for any Mormon to hold public office. Thus the Mormon children were taught by non-Mormon teacher hired by non-Mormon trustees. These were the only teacher that Alma had except for the short time the Ricks Academy was established and how he loved that school on the hill though he had never been able to attend. His parents were struggling to support their large family and they needed his help. During those early days the Snake River Valley was headquarters for notorious bands of horse thieves and bandits. Brother Larsen could tell many thrilling stories. There was the time prepared the meal he held the little sister on his knee and sang to her. He'd told them he was on the way to Montana but shortly afterward in a gunfight with lawmen he was mortally wounded. Brother Larsen said that as a young man he watched soldiers from Douglas who came by way of Market Lake with their heavy wagons and cannon. They marched through Rexburg on their way to Jackson Hole area because of a threate4ned Indian uprising. He had an excellent memory and his stories were a delight to listen to. As a young man he spent much time working in the saw mills both in the Swan Valley area and in Island Park. He could tell of floating logs down the Snake River and many exciting experiences. Later he had cattle in the Island Park area and when he told of these days you knew he loved the mountain country. Many times when a particular name was mentioned he would recall a party, or a dance, or a sleigh ride, or sometimes it was an illness or a time of tribulation but always as he spoke you know he loved and enjoyed people. Surely they enjoyed him. He had a quiet wit and a delightful sense of humor. It wasn't until he was twenty-nine year of age that he found just the right girl but when he did he took her the long trip to Logan, Utah, for a temple marriage. This was on the 1st of

December, 1904. She was Lydia Hales and her father was Rexburg's 1st photographer. I've heard him say, I don't know what that lovely girl saw in a rough codger like me but I loved her and we were happy. Three days after their return he left for the Fall River saw mill to build a one room cabin which became their first home. He said he worked at this time for a Mr. Wilson who, if I remember correctly, had no children of his own. He and his wife took such a liking to Alma they wanted to take him and Lydia to Mexico. They told him he could have a good job and would never need to worry about money again. It was a temptation but one he could easily turn aside. The first baby came and in the fall of 1906 he received a letter from Box B, Salt Lake City. It was a request to fill a mission. He said he hesitated only long enough to make arrangements when he left for that mission in March, 1907, it was after many weeks of illness, a ruptured appendix which came very close to taking his life. He said he was so weak that he could barely walk and so thin he was advised by many not go. But he knew the Lord wanted him and would bless him. He said he went on board ship with Brother John Stevens, who was going to England and that Brother Stevens suffered greatly from sea sickness and couldn't eat his meals. He served in his father's native land for twenty-eight months but it was not without trial. Before his mission was completed his brother died leaving three motherless children of his own in Lydia's care. It seemed there was no possible way but for Alma to return home. Arrangements such were made but at the last moment came a letter advising him that his wife had inherited a small piece of property in Utah. Something she had known nothing about previous to this time. It had been sold and she would be able to sustain herself and these children and how would he be able to complete his mission. I've heard him tell this story in much more detail many times but he could never tell it without shedding a tear. He always gave credit to the Lord and expressed gratitude for the privilege of completing an honorable mission. He returned in July, 1909, and was called in August to the Stake High Council. That fall came the most difficult experience of his life. For one November morning he awoke to find something wrong with his eyes. He consulted the local doctor who could give him no help. A new baby was due and on March the 12th, twins were born, another son and a little daughter. By this time he was practically in the dark. They sacrificed so that he could go to Salt Lake City to a specialist. I think, he said in all, he consulted fourteen doctors and spent some sixteen hundred dollars but before the end of the year, 1910, he was totally in the dark. He was barely thirty-five years old, in debt, handicapped, with no means for support. He had a lovely young wife and three little children. He said, I took my troubles too seriously and my health failed. So often he told the courage of his wife during those trying days and how she buoyed him and gave his will to live. Eventually he regained his health but for more than fifty-six years he has not seen the light of day. But he said the Lord was good to him and how was able to make a living through farming and dairying. His fingers in many instances became his eyes and with a child on his lap, he could plow a furrow or mend a fence. He often fixed machinery when other failed. Three more seemed an insurmountable problem became just another test of his faith. He said that upon his return from Salt Lake he went to the Stake President and offered himself for a release from the High council but the president with tears streaming down his faces said Brother Larsen, I can't release you. Only the Lord can do that. So he served on that Council for twenty-five years. Then on e day in June, in 1934, when Apostle Charles A. Callis was in attendance at a quarterly conference, while he was giving the opening prayer at a meeting he

received the inspiration that he was about to be called as a patriarch. He said, I've never made long prayer, but that was the shortest prayer I ever gave. Again he felt unequal to the task. How do you evaluate the pole when you can't see them. He said it frightened him and that the fright never completely left. I understand for many demands became so heavy that he couldn't keep up his strength through constant fasting and this practice he had to give up. But in the several hundred blessing that I witnessed, I never offer a prayer unto the Lord for wisdom and guidance. Always he gave thanks for the privilege he was enjoying. I know that whenever possible he spent some time before the blessing in quiet meditation preparing himself. He was a most humble man. One most selfless and most appreciative for the opportunity to give service in the Lord's Kingdom. In my experience with him over these years, he taught me many things. I remember one lesson in particular that came early in our association together. At first those who came to him for blessings always brought someone to write for them. I merely received the hand written copies and typed them on official paper for permanent filing. But his day, Brother Larsen called and said, Cleo, I have two young college fellows coming for their blessing this afternoon. They have offered to write for one another but I wish you would come too. I remember this was on a Monday, the Monday that the monthly Stake Primary preparation meeting was held. I had a responsibility in this organization and for a moment because of the pressures of the pressures of the day, I hesitated. Perhaps he sensed this because he said; I feel you should be here. I went, I wrote the blessing for the first young fellow and just near the end he slumped in the chair and fell to the floor in a faint. His companion helped him to Brother Larsen's bed which was in the room. Here, while he was almost semi-conscious, Brother Larsen concluded the blessing. He was a spells. But that he had not had one for many months. While he lay upon the bed in somewhat exhausted state we proceeded with the second blessing. I did the writing. I don't remember the particulars now but I know I was impressed that it was an extraordinary blessing. A guide that the second young man was diligently seeking and for which he very much had a need. When we were through Brother Larsen said to the three of us, if Cleo had not been here, this second blessing could not have been given this day. I knew this was her busy day but over the years I have learned to listen to the still small voice. The he said something that I shall never forget. He said, not many receive a testimony in a big way like Saul of Tarsus did on his way to Damascus or Alan in the Book of Mormon. Most of us must gain our testimony through little things. My testimony grew and was strengthened many times because of Brother Larsen. It might be interesting for you to know that his recorded Patriarchal blessings numbered 3542. I feel sure there were others for it used to be that people were responsible for getting their own blessing typed or neatly written and then returned to him for permanent filling. Some perhaps procrastinated in doing this. This number does not take into account the many, many special blessings he gave nor the hours spent in listening to people's problems, nor the times he was called out to participate in administration in the healing of sick. These were not written or recorded but they were numbered many times over. In the years I worked with him the young people especially sought him out. I often marveled at his stamina. I remember in January, 1965, when he was in his 90th year of age, he still gave 22 patriarchal blessings in one month's time. Perhaps for many that would not seem so great an accomplishment but you can't realize how much of his strength it took. When I told him the number he was amazed and said, I must have one of my boys write that down. I think that's a record. He could never

tell anyone no. But finally this past year or so it became necessary for others of us to space these appointments out. When it was finally necessary, because of his illness to cancel all of his appointments, there was a long list waiting. I've heard him promise on several occasions, your last days on earth shall be your best days. I mentioned this to him one day and told him I thought he was a living witness of this. He said, yes, my last days are my best days. It never ceased to thrill him when visiting General Authorities would stop by his humble room to visit. He had so many friends and they were so kind to him. It just can't begin to be told the many ways they showed their love for him. I shall just mention that several years ago a group presented him with some of the first talking records of the Book of Mormon. If I remember correctly, he told me last summer, he had just finished reading them for the thirteen time. In spite of his lack of schooling, I think he said he reached the third reader, and in spite of his handicap, he was an educated man. Others read to him. When the Foundation for the Blind made the talking records available, he studied them industriously. I'm sure through the many inspired blessings, which he gave; the Lord prepared a great learning process for him. He knew and understood the scriptures and he loved above all else, the gospel of Jesus Christ. But second to his testimony, he loved his family. In September, 1947, another great trial came, when his beloved Lydia, who had been his eyes and his comfort for so many years, passed away. It was one most difficult for him to accept and understand. He said it was not until she reappeared to him one night that he found peace. His children rallied around him and he never ceased to express his appreciation for his family. He always said the Lord blessed him with riches greater than gold and silver. He blessed him with a faithful posterity. I wish I had the words and the time to adequately pay tribute to his sons and daughters. When I speak of sons and daughters I included their wives and husbands. There was no difference. They all loved him equally and he knew it. Their devotion for these past months was no greater than it had been throughout the years. But I'd like to say that in the four months that he spent in the hospital he never once went to sleep at night without a member of his family being with him. The last two weeks some sat at his side night and day, every moment. He took comfort in this. His grandchildren used pattern from their parents. How often I've heard him speak of them. His granddaughters taking time from their busy schedule at Ricks College to come in and write his letters and address his Christmas cards. His grandsons ran errands and read to him and took him for a walk so that he might keep strength in his legs. Each time he spoke I fancied I could see his chin lift a little higher. So many times when I will take him home from an appointment he would say, don't bother to get out of the car. One of the boys will be watching for me. And they were. And they'd come running to help him into the house. He was always mindful of others, not wanting to infringe on anyone's kindness or generosity. I've often thought it is so much easier to give than it is to receive and for a man as proud as Brother Larsen, it must have taken a great schooling to learn to receive as graciously as he did. I thank my Father in Heaven for the privilege and blessing of Brother Alma B. Larsen. I was handed a letter that came from one of Brother Larsen's many friends. It seems that some almost twenty-five years ago at a funeral in Archer he met Sister Florence Cheney on the stand and he said, you're here to give tribute for me when I die. She said, I will Brother Larsen, if I am here. She preceded him in death by a few months but she left this bit of poetry in a letter that was forward to Gladys. And to represent all his friends who loved him so dearly, I read it now.

We pay tribute, Brother Larsen to you who have kept faith in God
Though great trials have beset you, you've trusted in God's word
We have heard your given blessing, go inspired by wondrous power
Power given by God's great Priesthood, promises as Heaven's shower
We have come with sore affliction, to ask succor in our pain
You've offered words of solace, many promises to gain
As your voice you've raised to heaven, God alone gave His reply
So humbling to us listening, those great words fresh from the sky
Far and near your name is revered, people know how you are blessed
Your are humble as God's servant, friends will all these things attest
We so feebly know your trials, all alone these many years
In the dark where light is silenced, all your eyes knew were but tears
But the Spirit height unseen, far beyond the human eye
God gave you a sense of your own vision, you'll see clearly all your way
And someday with your own vision, you'll see clearly all your way
To bless Spirits in the heavens, from then through Eternal Days
We shall wait there for your presence, to again clasp your firm hand
Then shall our tears be with your tears, to rejoice in Heaven land

May God bless us to strive for faith equal to that of Brother Larsen's, I ask in the name of
the Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.