

J Ballard and Barbara Washburn
Family History

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Prologue

It was nice to have a day off. They had been working hard all week, putting up hay, as they called it. It was a dusty, dirty job.

It was the summer of 1944. Platt Lyman worked for a cattle company on the far side of Blue Mountain, at Indian Creek. He was contracted to bail the alfalfa which sustained the herd. During the summer harvest, he drove the bailer machine. His son rode on the back, feeding the bailing wire through in one direction. But they needed another hand to work on the opposite side of the wire-feed and to tie off the bails. So he hired fifteen-year-old J B. Washburn to help him—for a dollar a day. J B. was thin but strong, was nearing six feet tall, and had a serious but kind countenance. And most importantly, he was a hard worker.

They awoke early each morning, ate a big breakfast prepared by the ranch's cook, and worked all day. J B. had ridden on the back of the bailer all summer long. They drove over the rows of cut alfalfa, leaving behind nice bails, waiting for the bucking crew to load and stack them.

They worked hard six days a week. But today was Sunday, a day of rest.

It would have been nice to go home—to see Mom and the family, and to go to church with them. But the cattle ranch was many miles from

Blanding, J B.'s home. It was too far to travel home each weekend. So J B. did what he had done every Sunday while working at Indian Creek. He grabbed a quilt that his mother had made for him and a small copy of the New Testament—just the right size to fit in his pants pocket. Then he hiked up a trail into a small canyon. The scenery was wonderful. A small stream trickled down the ravine. Wildflowers were flecked across the ground. The canyon walls reached up toward the sky. The white, fluffy clouds against a blue background were the finishing touch.

J B. spread the quilt, then stretched himself out comfortably upon it. He opened his New Testament and found his bookmark. Then he began to read.

He read about Jesus Christ. He read about the miracles He performed, about His teachings, and about the twelve whom He called. He read about how He was rejected and despised, how He suffered for the sins of the world, and how He died to redeem all men. He read about how He rose again, and how He invites all men to come unto Him and partake of salvation.

As J B. read, he felt a stirring in his heart. A tear came to his eye and he sat up. Then he rolled onto his knees and began to pray.

This Sunday and many events similar to it were shaping J B.'s life. They were preparing him for a life of service and of sacrifice.

They were preparing him for a life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

General Authority Seventy

“The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.”

— Doctrine and Covenants 107:25

On April 1st, 1989, President Washburn sat down for a well-deserved break from his missionary duties and watched the broadcast of General Conference. During one of these sessions, the Brethren formed the second Quorum of the Seventy. He recorded the specifications in his journal: It is composed of those who have a temporary call of approximately five years. There are thirty-six members in the second quorum and thirty-five in the first. Both are presided over by one presidency.

Almost a year later, on March 23rd, 1990, President Washburn was in the middle of a Zone Conference in St. Johns, Arizona, when the local Stake President’s wife walked up to him and handed him a note which read: “Call Bro. Hardy, Sec. to the 1st Pres, S.L.C.,” followed by a phone number. He quickly slipped out of the meeting and found a phone. He dialed the number and was soon talking to President Gordon B. Hinckley who asked, “How are you Brother Washburn?” He responded with, “fine.” After a brief conversation, President Hinckley asked if President Washburn intended to go back to his medical practice. He answered, “No.” He then asked what he and his wife planned to do after their mission. The answer was, “Kiss a bunch of grandkids.” President Hinckley asked about their health, and President Washburn reported it was good. President Hinck-

ley invited him and his wife to come to General Conference in April. He asked them to meet him at his office at 3:30 P.M. on the Friday prior to the General Conference meetings. Then the conversation ended.

This sudden and shocking event left him feeling, as he described, “a little sick and like I had a weight on my shoulders.” After the Zone Conference was over he and Barbara were alone in the Stake center, and she asked him about his phone call. He told her all about it, and they “cried a little and hugged then started for home.” The next day he wrote in his journal, “We feel very nervous.” The following few nights were restless. Together they fasted and prayed that the Lord would bless them and accept their offerings of service. They prayed that He would make them capable of whatever He would call them to do. As they fasted and prayed, they received a spirit of peace. They felt assured that the Lord would be with them and all would be well.

The couple continued their missionary labors and soon the day of their interview arrived. Without letting their missionaries know, President and Sister Washburn flew to Salt Lake City and went to 47 East South Temple. As soon as they got there, they were invited in to President Hinckley’s office. First, President Washburn was interviewed. President Hinckley asked him if there was anything in his past that would be an embarrassment to the Church. He happily answered, “No.” President Hinckley also talked to them both together and asked them about their health and their plans. He then said, “We would like to invite you to be a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy and to serve for five years.” They felt humbled and most inadequate, but their answer was simply, “We will be happy to serve.” President Hinckley looked tired, and their visit did not last much longer.

They went to their motel, and together they broke their fast, expressing their humility and gratitude to the Lord. They then called their children and told them to watch the Saturday afternoon session of the conference. The next day they watched the morning session in their room. Then they attended the afternoon session and sat in the Tabernacle at the front of the general seating. When the new Seventies’ names were called and their callings were announced, it felt like a dream. Elder Washburn went to the front and took his place among the big red seats on the stand, sitting among his fellow members of the Quorum. “It was a thrill to sit with some of the best men in the world,” J B. recalled. After the session

concluded, many people shook the hands of the newly called seventy and congratulated them. “There were pictures taken and many smiles and hugs.” It was a time of rejoicing.

After the Sunday sessions, they went to the Church office building where they were charged (1) to be special witnesses of Jesus Christ to all the world, (2) to be active, participating members of the quorum, and to accept the quorum’s final decisions as their own and support them, (3) to keep confidential the things the Brethren discussed, and (4) to make this calling their first priority and give it their best effort.

They were then set apart. President Hinckley set J Ballard Washburn apart and ordained him to be a Seventy in the Second Quorum of the Seventy. He gave him the Sealing Powers and commissioned him to be a Special Witness of Jesus Christ to all the world. In the blessing,

his work among the Lamanites was mentioned, and he was encouraged to continue that but with an expanded vision of the work. In addition, his children were blessed through him. It was a glorious occasion. (See Appendix F for full text.)

The next day they flew back to their mission and got back to work.

May 4th, 1990, was a day that changed their lives. President Hinckley informed them that they had been assigned to be a part of the Africa Area Presidency starting in October. He would be working with Elder Richard Lindsay and Elder Robert Sackley. “If I had guessed all the areas of the Church to be assigned to,” J B. wrote, “this is the last one I would have guessed. I don’t know why the Lord is sending us to Africa, but we will go and do our best to build the Kingdom.” He bought a book about Africa



Elder J Ballard Washburn of the Seventy

and a map and began learning all he could about the continent. He was excited about his new calling, and Africa was often on his mind. His excitement escalated as the time to begin drew nearer.

Among the duties of the Seventy was the reorganizing of Stakes. On June 2nd President Washburn met with Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin and reorganized the Winslow, Arizona Stake. After interviewing and praying about several local brethren, revelation came to them, and the Lord's will was done. "It is always a great spiritual experience to do that," he wrote.

In the following weeks he was assigned to reorganize stakes with Elders Boyd K. Packer, L. Tom Perry, Dallin H. Oaks, and Russell M. Nelson. Spending time with these Apostles taught him great things, and he sought to follow their examples. He was also assigned to preside at Stake Conferences on his own. The first time he did so was on September 8th, 1990, in Fallon, Nevada. "I felt a little apprehensive," he recalled. "But I remembered the words of President Monson, 'whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies.' It was a great conference. There was a great spirit there and people's hearts were touched."

When he was ordained to his new calling, he was given the Sealing Powers. On June 15th, 1990, he had the privilege of performing the marriage of his brother, AlDean, to Luzon Snyder, and sealing her four children to them, in the Provo Temple. A few weeks later on July 27th he sealed his son, Dan, to Heidi Lungren, in the Mesa Temple. Both of these were special and happy occasions.

At the end of June after they completed their mission presidency, they moved to Provo. As they anxiously awaited their October departure date, J B., now Elder Washburn, was given an office in downtown Salt Lake, one with a beautiful view of the temple and the Angel Moroni. He also continued to get assignments to preside at Stake Conferences. On the daily commute to and from Salt Lake City he would often sing hymns, prepare talks, and pray. Both J B.'s and Barbara's mothers were in Provo, and they spent many evenings together playing Rook.

Elder Washburn experienced a special privilege on August 30th, 1990. He wrote, "This is one of the great days of my life. To be in the upper-room of the temple with the Presidency and the Twelve, to partake of the sacrament with them, and to hear their instruction and testimony is a great blessing. I thank the Lord for his kindness in permitting me to be there. President Benson was not present and is having difficulty, but President

Hinckley and President Monson and many of the Twelve were present. I was asked to give the closing prayer and the Spirit was with me. I am so grateful. I love the brethren.” He cherished the memory of this occasion throughout his life.

On that day he also wrote, “Permission was given today to form a stake on the reservation with the stake center at Chinle. Tuba, Kayenta, and Window Rock will all be a part of it. I pray the Lord will bless the new stake.” This was a great victory in the battle he had fought for years to bring the gospel to the Lamanites.

Elder and Sister Washburn continued their daily routines but anxiously awaited the day they would begin their assignment overseas. On October 6th Elder Washburn received the opportunity to speak in General Conference. The topic on which he was inspired to speak was *The Life of President Ezra Taft Benson*. In that talk he bore his testimony, saying, “I bear witness that Ezra Taft Benson was born to be a prophet, has lived so he could be a prophet, and has been called of God to be a prophet in our day. He has set a pattern of



Elder Washburn raises a sustaining hand with fellow members of the Seventy

service and endurance that each of us should seek to follow... May God bless and sustain His prophet, and may we follow him, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ.” (See Appendix A for the full text.)

On October 12th, 1990, they said their goodbyes to family, friends, and the United States and flew across the Atlantic toward their next assignment and adventure.

* * *

The continent of Africa spans over 11.5 million square miles. It includes more than fifty nations (contrasted with South America which has only thirteen), and has a total population of over 700 million. Before 1990, there was no area presidency in Africa (the Area Presidency of England

was assigned to oversee Africa as well). Among the 700 million African people, the Church had only six stakes.

In 1978 the revelation to give the priesthood to all worthy males expanded the possibilities for the Church in Africa. Before that time the Church offices had received an ever-increasing number of letters requesting missionaries in Africa. But, as with everything else, Elder Washburn explained, it is the Lord who understands when it is time to open the Church in a particular area. It does not matter what men think, want, or believe. When the Lord knows it is time, He tells His Prophet, and the Prophet moves things forth.

In 1990 Elder Richard Lindsay was called to serve as the Africa Area President, with Elder Robert Sackley as his first councilor, and Elder J Ballard Washburn as his second councilor. The new presidency had its



Elder Washburn and President Richard P. Lindsay converse

headquarters in the country of South Africa in the city of Johannesburg.

Elder and Sister Washburn, traveling with Elder and Sister Lindsay, flew out of Salt Lake City on October 12th to Cincinnati, Ohio, then to London, England. They spent a little time touring and saw Big Ben, the Thames River, Hyde Park, St. Peter's Cathedral, Piccadilly Square, Buckingham Palace, and many other sites. On the 14th, they flew out of London on an eleven-hour flight arriving in Johannesburg, South Africa, on a beautiful spring morning, October 15th.

They quickly adjusted to the new lifestyle, so they could effectively promote the work. Elder Washburn found a place to play basketball and often played one-on-one with Brother George Bonnet.

They lived with the Sackleys for several weeks until their home was finished, and in November they moved in. But they did not spend much time at home. They traveled to many different countries, heard a wide variety

of exotic languages, tasted unique foods, learned new customs, and saw strange creatures and beautiful plant life. Upon arriving, Elder Washburn wrote in his journal, "It's a little different than Page or Blanding." Not only was South Africa much different from their home in the states, but each country was very different from the next—in matters of government, climate, vegetation, wildlife, culture, and so on. Soon the Washburns were driving on the wrong side of the road with ease. The beautiful Jacaranda trees seemed as familiar to them as the sage of the Arizona desert. Seeing the wild animals run free at the game preserves became an enjoyable yet typical experience.

Throughout Africa there are over eight-hundred different languages spoken. Within some countries more than forty are spoken. However, because of the colonization that had taken place, the major languages are not African. Twenty nations' primary language is French. Twelve are English. In most of the cities that Elder Washburn and his companions traveled to there were people who spoke English. Other times they recruited local members to come with them to translate to French. Most of the leadership in the Church was from the upper class and well-educated, thus most of them spoke English or, at least, French. Occasionally, as they would speak in larger conferences, they had to have two or even three translators repeating their words in different languages so that the entire audience could understand.

They found that church services were sometimes quite different from what they had experienced in the U.S. Though in some areas meetings were held in very modern buildings, like those typical in the States, in other areas meetings were held in small homes or even in tin-walled, branch-roofed huts. Barbara remembered one meeting in the Nigerian bush in which a chicken walked right through during sacrament meeting. J B. recalled a time when they met in a small building with a tin roof and it started to rain. The noise was so loud they could not hear each other until the shower was over.

The way that the people put their hearts into singing, Elder Washburn said, put congregations in the States to shame. However, the Africans often did not have pianos or organs and did not know the tunes, in which case they made-up their own tunes to the hymns. "A lot of times they would change the tune and the style, but they'd sing with their hearts, and that's what really counts," J B. said. The African people also put their

hearts into prayer, with a sincerity that was all too rare in the U.S. Another point that set the African congregations apart was their familiarity with the Bible. Most families had only one book in their homes—one given to them by a Christian charity. As a result, they knew the Bible well. Because of this knowledge, they had strong foundations to build the fullness of Jesus Christ's gospel upon. Despite the differences in meetings, in all the important ways the Church was the same. The African people believed in the same gospel, had the same faith in the Savior, and shared the same testimonies of truth.

The Washburns had unique experiences that to some would seem amazing. The following is an excerpt from a letter that Sister Washburn wrote to her family, dated May 29th, 1991:

“Monday morning early we flew to Lumumbashi. That afternoon we drove on to Kitwe, Zambia, over terrible roads. The pavement has deteriorated badly, with jagged sides formed from chuck-holes never being repaired. After several hours of bumping up and down we arrived. That evening we met David and Joyce Kafwanka. They joined the Church in England where he was studying. He is a chemist and is employed by Coca Cola Co. Dad [Elder Washburn] set him apart as Presiding Elder of the country of Zambia.

“After having dinner and visiting, we returned to our room but we couldn't get the door to our bedroom unlocked. We called for help. When a hotel employee came he told us we should never lock that door because it was impossible to unlock. He tried every key he had to no avail and then just left. This sort of thing is common in Africa. We had a little sitting room which we were able to get into. Dad opened a window there, climbed out onto the roof, (with Sister Taggart and I both telling him not to do it, that he would fall) maneuvered his way around, and found a little door through which he entered our bedroom. The locked door was easily opened from the inside. The roof door had no lock on it, so he pushed a chair in front of it and then we pushed the bed next to the chair. Then he balanced the lid of the ice bucket on top of the doorknob. When he did this I knew that the door swung out instead of in; otherwise there would be no need for the lid. But we slept and there were no intruders.

“Zambia was formerly British Northern Rhodesia. The economy is much better than in Zaire. We were thankful to travel safely back to Lumumbashi. Not only are the roads rough, they are narrow and there are

many heavy trucks.

“We checked into the Sheraton Hotel which was very nice by African standards. The trouble here was that we could only get steaming hot water out of both taps. It was scalding hot so we had to run bath water and let it cool for an hour before we could bathe. Another problem: we and the Taggarts got into an elevator and it stuck between floors. Fortunately, there was an emergency phone in the elevator and President Taggart speaks French very well, so help came before I started screaming, “Let me out of here!” Men came and pried open the doors above us. That allowed only enough space for a skinny cat to get through. So next they pried open the lower doors. There was enough space but it was too far to the floor. They wheeled over a shoe shining apparatus, and we were able to climb onto that and then down onto the floor.

“The next day after a fine buffet breakfast, we traveled to Kolwezi, Zaire. This was the worst trip of all—terrible roads, and trucks and buses passing within inches on the narrow road. Dad was planning to tell President Taggart to close down the branch in Kolwezi, but when he met the priesthood members and saw their dedication and the depth of their gospel knowledge, he advised instead that they plan to grow into a stake.”

These experiences and ones like them were commonplace. The Washburns learned to meet them with casual acceptance.

Another incident happened on their first trip to the Congo River. On December 20th, 1990, Elder Washburn wrote, “What a day! If you want a real experience, go to Kinshasa and cross over the Congo River to Brazzaville on the ferry. There are many people, and they’re all trying to go first. The Congo is the second largest river in the world, second only to the Amazon in water flow. It is brown from the rain washing soil into it.” The river was infested with crocodiles. They crossed the river, but before they reached the other side, the boat turned around and went back to the middle of the river and waited. Sister Washburn began to feel uneasy being stopped in a river full of crocodiles. The reason for the stop was that too many boats were docked on that side. They had to wait until a space became available. They had heard stories of ferry boats in disrepair suddenly sinking in the middle of the river. Despite the worries, they eventually arrived safely on the other side.

Elder Washburn continued, “We checked on our application for the Church’s registration which seems to be two months off. We visited the

central hospital which was clean and fairly modern. We tried to find members and finally found Hyacinthe Massamba Sita and his family. He is an Elder who was baptized six years ago in France—a clean looking man with a sweet wife and family. He was so happy to have someone from the Church come. He has his PhD. in Electrical Engineering and teaches at the university. What a joy it was to meet them! The Church will be in good hands in the Congo. The Lord prepares the way. Taggarts went back to Kinshasa. We went to bed tired and happy.”

Elder Russell M. Nelson and Elder Richard G. Scott came to the mission for a visit in August of 1992. They traveled to six different countries on this trip to dedicate the lands for the work of the Lord. Elder and Sister Washburn accompanied Elder Scott and they went to the Nairobi Game Park. In African parks the animals run free and the observers are the ones in cages. Sister Washburn said those game parks spoiled the fun of going to the zoo. Throughout their three years they visited the different game parks on several occasions, but they never ceased to be in awe of the beauty of the African wildlife.

A few days later they were with Elder Nelson on a special occasion. Elder Washburn wrote, “At 10:30 A.M. Elder Russell M. Nelson dedicated the Land of Namibia. We were atop Water Tower Hill, overlooking the city of Windhoek. It is a very dry city but modern and nice. Also present were many of the local priesthood leaders and their wives. It was a thoughtful, lovely, spiritual prayer and hearts were touched. One brother who had been delaying his baptism came up after and said he was ready to be baptized. We flew back to Johannesburg and had dinner at Lindsays’ and then a meeting of the Area Presidency with Elder Nelson and Elder Scott. They had good advice for us.”

Elder Washburn recorded another incident that took place in February of 1992. He wrote, “I got myself a ticket to Lagos, and the plane was an hour late. In Lagos they said I was too late to catch the plane to Brazzaville. I slipped past the police, paid the airport tax, went through customs, and was told twice more I was too late. I just kept going and when I got to the plane, they had removed the boarding ramp and closed the door, but the pilot could see me and I put my hands under my chin. He pointed to his watch and I put my hands under my chin again—as if praying. He had them open the door and put the ramp forward and let me on. It was an answer to my prayers. I would have been stuck in Lagos for a day or more

if they hadn't let me on, and I would have missed being with Joe." (Joe visited them in Africa upon returning home from his mission in Italy.)

These many experiences helped to temper them for the Lord's work. It helped them to be bolder and do more to carry out the work in a sometimes difficult land.

* * *

"Our job was to open up countries to the gospel—to get the governments to let the gospel in, missionaries in, and to teach the gospel to all the people there," J B. explained, looking back. This meant they would need to be legally registered as a Church in each country, they would need a strong leadership base, and they would need to spread temple blessings to as many members as possible. Legal registration then became the main focus, because the work could hardly progress until it had been gained. Until the Church was registered in a country, it would not be recognized as an accepted religion, which therefore meant that it was illegal for members to meet in groups that exceeded a certain size. It also meant they would not be able to acquire buildings for meetings, offices, or housing, and it meant they would not be allowed to proselyte.

Numerous obstacles hindered the spreading of the gospel. Tribalism was one of these. Many Africans had strong ties to traditions and were quicker to listen to tribal leaders than to church leaders. "We could have gone into the bush and baptized people like crazy—but right into inactivity," Elder Washburn said. "The tribal leaders have a lot of influence on those people because they have been brought up giving their allegiance to their tribe." Thus the missionaries focused their work on urban areas, moving at a slower pace into the bush and wilderness areas.

Corrupt governments created another obstacle for the missionaries to overcome. These governments caused the people a lot of turmoil and slowed development and progress. People were often so busy struggling to live they had a hard time focusing on more eternal things. An example of the governmental corruption was the frequent occurrence of bribery. Many officials expected bribes, and would hold out, doing things as slowly as possible, until they got their payoff. Of course, bribery is not the Lord's way, and so Elder Washburn and his companions had to plead and wait, and wait and plead, until finally their requests were granted. This made the work a lot slower. However, with the Lord's help they became registered in many countries, and did it all without offering a single bribe.

With fifty different nations and so many people, they had to start somewhere. They did not proselyte in the nations bordering the Mediterranean because of the strong Muslim influence there. They focused on the nations below the Sahara Desert. There were a few members of the Church in many of these countries, which proved to greatly help in building foundations for branches and wards.

During their three years they worked closely with twenty-five different countries, the primary goal being to get the respective governments to allow meetings and proselyting. To include details about each of these countries would take too much space for this particular record. However there are six specific ones that will be mentioned in some detail: South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Burundi, and Uganda.

* * *

South Africa had been in turmoil for centuries. White settlers first arrived in the seventeenth century, and there had been racial conflicts ever since. During the years from 1990 to 1993 the whites were in power, and there was an apartheid government (which had been in place for some time), which forced some very discriminating barriers between the blacks and the whites. This caused commotion in the country. People were paranoid. They would have two or three locks on each door, security systems on cars, and watchdogs in fenced yards. Theft and violence were common.

In spite of the dangers, South Africa was the best place for the Church to have its African headquarters. Many modern conveniences in South Africa could not be found anywhere else on the continent. Grocery stores were similar to those in the U.S., as were the transportation and living conditions. In other countries eating meat was a rarity; meals were centered on fruits and vegetables.

The government, though it had its low points, was one of the most stable governments in Africa, and therefore it was easier to legally establish the Church there. (In Nigeria, for example, it would have been extremely difficult to do the same.)

In most of Africa, having a home with decent security was hard to come by. Whereas in South Africa, almost every home was thoroughly guarded. (This became crucial when Barbara was forced to stay home because of the escalating danger in certain other countries.) South Africa had five stakes, and only one other stake existed in the rest of the conti-

ment. Ultimately, the conditions that existed in South Africa were prepared by the Lord.

Thus Johannesburg, South Africa, became the Washburns' home for the next three years. There they held their Presidency meetings and planned for taking the gospel to the vast continent of Africa. Elder Washburn was assigned to do two mission tours in South Africa, one in the Capetown Mission, and one in the Johannesburg Mission. (These tours included traveling around the mission with the Mission President and training and teaching at several zone conferences.)

The Church was well established in South Africa, yet it was almost non-existent elsewhere. Thus they spent a large portion of their time away from home. In fact, Elder Washburn calculated that he was away from South Africa for 191 days one year. Simply put, he was gone more than he was home. And after being in these other countries, it was a pleasant reprieve to go back to South Africa. Despite the sometimes hazardous living conditions, it was a good place to call 'home.'

They tried to always have one member of the area presidency in the South Africa office at all times. That way they could take care of routine duties and be at hand in case any unexpected issues came up. This turned out to be somewhat difficult because there were so many necessary duties elsewhere.

On November 21st, 1991, LaVon and Addy Gifford arrived in South Africa. They had lived in Page during the years the Washburns had, and the two families were good friends. Elder Gifford served as the executive secretary to the Area Presidency, and Sister Gifford served in the office. They had come at the Washburns' request. They soon became aware of the harsh conditions in South Africa. Soon after they arrived, they were mugged in broad daylight, had their valuables taken, and were quite roughed up—and all this with onlookers standing by. But they did not let it deter them, and they continued to serve faithfully.

Missionaries had been in South Africa for over a hundred years, but most early converts had traveled to the United States after their conversions. In the early 1990s, the stakes that existed in South Africa were mostly made up of white people, and little effort had been made to take the gospel to the black people. Many of the same racial separations that existed in the apartheid government existed among Church members. In the wards in South Africa, one would hardly ever see a black person, but in

the outlying branches, one would hardly ever see a white person.

“The hurt was real,” Barbara said as she later recalled what it was like. In the country’s history some serious crimes had been committed by both races toward each other, crimes that were hard to forget. One white sister in Relief Society said, “I can’t learn to love the black people, they killed my father.” There was a black family who came to church and was so ill-received by the whites that they never came back.

“People would classify everybody with the same color of skin as being the same,” said Elder Washburn, “which was a big mistake. There are good whites and bad whites, and there are good blacks and bad blacks.” One of the great successes the Washburns saw was when people learned to see past the prejudices and the traditional hatreds and allowed love to heal their wounds.

Things started to change in South Africa while they were there, albeit they were slow and subtle changes. The leadership became more open to having people go out and help strengthen the remote branches. The work went from being almost solely among the whites to involving the native people a lot more. Some of this had started before the new Area Presidency arrived, but having an Area Presidency there all of the time added strength. The Lord’s plan was to take the gospel to all his children, and He was providing a way for this to happen.

Elder Washburn said the gospel was the only thing that could heal the many problems that were so entrenched in the land. This proved to be true not only in South Africa, but in each of the countries that accepted the gospel. As the gospel was shared, hurts were healed, damages were repaired, and peace was given to the people who chose to follow its teachings.

* * *

In the 1960s a man from Ghana named R.A.F. Mensah came upon a copy of *The Book of Mormon*. He read it and knew it was true. He shared the book with his close friend Joseph W.B. Johnson, who also believed it. Together they unofficially started organizing church meetings and teaching people from this book and from any other church materials they could find. When missionaries finally came in 1978, 125 people were anxiously waiting to be baptized. Soon thereafter a mission was created for Ghana and Nigeria, and the gospel rolled forward. However, anti-Mormon protesters eventually convinced the government that having the

Church in Ghana was not in their best interest. On June 14th, 1989, the government of Ghana expelled the Church. No missionary work was allowed. Congregations were no longer allowed to meet, except in very small groups in people's homes. Church members called it "The Freeze."

When Elder Lindsay, Elder Sackley, and Elder Washburn arrived, they learned of this and were very concerned. They worried about the members who were now isolated. They spent hours fasting and praying that the Lord would provide a way for the Church to be reinstated there.

On October 31st, 1990, Elder Washburn wrote, "We have been fasting and praying for Ghana and are going to the temple this evening. We have been struggling with the Ghana problem and seem to be hitting dead end streets. Tuesday we had another discussion, and at the end President Lindsay asked me to pray. We knelt and the Spirit was present as we poured out our hearts to the Lord and asked for His help to open the way. The next day I fasted and prayed. Then we and the Sackleys went to the temple. We asked in the prayer circle for a blessing on Ghana. That same day Elder Sackley was given permission to go into Ghana. A ray of light seems to be shining forth. I am so grateful for the blessings of the Lord to us."

In the following weeks Elder Sackley spent a lot of time in Ghana doing paperwork, making contacts, and meeting with government officials—assuring them that the Church would be a blessing and not a hindrance. The members did all they could to convince the government that it had made a mistake.

On November 30th, Elder Washburn wrote in his journal, "HIP, HIP, HOORAY, WE ARE BACK IN GHANA! The Lord has heard our prayers and blessed us. The announcement has been made, and we are able to start having church there again. The people at the temple have been praying for this, and I am sure that has helped. Now we need the Lord to bless us so we can get into Kenya, which seems to be the key to East Africa."

After a year and a half of "The Freeze," the government finally allowed Church activities to resume. The Church had actually grown stronger while the missionaries were absent because they had to rely on themselves to support each other. During this time many people had learned of the gospel and wanted to be baptized. When the Church finally returned, the work exploded, so much so, that it was difficult to find enough leadership for the growing number of members.

The following February the Washburns made their first trip to Ghana.

There they met the Mission President and many other members who had been faithful during “The Freeze.” Elder Washburn interviewed and “felt good about” several young prospective missionaries. The fruits of the gospel continued to increase.

On April 21st, 1991, Elder James E. Faust and Elder Neal A. Maxwell came to Ghana and created two stakes. On May 19th, 1993, President Hinckley flew to Ghana and met with Elder Washburn and Elder Tingey to scout for temple sites. The Accra Ghana Temple was dedicated on January 11th, 2004.

The Lord had answered the prayers of His saints. He opened the gates to a land that had been locked and closed. The Lord provided a way and it was because of their faith.

* * *

Nigeria is home to over 100 million people, nearly one seventh of Africa’s total population. As Elder Washburn tried to describe the feeling one gets when there, he said, “In Ghana, the people seemed peaceful. Nigeria was the opposite—it felt like everyone was a crook.” It was a common saying among the Nigerians themselves that “there’s not one honest man in Nigeria, including the president.”

The country’s government had a history of instability. Recently a military group had taken control of the government and set up a democratic election. However, after the election the winning candidate was imprisoned, and one of the military’s generals took over. Following this event, as there had been in the past, there were riots, burnings, and much social chaos throughout Nigeria.

The Church had existed in Nigeria for a long time. In fact, when the Washburns arrived in Africa, Nigeria boasted the only stake in the whole continent outside of South Africa. People from Nigeria first inquired about the Church with letters to Church headquarters as early as 1946. Letters requesting missionaries continued until the Church sent LaMar S. Williams as the first presiding elder over Nigeria in 1962. He made preparations for a mission to be established there. However, in 1965, just as key strides were about to be taken, the First Presidency directed that the work should stop and that Brother Williams should return home. He was given no explanation for this. However, only two months later a violent civil war broke out which ravaged the country. For thirteen years there were no attempts made to establish the Church.

The first missionaries to Nigeria arrived in 1978. The work quickly progressed, and by 1990 there was one stake and two missions. In 1992 the Area Presidency set up two more missions there. When the Washburns left in 1993, the number of stakes had grown from one to five. The work continued to spread. In 2002 President Hinckley announced a temple to be built in Aba, Nigeria. It was dedicated in August 2005.

Elder and Sister Washburn's time in Nigeria was focused on building the Church and strengthening the leadership. This meant interviews with local leaders, instructional meetings on how to lead, and the continual search for more leadership. Elder Washburn went on a few mission tours there. He also presided over several District Conferences.

Nigeria was a rough place. At the Phoenix airport there were signs that advised against flying to Lagos, Nigeria, because of the danger upon arrival. During their three year stay, twelve vehicles were stolen at gunpoint from the Nigerian missions. The mission home in Lagos was broken into by men wearing police uniforms. The Mission President and his wife were tied up on the floor, and the house was looted of anything valuable. "We sometimes felt threatened there," Sister Washburn said. But the Lord always watched over and protected his servants.

Elder and Sister Washburn had several adventurous experiences while they were in Nigeria. Two of these happened at the airport. "You haven't been to Africa till you've been to Lagos airport," Elder Washburn said.

One time he and several companions were trying to get to their flight on time. They strode through the crowd in a rush. The airport was busy with people all about. Elder Washburn had been warned to never put his wallet in his back pocket while there. Instead he put it in his coat pocket where he could keep it safe. However, when the weather became hotter, he took off his coat. Having no time for a better solution, he switched his wallet to his back pants pocket, so it would not fall out and get lost. Moments later, a person bumped into Elder Washburn's shoulder. At the time he did not think much of it—it was very crowded. A minute or two later he felt his back pocket. His wallet was gone! It was common for the pick-pockets to work in pairs, with one of them bumping the victim so as to take his attention away from the heist. He did not have much money in his wallet, but his passport, visa, and other important documents were in it.

As soon as he noticed it was missing, he shouted, "Someone took my wallet. Someone took my wallet!" As he did, two men in the crowd ahead

of him took off running. He sprinted after them, shouting for help. No one seemed to hear. He continued the pursuit, shouting as he ran. The thieves jumped over a short wall and out of sight. When he caught up and hopped over the wall, they were nowhere to be seen. He had lost them. He realized there was no chance of ever retrieving his wallet. He wondered if he would still be able to get on the plane without his identification and papers.

With heavy breaths, he walked back to find the plane. As he went, a police officer approached him and asked him to follow. He was brought into an office where a few police officers and two men sat. The officer handed Elder Washburn his wallet after confirming it was his. The officer told him it was a rare thing for a wallet to be found and returned to its owner in that airport. Elder Washburn gave the money in his wallet to the officer as thanks. It was indeed a miracle that he had gotten his wallet back. He boarded the plane and traveled safely to his next destination.

Another event happened at that airport several months later, after Elder and Sister Washburn had been to Nigeria several times. As one would walk out of the airport the taxi drivers would “just mob you for business,” as Elder Washburn put it. One taxi driver came up to him and Sister Washburn and offered his services, but at an unreasonably high price—almost double the normal fare. This often happened to them because the drivers assumed that since they were white they were first-time visitors and not familiar with realistic costs. However, at this point Elder Washburn felt confident in his abilities to negotiate. He told the gentleman that it was not a fair price and walked on to the next taxi driver. The first driver got angry and followed him, telling him that he was first in line and had the right to the first customer. Elder Washburn ignored him and made a better deal with the next driver. They loaded their luggage and got in. At this point several other drivers had gathered around in support of the first driver, saying that he was first in line. As the Washburn’s taxi began to pull out, one of the men threw a big plank with nails sticking out of it in front of the tires. Elder Washburn got out, moved the plank, and returned to his seat. The men put it back again. He stepped out again, moved the board, and waited. The taxi pulled forward a bit. Then the men moved the board back. Elder Washburn moved it again, the taxi pulled ahead a bit, and the men moved it back. Elder Washburn moved the board one more time. The men finally realized that he would not give up, so they gave up. As

Elder and Sister Washburn drove away, they asked their courteous driver if he was going to be okay when he returned to the loading dock of the airport. He told them he'd be fine and that things like that happened all the time.

Nigeria eventually got dangerous enough that it was not safe for Barbara to travel there. They were thankful to have a safe home in South Africa where she could stay alone.

Despite the dangers and dishonesty in Nigeria, the local members of the Church were outstanding examples of righteousness. They showed that no-matter what turmoil and unrighteousness goes on, one can keep a tight grip on the gospel and weather any spiritual storm. The work continued to rapidly progress in Nigeria.

* * *

The Church was established in Kenya in the 1970s. It was started by American Church members whose occupations had brought them there temporarily. While there, they taught the gospel to a few of the natives. After the Americans left, the remaining members were few. For many years they tried to register the Church, but without success. Because they were unregistered, they were not allowed to own buildings for meeting, and only a limited number of missionaries were allowed to enter the country. The members were restricted to meeting in their homes in groups of no more than twenty-five people. Elder Joseph Sitati, a native Kenyan, was the Presiding Elder, and only a few small branches existed.

The Area Presidency made opening Kenya a high priority, not only so the branches could be better supported, but so the gospel could spread throughout the nation—a land of fertile soil waiting for the seeds of the gospel. The first step was to become officially registered by the government. The Area Presidency often fasted and prayed for Kenya. So did Elder Sitati and the members of his branches.

President Daniel arap Moi presided over Kenya—"a good Seventh-Day Adventist," as Elder Washburn described him. He was against letting any more churches into the country because he worried that some religions might gain strong political sway and become a hindrance to the government. This had been a major factor in the Church's failed attempts at registration.

At one point Elder Sitati was granted a meeting with President Moi. As they sat together, Elder Sitati read to President Moi from *The Doctrine*

and Covenants section 134: “We believe that governments were instituted of God for the benefit of man... We believe that all men are bound to sustain and uphold the respective governments in which they reside...” He also read to him the Twelfth Article of Faith: “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, magistrates, and in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” He assured President Moi that the Church would not be politically involved, would not attempt to gain civil powers, and would show respect toward their government and its laws.

A few weeks later, on the 25th of February 1991, the Attorney General called Elder Sitati and asked to meet with him. Elder and Sister Washburn happened to be in Kenya at the time. Elder Sitati drove to their hotel and met with them and the three branch presidents of the area. Together they knelt down and each took a turn praying. They asked that whatever happened at the meeting would advance the Lord’s work.

They then drove to the Attorney General’s office. As Elder Sitati and the three branch presidents entered, they were welcomed with, “Are you the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints?” They said, “Yes, we are.” The Attorney General then said, “The President is pleased with you and your church.” He handed Elder Sitati the certificate of registration for the Church in Kenya. Twelve years of effort and prayer were finally rewarded! Elder Washburn’s journal describes the rest as follows: “I was invited in and shook hands with the Attorney General. I thanked him for his kindness. Elder Sitati read to him from section 134 about how we support governments. He said he would like a copy of that. I gave him a copy of The Book of Mormon. Then I took a picture of all five of them with the document. We thanked him again and departed feeling happy and grateful for the blessings of our Heavenly Father. We went back to the hotel and again each said a prayer of thanks. Then we talked about the things we need to do to cause the work to go forth. What a glorious day!”

Now they were able to proselyte, have missionaries and a mission, hold larger meetings and conferences, and do many other things. A short time later a mission was approved. The Church has been growing in Kenya ever since.

The Church spent a lot of money on two major welfare programs in Kenya. The first was an immunization program that used two-hundred thousand dollars to buy and distribute vaccinations for the children of Ke-

nya. The second was a large-scale water project that brought water from a mountain spring down to a small village, so the people there wouldn't have to walk such a distance for water.

In May Elder and Sister Washburn searched for and found a house that would soon become a mission home. The Kenya Nairobi Mission was organized in July of 1991. By the end of 1991, those three small branches had turned into over 300 members. Elder Washburn wrote in his journal on August 19th, 1992, "Kenya truly will be the center of the Church in East Africa."

Elder Joseph Sitati and his family wanted to have the blessings of the temple. Unfortunately, it was difficult to gain visas for South Africa. Also, they could not afford the cost of airfare, and the drive from Kenya to South Africa would take days. However, they were willing to pay any price to be sealed as a family. They were blessed to have their visas finally come through, but even more blessed when a generous member from the United States offered to pay their airfare. Joseph Sitati, his wife, and their five children were sealed together for time and all eternity in the South Africa Temple. The ordinance was performed by their good friend Elder Washburn. After that wonderful event, the Washburns and the Sitatis traveled to Swaziland, Krueger Park, and several other sites in the area. It was an enjoyable time for all of them.

Kenya was another country that experienced both trying times and great success. The members had gone through twelve years of waiting and working to get the Church registered. The Lord blessed them for their endurance. He not only answered their prayers, but He opened up even greater blessings that came with their reception of the gospel.

* * *

Burundi is a small, landlocked country in the southern part of West Africa and is dwarfed by the giant countries which surround it. On the 15th of May 1991, Elder and Sister Washburn were scheduled to travel to Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi. However, someone made a mistake: Rather than scheduling the flight with a large airline, it was scheduled with a Burundi plane, or rather, *the* Burundi plane. It was a small, forty-four passenger plane, and it was so loaded down with passengers and cargo that it seemed like it might not even make it off the ground. Thankfully, they arrived safely.

Soon thereafter Elder Washburn wrote, "Burundi is more stable, pros-

perous, and ready for the gospel than most countries.” The day after their arrival, they met with government officials about the Church being officially registered in Burundi.

They met “the sweetest looking family,” as Sister Washburn said. Egide and Beatrice Nzojimbwani had three beautiful daughters, and Beatrice was pregnant with their fourth. Egide had a doctorate in geology and worked at a local university. They had been converted while visiting Belgium six years before. Since that time they had held Sunday School each week in their home in Bujambura. They had also kept a separate bank account wherein they put all their tithing and saved it for the time that the Church would be established in their country.

Elder Washburn set Egide apart as the Presiding Elder for Burundi and asked him to conduct a sacrament meeting each week. “I have not seen a place in Africa that would be more exciting to open to the gospel,” Elder Washburn added.

In 1992 Elder Earl C. Tingey, who had since become a member of the Africa Area Presidency (replacing Elder Sackley), traveled to Burundi to meet with government officials. He spent twenty minutes with one official, explaining the Church. After his explanation he requested that the Church be registered. His request was denied. He was told that his church did not seem to offer anything different than the churches that were already registered. In a moment of inspiration he asked for just five more minutes to explain before he left. He pulled out a wallet-sized copy of the *For the Strength of the Youth* pamphlet. He proceeded to read from it the values and standards for the youth of the Church. The official asked, “You mean to tell me you expect the youth of your church to live these standards?” “Yes,” Elder Tingey replied, “and they do.” The official requested copies of the pamphlet to share with the youth of his church. A few months later the Church was registered in Burundi. Elder Tingey retold this story in the April 2004 General Conference.

On November 19th, 1992, a branch was officially formed with Brother Egide Nzojimbwani as President. The events that took place in Burundi echo the statement, “By small and simple things are great things brought to pass.” In a small country the gospel was pushed forward by the hands of ordinary people. The Lord inspired and guided those hands to do things beyond their natural abilities. Unfortunately, a civil war soon broke out in the neighboring country of Rwanda, the effects of which flowed

into Burundi. The progress of the Church halted. The members there, keeping a firm hope, awaited the time when the Lord would open the way for the work to move forward again.

* * *

“Uganda is a land of great potential,” Elder Washburn wrote on November 10th, 1990. “It could be one of the most beautiful lands on earth, but it has been ravaged by war—poor roads, garbage on the streets, no modern stores, run-down buildings, etc.” Idi Amin had been a ruthless dictator there for many years, and though he was dead and gone, he had left the country in a state of great disrepair. He had killed many of the intellectuals and stolen great amounts of money. He left the whole country suffering.

On their first trip to Uganda, they spent eight hours in an airport waiting. Long waits in airports were a common occurrence during their stay in Africa. By the time they arrived in Kampala, the capital of Uganda, it was 3:00 A.M.

When they arrived, Elder and Sister Washburn met with two expatriate families: the Worthens, who were there doing dental work, and the Denton family, who were assisting the Department of Agriculture. The next day they attended a small sacrament meeting which included only these two families and four native families. It was clear that there were plentiful opportunities for expanding the Church in Uganda. However, the Church was in an early phase and was not even registered.

Senior missionary couples were pillars for the work in Africa. The Area Presidency recognized that Uganda would not get going until senior couples arrived to stabilize the work. Elder Washburn requested that his brother, Lark, and his wife, Arlea, be called to serve in Uganda.

Lark and Arlea received their call and arrived in Kampala on December 8th, 1990. The couple soon discovered that Uganda was (as they described it) “not that great.” They arrived in a dark and dingy airport that was infested with mice, and huge, flying termites. Elder and Sister Washburn were there to greet them.

The four of them drove to their new home; they were to share a house with the Worthens. The house was better than the airport but still was not wonderful. The water and electricity were turned off on a regular basis. As Elder Washburn looked at his brother and noted the distaste in his eyes, he said, “You know, some places are much worse than this. It’s all relative.”

Lark looked back at his brother and replied, “It sure is. If I wasn’t your relative, I wouldn’t be here.”

Despite the humble living conditions, Lark and Arlea stayed and endured the discomforts. They served the Lord and expanded His church. They were blessed with extraordinary success and had baptisms almost every week.

In February of 1991 Elder and Sister Washburn returned to Kampala. They witnessed Lark baptize three young men. As Elder Washburn later recalled, “It was obvious the Church was going to grow quite well in Uganda.”

Two months later on April 23rd, Lark called to tell them the Church was registered in Uganda! It was exciting news. But they soon found out the registration was for the city of Kampala only. Jinja, another major city in Uganda, was not included on the registration. Unfortunately they had already sent a missionary couple there, rented a building, and were planning a fireside. Elder Washburn and Lark went back to the government official to request registration for Jinja. He adamantly told them no, but they persisted. Finally he told them to come back the next day. They returned, and he gave them a new registration certificate with Jinja included. They arrived at the fireside in Jinja just in time: The police had arrived to stop the event from taking place because it had not been authorized. They showed the registration to the police, and the fireside proceeded.

In October 1991 Elder James E. Faust came to Uganda and dedicated the land to the work of the Lord. Since then the work in Uganda has progressed remarkably well. Because of the devotion of Lark and Arlea and many missionaries like them, there is now a stake in Kampala. In 2005 the Church announced the Uganda Kampala Mission, which would include Uganda and Ethiopia. Those who made sacrifices for the work learned that it is through trials that blessings come. For their longsuffering, the Lord poured out great blessings in return.

* * *

It was a twenty-thousand mile round trip from Salt Lake City to Johannesburg. Elder and Sister Washburn made that trip eight times. Each April and October they would fly back for General Conference.

At conference time the Quorum of the Twelve invited all the returning Seventies to meet with them at their weekly temple meeting. All came fasting. They broke their fast by partaking of the sacrament together in the

temple. Elder Washburn later said of these experiences, “It was a special privilege to be in the presence of those great leaders of the Church—to sit with them in the temple, clothed in temple robes, and to hear their testimonies. I cherish it very much. It is as close to heaven as you can get on this earth.”

On April 4th, 1991, in one of these very meetings, Elder Washburn was called on to share his testimony. “It was humbling,” he wrote. “I expressed my love for the Lord and the blessings of being in His service. President Hinckley in his remarks said, ‘thank you, Brother Washburn, for looking after Central Africa.’”

It was difficult to be away from their family during their years in Africa. But being on the Lord’s errand was worth the price (See Appendix J for Letter from Africa). However, they were excited every Thursday when the mail pouch came to Johannesburg because it often meant receiving letters from their children and grandchildren. They also received phone calls on occasion, including ones announcing new grandbabies. They especially loved traveling home for family reunions. The two that took



J B. and Barbara in Brazil during one of their trips between Africa and the U.S.A.

place during their years in Africa were held on Brigham Young University campus at Heritage Halls. It made them happy to visit their children and to spend time with their grandchildren. Of course, the grandchildren loved to see “Grandpa and Grandma.” As usual these reunions were one of the highlights of the year.

Christmastime without the family was difficult. Though they missed their family and wanted to be with them, their primary desire was to serve the Lord, and if that meant sacrificing the holidays and other occasions

with the family, so be it.

Two other important family events took place during the Africa years. In April 1991, Andy called and told them he was engaged to Ann Bagley Jacobs. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple on July 15th, 1991.



At the 1993 Reunion: (Back) Andy, Jim, Mark, Ted, Jay, Shannon;
(Front) Rich, Joe, J B., Dave, Dan

Dave met Kelly South in the spring of the following year. They were married in the Mesa Temple on September 26th, 1992. Elder and Sister Washburn were blessed to attend both of these weddings, and Elder Washburn performed the ordinances.

Throughout the Washburns' years in Africa, Barbara's mother's health was unsteady. In the first months of 1992, Barbara took two trips home to be with her mother. On June 22nd, Aileen Harries passed away. It was difficult for Barbara to say goodbye, but she understood that she would be reunited with her mother again. She counted it a blessing that she had been with her, rather than in Africa, when it was time for her to go.

Amid the exciting tales of Africa, there was a deepening love story taking place. Each year J B. and Barbara came to love each other more. They became more one. This made the times when they were separated painful.

J B. would often write in his journal that he missed Barbara and could not wait for her to return. Sometimes when either she had left for the states, or he was away on Church duties, he would write how homesick he was. Once he wrote, “For me, home is where Barbara is.” On another occasion he penned, “I miss my sweetheart. Only the Lord’s work could keep me from her.” It was during their mission to Africa that they celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary—four decades of their commitment to love each other for eternity.

* * *

When the Washburns first arrived in Africa, only six stakes existed in the whole continent: five in South Africa and one in Nigeria. There were only a few missions. When they first arrived, it was difficult to find a member of the Church in most of the countries. When they left three years later, the Church was registered in almost half of the more than fifty nations. The number of stakes and the number of missions had greatly increased. The Lord truly blessed the work in Africa.

In February of 1993, the Washburns had served in Africa for two-and-a-half years. It was then that they received word of a change of assignment. On March 31st they traveled back to Salt Lake City for General Conference. There President Hinckley told Elder Washburn that he was to be reassigned to serve as a counselor in the Utah Central Area Presidency.

In some ways it was exciting news. In other ways it was sad. They had grown to love Africa. It was home to so many of God’s most beautiful creations. Even more, they had grown to love the people. They had gained many strong friendships. But they also looked forward to the comforts of the United States, and more importantly, to be close to their family once again. Ultimately, they were glad to serve wherever the Lord asked them to.



J B. with his mother, Wasel

They said goodbye to Africa for the last time on July 16th and flew back to

Utah.

They stayed in Provo with Elder Washburn's mother, Wasel, whose health had been declining. She was happy to have them with her. She was proud of the things they had accomplished. On July 30th, at 5:35 P.M., she passed away. She had always been one to serve others and was one of the most inspiring people in her son's life. Elder Washburn was happy to think that she had been reunited with her loving husband, Vell.

In that same month Elder and Sister Washburn were reunited with their family at a mountain lodge in Idaho, for the annual reunion. Then they began looking for a home in the Salt Lake Valley. They found one in West Jordan. It was a twenty minute commute from their new home to his office in Salt Lake.

Elder Washburn's new calling had him working in the Church Administration Building at 47 East South Temple #408. His office was on the fourth floor, above President Hinckley's office on the first floor. Elder Washburn often joked that all the revelations President Hinckley received had to pass right through his office. It was a wonderful experience to work so closely with the Church's leaders.

While serving as a member of an Area Presidency, Elder Washburn's duties included the following: presiding over Stake Conferences; restoring blessings to excommunicated members; meeting with the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve, and Quorums of the Seventy; acting as counselor in the General Sunday School Presidency; being on the Priesthood Executive Committee; communicating the needs of the Mormon Youth Symphony and Chorus, and being a liaison for Military Relations.

He and the other Seventies in Salt Lake were invited to the Twelve's Thursday temple meeting once a month. He considered this a great privilege and valued each of these meetings. After one such meeting, Elder Washburn recorded the following: "This was a special day... In the temple meeting President Monson said he received a letter from a man who took a whole page to say what a great stake conference he had been to, and it was one Brother Washburn presided at. It was kind of President Monson and made me feel humble. Then I was asked to lead in the prayer circle, and this is very humbling too. What a sweet spirit is in those meetings."

That Christmas they drove to Idaho and visited the families of Ted and Becky, Jim and Sonya, Shannon and Katie, and Rich and Yvette. Later Andy and Ann brought their family to West Jordan to visit. For part of

the time in West Jordan, Dan and Heidi lived in their basement. Dan was working while waiting to get into medical school. Rich and Yvette moved to the town of Magna, which was nearby, and so were frequent visitors. Also, Joe, and his future wife, Jennifer, made frequent visits. They counted it a huge blessing to spend so much time with their family.

Elder Washburn called May 21st of 1994, “A Heaven on Earth day.” All twenty of his and Barbara’s children—ten of their own, ten by marriage—gathered together in the temple. They witnessed the sealing of Joseph to his wife, Jennifer Falls. Elder Washburn had the opportunity of performing the marriage. It was a wonderful occasion.

On August 19th, 1994, Elder and Sister Washburn met in the temple with their family once again for the marriage of Marcian Manson Washburn and his bride, Holly Tessoroff. Again Elder Washburn was privileged to perform the ceremony.

The blessings of family and the rewards of Church service made those years in Salt Lake a memorable time—one in which they felt content and satisfied with their lives.

In January of 1994, Elder J. B. Washburn turned sixty-five years old. On his birthday he wrote, “Sixty-five years old doesn’t seem possible, but the years roll by. I’m a blessed man. I have good health, a great wife, and good children, and I associate with the best people in the world every week. I’ll try to make this the best year of my life.” He invited his brothers and sisters to his house that evening and cooked dinner for them. A few days prior to his birthday, he had the sacred privilege of speaking in two sessions of the Bountiful Temple dedication. (See Appendices H and I for full texts.)

At the following April General Conference, Elder Washburn was re-assigned to be the first counselor to President John E. Fowler in the Utah



L-R: Elder Washburn,
President John Fowler, and
2nd Counselor Darrel Woolsey

North Area. “We will have about thirty regional representatives and 275 stakes,” he wrote. “What a job.” A few months later, President Monson asked him to be the first counselor in the General Sunday School Presidency. Elder Charles Didier was the President, and Elder F. Burton Howard

was the second counselor.

One of the duties of his calling (which was also a blessing) was that of interviewing people who had been excommunicated and determining their worthiness for re-baptism. Elder Washburn found this to be one of the most rewarding parts of his calling. One day he wrote, "I restored the blessings to a sweet lady who truly had the spirit of repentance. It is a joy to restore blessings to such a person." In many cases he found similar humility and sincere desires to have the blessings of the gospel renewed. He felt blessed to share the happiness that always accompanied that restoration.

In 1994 the family reunion was held at a resort on the south beach of Bear Lake, Utah. The family loved it so much, they returned for several more summers. The following week the Washburns flew to Alaska with the Lindsays to visit the Giffords, who presided over the mission there. There they saw wonders quite the opposite of what they had seen in Africa: glaciers, icebergs, daylight both at bedtime and in the early hours of the morning, wildlife unique to the cold north, and the wondrous Mount McKinley.

During the months in the Salt Lake valley, Sister Washburn spent many hours in the Church's Family History Library doing genealogical work. In September of 1994, the Utah Medical Association honored J Ballard Washburn with a plaque for his dedicated service to the Native Americans.

On the first day of 1995, Elder Washburn set his brother AlDean apart as a missionary, but the spirit guided him to bless him in preparation for a higher mission. In the weeks soon thereafter, AlDean's cancer returned, and he was unable to leave for the mission field. He spent his last mortal days preparing for this higher call. J B. visited him frequently. He passed away on April 29th. In spite of the loss, J B. felt peace, and he knew that AlDean was doing a more important work in the place he had gone to. Over the years when his brother Berk's birthday would come around, J B. would often stop to think about what work his brother and his father were doing. Now AlDean had joined them in their great work.

On August 2nd, 1995, Elder Washburn was set apart for his new calling. The 10th was his last day in the office. "I have loved being here and enjoyed every day, but I am excited about our new call and anxious to get on with it."

* Some information for this chapter was gathered from the 2005 Church Almanac.