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Yea, and when you do not cry unto the Lord, let your hearts be full, drawn out in prayer unto him continually for your welfare, and also for the welfare of those who are around you (Alma 34:27).

Mirroring Influences

Larry and Terry EchoHawk

Larry EchoHawk is a professor of law at Brigham Young University’s J. Reuben Clark Law School. He was born in 1948 and is a member of the Pawnee Indian tribe. He joined the Church when he was fourteen. Recruited to play football at BYU, he graduated in 1970. He earned his juris doctorate from the University of Utah in 1973 and pursued graduate business studies at Stanford University. Professor EchoHawk practiced law in Salt Lake City until he was named chief general counsel to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes at Fort Hall, Idaho, a position he held for over eight years. From 1990 to 1994 he served as attorney general for the state of Idaho. Terry EchoHawk grew up in Farmington, New Mexico. She was baptized a member of the Church at nineteen by her husband while both were students at BYU. She graduated with an associate degree in nursing, eventually receiving a B.S. in community health. Terry currently works part-time at the BYU Health Center and the Missionary Training Center in Provo. She enjoys family history research and temple work. The EchoHawks are the parents of six children. Both enjoy running and have completed several marathons.

Terry:

Larry and I met in the fourth grade in Farmington, New Mexico. When my family moved from California, Larry and I attended the same elementary school for six months while our home was being built across town. We did not see each other again until junior high, when we once more attended the same school.

Larry:

When Terry and I met, neither one of us were members of the Church. I really didn’t have contact with any church. But that soon changed. My father is a full-blood Native American, from the Pawnee tribe, and my mother is of German descent. There are six children in my family. The two oldest are sisters. I am the third youngest of four boys. When I was growing up, there was a lot of turmoil in my family. We never went to church. My father had a drinking problem. When he was drinking, it was terrible at home. I didn’t think my parents were going to stay together.

One day a neighbor, who was standing next to my father in a line at a bank, asked him if he would be interested in having the missionaries come over. At the time, my older brother, an excellent student who was close to graduation, was applying for one of the military academies. My dad thought it would be nice if my brother listed some church background on his application. So he was willing to let the missionaries come.

The stake missionaries, Brother Pearson and Brother Camphuysen, came to our home. I was fourteen years old. I don’t remember much about the lessons because I didn’t pay a lot of attention. When we were asked to commit to baptism, my dad said yes. He was a real disciplinarian in our home. He went down the line from the oldest to the youngest asking, “You want to be baptized?” I remember when he looked at me. After my mom and dad had said yes, it was automatic that the rest of the family would too. Although I had no testimony, I was baptized. Indeed, after joining the Church, my older brothers and I lived as we had before. By the seventh grade I was already doing things I shouldn’t. That didn’t change immediately for me. Fortunately, my father made us go to church every Sunday, and I got the benefit of listening to Sunday School teachers, priesthood leaders, and sacrament meeting speakers. I paid attention, but it wasn’t influencing my life. However, I could see that it was better for our family because the problems associated with my dad’s drinking disappeared. Our home was a much better place to be.

Terry:

I came from a home where my mother took my brother and me to a Lutheran church every Sunday. My father would go with us at Christmas and Easter. I was confirmed at the age of twelve, an important event for me. I remember participating in the church Christmas plays and vacation Bible school, singing in the choir, and playing the organ. The church was a part of our lives. Sunday morning was for church, then my family would usually go water skiing or snow skiing with friends.

When I was a sophomore in high school, I started dating an LDS boy, named Brent Packer. This young man had

a Book of Mormon in the glove compartment of his car. He asked if I'd like to read it. At about the same time, my friend Tammy asked if I would like to take the missionary lessons at her home. It was then that I met my first missionaries. I will be forever grateful for them.

My family's response to my interest in the Church was not positive. I loved my family, but as I started learning more about the gospel, I wanted to keep the Sabbath day holy in a different way than I had in the past. My friend and classmate Tyra Brown was a very positive influence on my life at this time. I asked to go to the LDS Church with her. My parents didn't like that, but they agreed to let me go to the LDS Church if I also went to the Lutheran Church. Family ski trips would come up on Sundays, and I would say, "I don't want to go skiing on Sunday." I remember vividly my father's response. I can still see him when he said, "What kind of a church would pull families apart like this?" His response really hurt me. Of course, the Church wasn't pulling our family apart. I simply wanted to change some things in my life. Although my father didn't go to church, it was interesting to me that he paid attention and became concerned when I became seriously interested in the LDS Church. Because of his concerns, he would not give permission for me to be baptized. As a consequence, my interest in the LDS Church caused friction with my family.

I remember that Tracy, my best friend from grade school and high school, reacted differently than I did when the gospel was introduced to us. We were sixteen and we started associating with Mormon kids. Both of our boyfriends were LDS. I wanted to take the missionary lessons, so Tracy took them too. Tracy chose not have anything to do with the Church after the lessons. But after I took the lessons, I knew that I wanted to join the Church. This decision didn't change my friendship with Tracy or with other non-LDS friends in any way.

Larry:

My achievement in sports is tied very closely to my conversion to the Church—it's one and the same story. A key moment for me occurred between my junior and senior years of high school, after I was a member of the Church and had become a priest. Brother Richard Boren was the quorum advisor. He took a special interest in me. In a real sense, my experiences as a member of that priests quorum prepared me to take advantage of the spiritual and academic opportunities that I found at BYU.

Brother Boren was a very instrumental part of this. My brothers and I all played sports. We loved it. My brother Fred is a year and a half older than I am, but we were in the same grade. He is the better athlete, and as a consequence I was always in his shadow through grade school, junior high, and high school. I didn't excel in football until my senior year.

Brother Boren was a very successful lawyer. He told me repeatedly, "You can do anything you want. You can get a good education and you can do wonderful things in your life." He knew that I loved sports. So he pulled me aside and said, "If you really want to do well in sports, you have to work at it. You have to set goals and you have to develop yourself." At this point I was not a particularly good football player. Although I wasn't a bad athlete, I wasn't anything special.

However, during my junior year I decided that I wanted to be a good, not mediocre, football player. Brother Boren had said, "In order to succeed you have to set goals and work to prepare yourself." He did more than talk; he helped me set up programs for weight lifting and running. He provided constant encouragement.

Physically I was small for my age (my friends called me "Little Larry"). Along with lifting weights and running, I began mixing up a special weight-gaining formula to drink. It consisted of raw eggs, powdered milk, peanut butter, and all the fattening things I could think of. I put a little vanilla in it to help the taste. I drank this daily and worked out hard. With this and Brother Boren's encouragement, I really started to develop. I probably gained twenty-five pounds in one year.

When I showed up for football practice at the beginning of my senior year, the coaches could hardly believe their eyes. I thought I was going to be a defensive player because I was quick, but when I came to practice I found that they had me listed as a quarterback. This was disappointing because the captain of our football team was already the starting quarterback. But I had prepared. After a few days, I came into the locker room before practice, and my name was listed in the starting position. I had beaten out the captain of the football team! I remember thinking that the coaches were just trying to spur him to do a little better. But I had clearly impressed the coaches because I was bigger and faster and had worked on my skills. I was doing all the things I was supposed to do. I thought, "Man, I've made it!"

Terry:

My first visit to BYU came when I was a high school sophomore—an experience that helped shape my life. I had begun taking the missionary lessons when I was sixteen years old in the home of my friend Tammy Huntzinger in Farmington, New Mexico. About the same time, her mother drove five girls to Provo to visit. I had never seen the BYU

campus. But I remember that it was like coming home. Recalling the trip brings back a flood of memories. Even today, when I drive down University Avenue and see the “Y” on the mountain, I recall that day when we were coming from the southern part of the valley. I remember looking up then and seeing the “Y.” I can still recall the unexpected feelings that came over me. From that moment, BYU was special.

I dated Larry for a short time at the beginning of high school, and during my senior year I began dating him again. My parents had plans for me to go to the University of New Mexico when I graduated, but all my friends and Larry were planning to go to BYU. When I told my parents I wanted to go to BYU they were adamantly opposed. My father said, “I will let you be baptized if you go to the University of New Mexico.”

While pondering this choice I had a wonderful experience at Mutual. I was the only non-Latter-day Saint that night as I went into a Laurel class taught by Sister Faye Mathews. She taught a lesson about temples. I don’t remember exactly what she said, but at the end of her lesson she walked across the circle of girls and laid a set of pale blue pillowcases on my lap. She looked into my eyes and said, “Would you keep these to use after you get married in the temple?”

What I now know to have been feelings prompted by the presence of the Holy Spirit were very powerful and influencing. Each time Larry would invite me to go to Mutual with him and our friends, I became more and more convinced that baptism could wait. I had to be at BYU to be in a place where the Spirit would be too. I chose to go to BYU and postpone baptism for one year.

Larry:

A pivotal moment in my life came during two-a-day practices before the first game of my senior year in high school. Between practice sessions I was out playing with my brother and two friends. Someone threw a ball. I turned around just at the wrong time, and the ball hit me squarely in the eye. It was a serious and painful injury. I was taken to the emergency room at the hospital. My eye was swollen shut. I couldn’t see a thing. When the doctor met with my parents, he said that it was too early to tell, but I might lose the sight in my eye. He bandaged both eyes and sent me home.

I had to lie in bed for a week. You can imagine how devastating it was to me because I had pushed myself to a position where I was the starting quarterback and it was just a week until the first game. I kept asking, “How could this happen?” But it was a turning point of my life. As I lay there in bed, for the first time I started to think about other things Brother Boren had told me. I had been listening as he and others had talked about the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of prayer. As with Enos in the Book of Mormon, those thoughts started coming back to me. But I was still thinking, “How unfair. How could something like this happen to me?”

I remember finally slipping out of bed to my knees. That moment was the first time I had ever prayed intently in my life. There I was with bandages on my eyes, alone in my room, praying. I remember saying, “Heavenly Father, please. If you are there, listen to my prayer and help me not lose the vision in my eye.” I later wondered whether I should have made this promise, but I said, “I promise, if I can just keep the vision in my eye, I will read the Book of Mormon as Brother Boren has challenged me to do.”

When the bandages came off, I couldn’t see. I recall looking toward the light, and if I held my hand in front of my face I could detect something dark in front of me. But gradually, day by day, my sight came back to the point that I had near perfect vision within a week. Of course, I was ecstatic! Then I remembered my promise, and I felt bound to read the Book of Mormon.

The football team had played its first game, and the season was underway. I didn’t think I would be able to play, but the doctors cleared me to practice with the team. The captain of the football team was again the starting quarterback.

During the next game, this one in Grand Junction, Colorado, the coach came to me and said, “Do you want to play?” I said, “Sure.” Later he said, “I talked to your mother and father and they said it’s okay. I talked to the doctor, and you can play.” We were already far behind in the game. When we went out for the second half, we didn’t do very well. Finally, the coach came and said, “The next time we get the ball, you’re going in.” I remember going over to the sideline and kneeling down on one knee (football players often kneel down like that to watch the game). I just dropped my head and said a prayer. I whispered that prayer with “real intent” because I was going to face my biggest challenge on an athletic field. This would be my chance.

The coach called me over, gave me the play, and sent me in. It was a play where I faked to a halfback and rolled out. I could either run with the ball, or I could throw it to receivers downfield. Taking the snap, I could tell after just a few strides that I wouldn’t be able to run the ball. The other team had the play defended. At the last minute I saw one of my teammates down the field. I stopped, planted my foot—this was where the weight lifting paid off—and threw that ball as far and as hard as I could. As soon as I turned the ball loose, I was tackled. Then I heard a roar in the stadium. I

remember thinking, “I don’t know whether they’re cheering for my side or the other side.” When I could look down field, my teammate had the ball in the end zone! That was the greatest moment of my teenage life. To me, it was as an answer to my prayer.

I had another wonderful high school game in Albuquerque. We played harder against the state championship team than any other team that year. Afterward, one of the coaches from the University of New Mexico came into the dressing room. He introduced himself and said, “We liked what we saw tonight.” To me the experience was unreal because I had never been in a position where I had been successful before. He shook my hand and told me that he would be watching me the rest of the year. By the end of the season, I had been selected as the all-star high school quarterback for the state of New Mexico.

After recovering my sight from the accident, I started reading, the Book of Mormon. I had not been a good student when going through junior high and high school. I really struggled because my mind was not on school. I loved sports but not school. I’m sure that the Book of Mormon was the first book that I read from cover to cover.

As Brother Boren had suggested, my plan was to read ten pages every night. I never missed a night. When I finished, I knelt down and prayed. At that moment, I had my first very strong, spiritual experience. I knew then the Book of Mormon was true. I had received my first real answer to prayer. The wonderful thing about the Book of Mormon is that it is about my ancestors. I have come to tie my knowledge and my testimony of the Book of Mormon to my own Pawnee ancestry. The Book of Mormon talks about a people who would be scattered, smitten, driven, and nearly destroyed. But in the end they would be blessed. That’s exactly what I saw in my own family, history. In fact, I found myself and my family in the pages of the Book of Mormon. When I read the Book of Mormon, it gave me a very positive feeling about who I was and a knowledge that I Heavenly Father had something for me to accomplish in life and that I would be an instrument in his hands. It was as if I had always believed those teachings. When I arrived at BYU, I felt those things even more strongly.

Terry:

One weekend just after Larry and I started attending BYU, we returned to Farmington, New Mexico. Bishop Richard Mathews called on Larry and me to bear our testimonies in Larry’s home Ward. I remember thinking, “I’m not even a member, and this bishop feels I have something to contribute!”

James Baird, who taught in the Education Department, was my first bishop at BYU. He knew I was not LDS. He called me in and got to know who I was. He knew that I was waiting to be baptized. I don’t know what prompted him, but he called me to be a visiting teacher. It meant a lot to me that Bishop Baird took an interest in me and gave me many of the benefits of being a member of the Church.

My calling as a visiting teacher at BYU helped give me a sense of belonging. I also loved the feeling in the dorm when we would gather together for family prayer each night and sing a song. This was all a part of what drew me to the Church. I saw and felt these same things in my friends’ homes when they would kneel together in prayer. Larry, Tyra Brown, Tammy Huntzinger, the Packer family, Bishop and Sister Mathews, and other good LDS friends and their families were very instrumental in pulling me closer to the Church in Farmington. Many of those friends were now at BYU with me and formed a support system. Friends really made a difference.

At BYU, Bishop Baird encouraged a lot of growth with fasting and prayer. In the spring of 1967, I knew the time for my baptism was approaching, and I needed to have my life in order. Tyra Brown talked to me about fasting and suggested I try it. It was an important experience for me. Living in the dorms where the kitchens only served one meal on Fast Sundays, students were sometimes forced to fast. But to fast with a purpose changed the whole feeling of fasting. Now I love to fast. Fasting has become an anchor for my soul.

Did I receive an answer to my prayers? Definitely. As a Lutheran I said a lot of set prayers, memorized prayers, things that came from the liturgy. Until the age of sixteen my prayers basically consisted of kneeling down and saying the Lord’s Prayer. Prayer wasn’t ever talking with the Lord and thinking about gratitude or asking for needed help. It wasn’t really a two-way communication. Prayer now became something new. Feeling the influence of the Holy Spirit drew me closer to the Lord. I came to love prayer.

Larry:

After the high school football season, I was sitting in a study class one day when a student messenger passed me a note. It said I was to see the coach. I went down to his office. The door was closed. I knocked and he said to come in. I opened the door and looked across the room. The head football coach of the University of New Mexico was sitting there. I remember that moment vividly, because as soon as I saw him, I knew I was going to college. Before that moment, I never thought I would go.

BYU also recruited me because the coaches had seen my athletic achievements. But I wasn't sure whether BYU would offer me a scholarship. I remember the meeting with Tommy Hudspeth, the head coach. He asked me whether I had any other scholarship offers. I said, "Yes. I have a four-year, full ride scholarship to the University of New Mexico." I happened to have the scholarship offer from New Mexico in the notebook I was carrying. I handed him the letter and he read it. He folded it up, handed it back, and said, "You have a full scholarship at BYU if you want it."

Terry:

Did the University somehow make a difference in my life that first year? Absolutely! Recently I have heard President Hinckley and President Monson talk about "the BYU experience." There is something real there. It's tangible. I'm grateful that I came as a young woman. Our whole lives, Larry and I have dreamed of our children going to BYU so they could experience what we did. It's difficult to put into words. I still think I would have embraced the gospel if I had been in a different setting, but BYU really helped to nurture and sustain growth that was just beginning. I remember I loved fast and testimony meetings on campus. Those meetings influenced me the most.

In retrospect, BYU has had an enormous influence on my life, in shaping my goals, my ideals, and my testimony. I can remember distinctly kneeling by my bed in Q Hall in Deseret Towers in the spring of 1967 and pouring out my heart to my Father in Heaven and feeling so surely his presence and his love.

I can state unequivocally that if I had followed my friend Tracy, who took the lessons at the same time I did and attended a different university, I would not be who I am, or where I am today. I would have had to do a lot more alone. I prepared for baptism and became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 10 June 1967, when Larry baptized me in my homeward in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where my parents had recently moved.

Larry:

Spencer W. Kimball was one of my greatest mentors. At church in New Mexico everybody talked about the apostle who had a great love for the Indian people. We revered the name Spencer W. Kimball. I met him in high school at a Lamanite youth conference in Kirtland, New Mexico, a largely LDS community about fifteen miles outside of Farmington. I remember sitting out on a softball field with a number of other Indian youth, waiting for this apostle to come. There was a lot of anticipation. A car pulled up. Men in dark suits got out and came walking across the field. All these Indian kids were there waiting for them. As they approached, I was standing there thinking, "Which one is he?" finally, he stepped forward. My first impression was disappointment because he was short and balding. He started talking to us in a raspy voice. My thought was, "Is this him?" But the wonderful thing about him was that he befriended us all very quickly—this was a real accomplishment because Indian youth are not easy to get close to.

Later, when I was at BYU, I heard him speak several times. Like Brother Boren, he provided a blueprint for my life. To this day in my scriptures or in my journal I carry an excerpt from a speech that he gave when I was a BYU student, entitled "This Is My Vision." In this talk, he tells of a dream: "I woke up and I had his dream about you—about the Lamanites. I wrote it down. It may be a dream. It may be a vision. But this is what I saw you doing." In one part of it he said, "I saw you as lawyers. I saw you looking after your people. I saw you as heads of cities and of states and in elective office." To me that was a patriarchal blessing and a challenge from a prophet of God: "Get an education. Be a lawyer. Use your education to bless your people." That is what I wanted to do. At a certain point in my life, when I read the passage where he said we could become leaders of cities or states, it was as if it was directed to me. Even though I had never envisioned running for elective office, I knew that I could and should do it because of President Kimball's vision for me and those like me.

I loved President Kimball. The day he passed away, I cried. When I heard about his death, I was overcome because I had felt his love. I had seen so much of the good that he had accomplished among Native Americans. I was also a recipient of his vision for us as individuals and as a people.

Others at BYU were also mentors. For example, Floyd Johnson at BYU in the athletic department took a special interest in me. I think most athletes at BYU felt Floyd's love and concern because he took so many young men under his wing. In my case, I really thought so because right away he told me that he had raised several Indian placement students. When I came in—and he probably said this to everybody—he said, "You're special. I'm going to look after you." I thought he was just talking about me. I felt that all the time I was at BYU. If I had any need, he was there to take care of it.

During my years at BYU, my generation of Native Americans heard, "You are a special people. You have a destiny in this Church. The Book of Mormon is about you. You have roots in that book, and you need to do certain things." And I believed every word that was said. There was a purpose for me being at BYU.

Terry:

Life takes us on curious journeys sometimes. In December 1968 we were married by Spencer W. Kimball in the Salt Lake City Temple and moved into Wymount Terrace at BYU. After four years of safekeeping, and my temple marriage, I used the pillowcases Sister Mathews gave me. Then in December 1995, twenty-seven years later, we returned to live in Wymount Terrace for ten months when Larry was asked to teach at the J. Reuben Clark Law School after his unsuccessful bid in the Idaho gubernatorial race in November 1994. BYU had many things to offer us as eighteen-year-old freshmen in 1966; it still has much to offer today. BYU provides us opportunities to serve and to find ways to increase our faith and testimonies today.

Larry:

I enjoyed my classwork at BYU. I was a much better student in college than I was in high school. It was because I became focused. I knew what I wanted out of life, and I had some self-confidence. Even so, university work was a challenge for me because I wasn't used to doing well in school. When I came to BYU I had to work harder to catch up. I underwent the same experience when I went to law school. Because I didn't have the background that other students had, I needed to work harder. But, with Terry's support, I was successful.

When I graduated from BYU I wanted to be a lawyer for one reason: to help Indian people. Subsequently, I spent nine years as a tribal attorney. I have seen a marvelous awakening under the laws that now help native people to become self-sufficient and economically strong. I have always thought it was no accident that we were able to survive as a separate, identifiable people. I don't know how the Lord is going to use such people in his ultimate plan. But I see many people I went to school with who have been able to go on and do the same kinds of things I have done. I think it has a cumulative impact.

BYU gave me a vision of who I am and what I should do. I think I have effectively—and I hope it is okay to say this—executed that in my life. I think it is exactly what Richard Boren, President Kimball, Floyd Johnson, and other people who cared about me at BYU wanted me to do. It's as if I went to BYU not only to learn to make a living but to do something to impact the lives of other people. Because of where I started, I feel satisfied that I have done that. There is now a regular flow of Native American students coming to my office. I'm not sure who sends them, but I enjoy visiting with them. I feel that in some small measure I am in a position to inspire them, to lift their sights, and to encourage them to focus on what is important, especially finding God in their lives.

Terry:

Our dreams for our children are coming true. Five of our six children have attended BYU, where their lives are being blessed as ours have been blessed, although perhaps in different and individual ways.