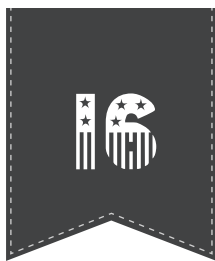




*Julian C. Lowe, Milan D. Smith, J. Willard Marriott, and Robert W. Barker, ca. 1970.
Courtesy of Steven Lowe.*



EIGHT LATTER-DAY SAINTS WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE IN WASHINGTON

RALPH W. HARDY JR.

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The 23 June 1940 formation of the Washington Stake (later the Washington D.C. Stake) by President Rudger Clawson and Elder Albert E. Bowen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles marked the beginning of a fifty-year era of substantial, sustained growth of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the greater Washington-Baltimore-Richmond metropolitan areas. A prime catalyst of this growth was the in-migration of several thousand Latter-day Saints from the West who came to serve in the burgeoning federal government operations, the many government servicing businesses, and the uniformed military services in connection with the United States' entry into World War II and its continuing Cold War aftermath. Another important catalyst was the direction and foresight of stake presidencies, bishoprics, mission presidents, and men's and women's auxiliary leaders who were called to plan for this growth and to lead the people.

This essay focuses on eight exceptional, interconnected Latter-day Saint leaders—all residents of Washington, DC—who occupied some of the most critical roles in planning for and implementing the growth, success, and recognition of the Church in the greater national capital area.¹

These eight priesthood leaders are not the only Latter-day Saint leaders of undaunted faithfulness and distinction during that half century. They are, however, representative of the unusual quality and dedication of faithful Latter-day Saint leadership who made such a significant difference in the development and recognition of the Church during the fifty years between 1940 and 1990.

All of these eight men knew and respected each other; they worked together in many capacities; they learned from and supported each other; and each left an indelible mark on the rich history of what is today a significant concentration of Church membership in the eastern United States.

SNAPSHOT OF EIGHT LEADERS IN THE SPRING OF 1944

On 5 March 1944, **Ezra Taft Benson**, forty-five, raised in Whitney, Idaho, and having been ordained to the apostleship by President Heber J. Grant at the October 1943 general conference, was released as the first president of the Washington Stake of Zion, where he had served almost four years. That same day, **Edgar Bernard Brossard**, fifty-six, raised in Logan, Utah, was released as the first bishop of the landmark Washington Ward and set apart as second president of the Washington Stake. That year, **J. Willard Marriott**, forty-four, raised in Marriott-Slaterville, Utah, was serving as a member of the Washington Stake high council. Captain **Robert Whitney Barker**, twenty-five, from Ogden, Utah, of the U.S. Army's Second Armored Division and already a veteran of combat operations in North Africa and Sicily, waded ashore on Utah Beach through withering German fire on D-Day, 6 June 1944.² Two days later, first lieutenant **Julian Cassity Lowe**, twenty-six, from Orem, Utah, of the U.S. Army's 784th Automatic Weapons Battalion, waded chest deep through choppy waters in full battle gear toward Utah Beach on the Normandy Coast.³ **Milan Dale Smith**, twenty-six, was a bishop in 1944, where he was supervising his family's significant canning and frozen vegetable operations in Pendleton, Oregon, packing harvested peas for the wartime American food supply and war effort. In March 1944, **J. W. Marriott Jr.**, twelve, was ordained a deacon in the Aaronic Priesthood in the Chevy Chase Ward of the Washington Stake.

William Donald Ladd, eleven, although not a member of the Church because of his Baptist father's stricture against his being baptized a Latter-day Saint, was attending the Palatka Ward in Florida in 1944.

EZRA TAFT BENSON (1899-1994)

When this great-grandson of Elder Ezra T. Benson (1811–69) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles arrived in Washington, DC, in 1939 to become executive secretary of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, an agricultural trade association, he brought with him his experience as the immediate former president of the Boise Stake in Idaho. In forming the new Washington Stake out of the Eastern States Mission, President Clawson and Elder Bowen extended a call to Ezra Taft Benson to be its first stake president, with Federal Reserve Board secretary Samuel R. Carpenter as first counselor and Washington attorney and future Brigham Young University president Ernest L. Wilkinson as second counselor. The geographical boundaries of the new stake included not only the Washington and Baltimore metropolitan areas but also extended south to Richmond, Virginia, and north to Fairview, Pennsylvania (close to Gettysburg).

With the benefit of his experience as stake president in Idaho, Ezra Taft Benson organized two wards in the District of Columbia as well as new wards in Chevy Chase, Maryland, and Arlington, Virginia, and new branches in Greenbelt, Annapolis, and Baltimore, Maryland.⁴ In this fashion, President Benson created a basic, wide-area template for this vibrant new stake of the Church. In the aftermath of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, and as the nation's capital commenced preparations for the onset of the hostilities of World War II that had already engulfed Europe and Asia,⁵ President Benson also set into motion a regimen of spiritual and temporal preparedness for the growing number of Latter-day Saints. This number included young people from the military who came to train and government workers who came to reside in the greater Washington area.⁶ In this President Benson was assisted not only by his able counselors but also by other priesthood leaders of great capacity such as future treasury secretary David Kennedy and restaurateur J. Willard Marriott. Benson's



Ezra Taft Benson. U.S. Department of Agriculture.

service as an energetic stake president was only his first act in building the Church in the nation's capital. After Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected the thirty-fourth president of the United States in 1952, he brought Benson into his cabinet as the Secretary of Agriculture. This cabinet assignment required Elder Benson, now an Apostle, to return to Washington on a

full-time basis for the entire eight years of Eisenhower’s presidency and led him to become—like Senator Reed Smoot before him—Washington’s resident Apostle. In this capacity, Secretary Benson was an encouraging presence in sacrament, stake conference, and other meetings. Those of us who grew up in Washington remember Secretary Benson well because we saw him often at our Church activities. In my own case, at a Boy Scout court of honor held in the Chevy Chase Ward, Elder Benson was on the stand and presented me with my Star Scout rank. In a quarterly Washington Stake conference meeting, stake president J. Willard Marriott made a humorous comment to the congregation that, because Secretary Benson was sitting on the stand, a *Washington Post* reporter was probably in the congregation. In fact, on Monday morning, the *Washington Post* carried a brief report of Secretary Benson’s attendance and his remarks to the stake conference.

At a large 2015 fireside commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the organization of the Washington D.C. Stake, Russell M. Nelson, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, reminisced:

President Ezra Taft Benson spoke at my farewell when I was released as a member of the bishopric [of the Washington Ward]. He was then in the Cabinet, as you know. And after the meeting was over, he said, “Brother Nelson, you’re going to Boston, aren’t you? Where are you going?” “To Massachusetts General Hospital to resume my surgical career and training.” He said, “Well, when you go up there maybe you’ll find a fine surgeon named Robert Walker. Look after him, would you?” So, I went up to Boston and looked after Robert Walker, who later married one of President Benson’s daughters. So, there is a prophet, there is a seer!⁷

EDGAR BERNARD BROSSARD (1889-1980)

Edgar B. Brossard succeeded Benson as the Washington Stake’s president. Brossard was born in Oxford, Idaho, and grew up in Logan, Utah, where he graduated from Utah State University. He received his master’s and PhD degrees from the University of Minnesota. Since the organization



Edgar Bernard Brossard, an economist, served as a member (and twice chairman) of the U.S. Tariff Commission. Public domain.

of the Washington Stake on 23 June 1940, Brossard had served as the first and much-loved bishop of the Washington Ward, located in the beautiful landmark chapel at Sixteenth Street and Columbia Road, N.W. In his professional career, President Brossard served as a member of the Federal Tariff Commission (now known as the International Trade Commission) from the time he was appointed by President Calvin Coolidge and subsequently reappointed by President Herbert Hoover (who designated him as chairman), Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower (who again designated Edgar Brossard as chairman). His thirty-eight

years of continuous service made Edgar Brossard the longest-serving commissioner in the history of the Federal Tariff Commission.⁸

Edgar and Laura Cowley Brossard⁹ lived in a comfortable apartment directly across Sixteenth Street from the Washington Ward Chapel. They opened their home—a “church crossroads”—as a gathering place for all, especially for the large number of young single adult members coming through Washington in connection with their service in the military, to work in the federal government, or to attend local universities. The Washington Ward was, to a large extent, what would today be referred to as the young single adult ward for the greater Washington area.

President Brossard was an affable, big bear of a man with a ready smile and a firm, friendly handshake. Both as bishop and then as stake president, President Brossard was very much a wise and loving pastoral leader in a stake with boundaries that stretched from Richmond, Virginia, on the

south, to southern Pennsylvania on the north. During President Brossard's tenure, the Richmond Virginia Branch grew to be a ward. In May 1945, the membership of the Washington Stake was 2,928,¹⁰ and the Capitol Ward in northeast Washington was organized; the construction of the Arlington Virginia Ward commenced; and a new branch was created in Fredericksburg, Virginia.¹¹ Following President Brossard's retirement from the Federal Trade Commission, he served as president of the New England Mission and the French Mission.¹²

J. WILLARD MARRIOTT (1900-1985)

John Willard "Bill" Marriott served in various Church roles, including full-time missionary in the Eastern States Mission, high councilor, counselor to stake president Edgar Brossard and, on 12 December 1948, third president of the Washington Stake. He served for nine years during a time of very substantial growth of the Church in Washington and its environs.

Marriott possessed enormous stature, was widely admired in the nation's capital, and was recognized not only as the Latter-day Saints' preeminent ecclesiastical leader but also as one of the region's most successful business entrepreneurs and popular employers. As stake president, and with his easy, affable, and rancher-like delivery, President Marriott spoke the language of the common member. Like a favorite wise uncle, he was easy to listen to, easy to follow, and easy to emulate.

Lee Roderick, a former Latter-day Saint president of the White House Correspondents Association, probably described President Marriott best:

It would be difficult to overstate the contributions of J. Willard Marriott, Sr. to the growth of the Church. He and his young bride, the former Alice Sheets, came to Washington in 1927 to seek their fortune. Through hard work and adherence to high principles, they prospered and became a Washington legend. Today, the acorn of a root beer stand they planted over a half century ago has grown into the mighty oak of the Marriott Corporation, a multinational lodging and food service business that, in 1989, was one of the nation's top ten private employers. The Marriott family has contributed generously to the work of the Lord in Washington and throughout the Church, in-

cluding their contribution to the building of the Washington Temple and the Visitors Center.¹³

During Marriott's tenure as stake president, the Washington Stake continued to grow within its unchanged, broad geographical boundaries. The venue for stake conferences outgrew the Washington Ward Chapel and was moved to George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium.

One of President Marriott's sustained efforts was to urge the First Presidency to consider the future construction of a temple in the Washington area. In his March 1954 letter to the First Presidency, he noted there were seventy thousand members east of the Mississippi who would be served by such a temple. President Marriott concluded, "A temple would be a real strength and a blessing to all of us who live in the East."¹⁴

At the seventy-fifth anniversary of the creation of the Washington Stake held on 20 November 2015, President Nelson reminisced about his former stake president:

Bill and Allie Marriott; what a surprise it was one day when I went to the stake president's office on the second floor of the Washington Ward (Sixteenth Street and Columbia Road) and there was President J. Willard Marriott who extended a call to me to be a counselor in the bishopric of that ward. How I love that man and his dear wife and their family! They're still very dear and close to me. President Marriott was ably assisted by two great counselors, Samuel Carpenter and Frank Kimball. We had such a wonderful experience in the bishopric.¹⁵

When President Marriott died in 1985, his funeral service was held in the Washington D.C. Stake Center, located next to the Washington D.C. Temple that he worked so hard to see come to fruition. Among the speakers at the funeral conducted by stake president J. W. Marriott Jr. were President Ezra Taft Benson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the Reverend Billy Graham, former president Richard M. Nixon,¹⁶ and President Gordon B. Hinckley of the First Presidency.

MILAN DALE SMITH (1919-87)

On 30 November 1957, Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles called Milan D. Smith from the high council to succeed J. Willard Marriott as president of the Washington Stake, with Joseph Tippets and Robert W. Barker as counselors. President Smith was working as executive assistant to Secretary Benson. Previously Smith had served as president of the Union Stake in Le Grande, Oregon, then had left his frozen vegetable–packing company in the day-to-day care of a trusted assistant in order to commence his government service in Washington. He served a record thirteen years as stake president. When President Smith commenced his presidency, the Washington Stake still encompassed the same southern Pennsylvania to northern Virginia geography, with a growing number of wards and branches. Six new wards were created during the first five years of his presidency—the Fairfax, Mount Vernon, McLean, and Falls Church Wards in Virginia and the Baltimore Second and Rock Creek Wards in Maryland.

A historic change in the organization of the Church in the greater Washington metropolitan area occurred on 3 March 1963 when the Potomac Stake was created to include all of the wards and branches in Northern Virginia. This division, with its northern boundary along the Potomac River, launched a stake that would grow at a faster pace than the wards and branches on the Maryland and District of Columbia side of the Potomac River.

After concluding his duties as executive assistant to Secretary Benson, Milan Smith accepted several important leadership roles with the National Canners Association in Washington, where he eventually became its chief executive officer.

Robert W. Barker, his former first counselor and a regional representative of the Twelve, noted Smith's significant efforts to convince the First Presidency of the need to build a temple in the Washington area as soon as possible:

At the first official meeting of the Washington Presidency in December 1957, Milan made known his desire to do all possible to have the church establish a temple in the nation's capital. There then was no

temple in the United States or Canada east of Salt Lake. The Salt Lake Temple was almost two thousand miles away. After obtaining permission to write all stakes and missions east of the Mississippi, we did so asking how they felt about a Washington Temple. The responses were all favorable, but many said the next temple should be in their hometown. It was certainly due to Milan's leadership and persistence that the First Presidency of the Church authorized us to acquire a site. Under Milan's leadership, our committee and church officials considered thirty-one sites. When we purchased the 57.4 acres in 1962, we were instructed to call it only a lot for future church use. President McKay made it clear that he did not wish to bind his successor to any project not started in President McKay's lifetime.¹⁷

After ground was broken for the Washington Temple on 7 December 1968, the First Presidency called President Smith to be chairman of the temple committee.

Additional wards and branches were created by President Smith in Aberdeen, Carrollton, Fort Meade-Laurel, Annapolis, Hagerstown, Frederick, Catonsville, Potomac, and Kensington, Maryland. In addition, the stake welfare farm holdings were changed in a significant way while President Smith presided over the Washington Stake. A dairy farm in suburban northern Virginia that was situated close to the planned Dulles International Airport was sold at an advantageous price, and a new dairy farm near Trappe, Maryland, on the Delmarva Peninsula was acquired. The farm was named Bountiful Farm and would become the largest dairy operation in the state of Maryland. Bountiful Farm was operating so successfully that it was later taken over directly and operated by the Church welfare system.

After Smith's release as stake president in September 1970, he was called by the First Presidency as president of the England London Mission.

When asked what he best remembers about his father's tenure as stake president of the Washington Stake, his eldest son, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Milan D. Smith Jr., responded, "My father was a bishop at twenty-two in Oregon and then stake president twice. I remember that he was a builder—he loved finding suitable building sites and constructing new meetinghouses to address the Saints' needs."¹⁸

ROBERT WHITNEY BARKER (1919-87)

Robert W. Barker came to Washington from Ogden, Utah. His father and grandfather were significant figures in the law, his grandfather being a judge. During World War II, Bob Barker became an officer in the U.S. Army's 6th Armored Field Artillery Battalion. He was in heavy combat in North Africa and then in Sicily before going to England to train for the invasion of Normandy. He continued in combat operations under the command of General George Patton until Germany surrendered in 1945. When the war concluded, Bob Barker, then a major, left the army and returned to Ogden.

When he graduated from the Georgetown Law School in Washington, Bob received the Lucey Medal in recognition for graduating first in his class—where he was also an editor of the *Law Review*. After a short time practicing law with his father in Utah, Bob returned to Washington, joining the law firm headed by renowned attorney Ernest L. Wilkinson, where he specialized in various matters before the government, including significant claims filed by Native American tribes. Following Senator Wallace F. Bennett's election to the U.S. Senate in 1950, Bob Barker became his administrative assistant (chief of staff) for one year and then rejoined the Wilkinson law firm, where he became a name partner.

Stake president J. Willard Marriott called Bob Barker to be bishop of the Chevy Chase Ward until its division, when he became the first bishop of the new Silver Spring Ward. When Milan D. Smith was called to succeed Marriott as stake president, Smith called Bob as his counselor, where he served ten years. In 1967 Barker was called by the First Presidency to be in the first group of sixty-seven regional representatives of the Twelve, where he assumed oversight responsibilities with many of the stakes in the middle Atlantic area of the Church, which included the national capital area.

In connection with the efforts of Presidents Marriott and Smith to have the First Presidency approve the construction of a temple in Washington, Bob Barker assumed the principal role in the finding, due diligence, purchase negotiations, governmental approval process, and adjacent neighborhood acceptance of the placement of the proposed temple. The account of Barker's successful, herculean efforts to acquire this 57.4-acre wooded tract and secure all of the required governmental and

neighborhood approvals was related by President Hinckley at Bob Barker's 6 January 1988 funeral service at the Washington D.C. Stake Center:

As I came here from the Marriott Dulles Hotel this morning, I drove and saw the spires of the temple as they came into view. I said to myself, "That temple stands where it does because of Robert W. Barker." He was the one who negotiated the purchase of this acreage here. He was the one who fought the fight with the zoning commission. He was the one who set up neighborhood meetings with the people of this community who had some strong feelings against the construction of the temple here. Bob ameliorated those feelings and overcame the opposition and won the concurrence of those who reside in this vicinity. The temple stands where it stands in this beautiful section predominant and magnificent because of the labors of the man we honor today. That may not be widely known. That is the fact and we are all blessed by reason of that. How fitting it is that he should serve as temple president and finish out his life in that capacity. I am so grateful that he had that privilege and opportunity.¹⁹

Barker was a highly competent and influential attorney. He was part of a class of practitioners in the Washington legal establishment who were often referred to as "super-lawyers." Not only was Barker the senior partner of a prestigious Washington law firm, but he also represented with great skill many clients involved in complex matters of considerable moment. During the Watergate proceedings, for example, Barker was retained to represent, successfully, one of the defendants, former Nixon secretary of commerce Maurice Stans. For many years Bob Barker was also general counsel and senior vice president of Bonneville International Corporation, the Church's for-profit corporate entity that owns and operates radio and television stations KSL AM-FM-TV as well as other broadcast stations throughout the United States. He also served as general counsel of the Nixon presidential inaugurations held in 1969 and 1973.

In addition to his efforts to secure the purchase and approvals for the temple, it was through Bob Barker's eleven years as a regional representative and in his membership on the Church's Special Affairs Committee that he had a significant impact on the growth and development of the

Church in the eastern states, including the stakes proximate to the national capital area. His distinguished Church service concluded with his presidency of the Washington D.C. Temple.

JULIAN CASSITY LOWE (1917-2002)

Born in Provo, Utah, Julian Lowe spent his formative years in Orem. After returning from the Western States Mission and with the onset of World War II, he was inducted into the U.S. Army in June 1942, planning to be part of the Medical Corps. Instead, Julian was assigned to an antiaircraft training unit. When the Army sensed his maturity and leadership qualities, Julian was offered an invitation to attend the U.S. Army Officer Candidate School where he graduated, became a second lieutenant, and was assigned to the 784th Automatic Weapons Battalion. Thereafter, Julian was sent to England and prepared to be part of the Allies' D-Day Normandy invasion of France. After wading ashore on Utah Beach just after D-Day, his antiaircraft battalion commenced combat operations and engaged Luftwaffe aircraft that were threatening the Allied advance. His battalion fought its way through France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany until the war ended in April 1945. His unit had advanced as far as Hanover by the time of the German surrender.

On returning to the United States after the war ended, Julian Lowe, now a U.S. Army captain, married Nola Kotter. After receiving his master's degree from Brigham Young University, Julian was recruited to join the Central Intelligence Agency and moved to the Washington, DC, area, where he spent most of his professional career with that agency. Although originally living in Washington's Maryland suburbs, the Lowes moved in 1958 to northern Virginia. After several Church assignments, President Milan D. Smith called Julian Lowe in November 1961 as bishop of the newly formed McLean Virginia Ward. He immediately began to make plans and raise funds for the construction of the ward's new chapel.

In connection with the reorganization of the Potomac Stake presidency in January 1967, Elder Harold B. Lee of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles called Julian Lowe to be the new stake president following the departure of President Miller Shurtleff to fulfill a National Science

Foundation assignment in India. The Potomac Stake covered all of the wards and branches in northern Virginia.

This was an era of exceptionally rapid Church growth in northern Virginia—which was still growing disproportionately faster than the stakes on the Maryland–District of Columbia side of the Potomac River.²⁰ During his ten-year tenure as president of the Potomac Stake,²¹ Julian Lowe was deeply involved in the planning for the development of the church in Northern Virginia as new wards and stakes were created. He was released in September 1975 when President Marion G. Romney of the First Presidency extended a call to President Lowe to serve as a regional representative and was assigned responsibility for the Toronto Canada and New York–New Jersey Regions. In 1977, however, Elder Lowe’s regional representative assignment was changed so that he had responsibility for the Capitol and Potomac Regions, which included the greater Washington area.

In connection with the construction of the Washington Temple, Julian Lowe was assigned in the late 1960s to serve as one of the eleven members of the finance committee charged with raising funds for the new edifice. In 1970, following the release of President Smith, Julian Lowe became chairman of the Washington Temple Committee.²² His responsibilities as chairman were specified by the First Presidency as follows:

- (1) working with the Church Building Department in the preparation of the building plans and specifications, construction, landscaping, decorating, furnishing and equipping [of] the building; (2) making arrangements for the cornerstone services and laying of the cornerstone; (3) planning and managing the public preview; (4) planning and executing the dedicatory services; and (5) providing for the arrangements for all General Authorities and official visitors coming to the area for the completion ceremonies, for press conferences, for the public preview, and for the dedicatory services.²³

Once the Washington Temple was dedicated, however, Julian Lowe reminisced that his responsibilities were not at an end:

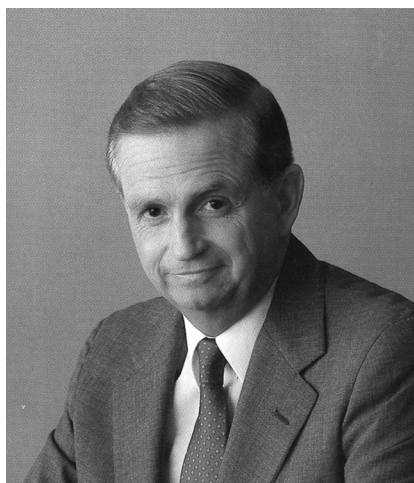
Although the opening of the Temple terminated the Washington Temple committee, I still had a role to play as chairman of the fi-

nance committee. By this time, we had raised all our monies for the construction of the Temple, but the Visitors' Center was yet to be built. The plans for the Center had already been completed, and the building was to cost \$1,500,000. The Church was to pay a third, and the rest was to be collected from within the Temple District. J. Willard Marriott, Sr., who had already contributed heavily towards the construction of the Temple, volunteered to contribute one-half of the local share. This reduced our local assessment to \$500,000. By the time the Visitors' Center was completed in June 1976, all our monies had been raised and the building was ready to be dedicated.²⁴

J. W. (BILL) MARRIOTT JR. (1932-PRESENT)

In December 1982, thirty-four years after his father, J. Willard Marriott, became the third president of the Washington D.C. Stake, J.W. "Bill" Marriott Jr. was called by President Ezra Taft Benson, then President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, as eighth president of the Washington D.C. Stake of Zion—like father, like son. J. W. Marriott Jr. had been first counselor to the previous stake president, Leonidas Ralph Meham.²⁵

Already one of America's most accomplished, visionary, and highly recognized business leaders, Bill served as president and chief executive officer of Marriott Corporation, a worldwide lodging enterprise founded by his legendary parents that operated hotels and restaurants and provided other commercial services such as airline food catering and industrial feeding facilities. In 1985, following his father's death at age eighty-five, Bill Marriott Jr. became chairman in



J. W. (Bill) Marriott Jr. Courtesy of the Marriott International Archives.

addition to his position as president and chief executive officer of Marriott Corporation.²⁶

Like his distinguished father, Bill has been equally yoked and committed to the fulfillment of his many assignments to lead in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Beginning in 1975 until 2011, he was successively involved in Church leadership as bishop of the Chevy Chase Ward, stake president's counselor, president of the Washington D.C. Stake, regional representative, and Area Seventy. As a regional representative and member of the Seventy, in particular, Elder Marriott fulfilled his assigned responsibilities with the stakes in the greater Washington, DC, and Richmond, Virginia, regions of the Church as well as throughout the eastern part of the United States and Canada. In addition, for the past forty-two years since its commencement, Elder Marriott has been chairman, host, and speaker at all the Festival of Lights opening ceremonies held at the Washington D.C. Temple Visitors' Center at the beginning of each Christmas season. This program has become a well-recognized, signature Christmas event in the Washington metropolitan area where ambassadors and staff from the resident diplomatic community as well as members of Congress are in attendance.

During his eight-year stake presidency and thereafter as a long-term regional leader of the Church from 1990 to 2011, Elder Marriott has been one of the most influential and admired Latter-day Saints in the Washington community and throughout the country. On many occasions of importance to the Church, Elder Marriott has appeared on national television and been featured in print, electronic, and social media not only professionally in connection with his worldwide lodging business but also in support and defense of the Church and its prophetic leadership.²⁷

Elder Marriott is a gifted, always well-prepared speaker and teacher of the restored gospel. Many years ago, Stephen Garff Marriott, his late eldest son, told me that he was sure very few people knew how hard his father worked to craft the many Church addresses he gave as bishop, stake president, regional representative, and Area Seventy. Stephen added that with many of his father's talks Elder Marriott would—even on long trips aboard his corporate aircraft—research the scriptures and then go through repeated drafts for as long as twenty hours until he was satisfied that he

was well enough prepared to deliver the message he felt inspired to give to the Latter-day Saints.

WILLIAM DONALD LADD (1933-2009)

Don Ladd grew up in the rural Florida town of Palatka. His mother was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. His father was Southern Baptist and, although Don was allowed to attend Latter-day Saint meetings in the Palatka Ward, his father forbade him from being baptized into the Church. When Don turned nineteen and prepared to enter college at the University of Florida to pursue a degree in chemical engineering, he informed his father that, as a responsible adult, he intended to join the Church and be baptized. To a significant extent, Don Ladd credited Woodrow W. Tilton, his wise Palatka Ward bishop, for his mentoring role and encouragement in the Church.²⁸

After a European tour of duty with the U.S. Army, Don Ladd moved to Washington with a recommendation from Bishop Tilton and became a legislative assistant and then chief of staff to a Florida member of Congress. While in Washington Don Ladd attended the Washington Ward, where he met and married Ruth Pearson, who was working for U.S. senator Wallace F. Bennett. After working on Capitol Hill, Don Ladd joined the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where he handled liaison with Congress and the White House.

In time, Don Ladd was called by President Milan D. Smith to serve on the Washington D.C. Stake high council. In June 1970 President Smith called Don Ladd as the first bishop of the new Potomac Ward in the Washington D.C. Stake; however, after less



*William Donald Ladd as a stake president.
Courtesy of Ralph W. Hardy Jr.*

than a year, he was called as second counselor in the stake presidency to new stake president Wendell G. Eames.²⁹ When President Eames was released as stake president in 1974 to become first counselor in the first Washington Temple presidency, Don Ladd became the sixth president of the Washington D.C. Stake.

In 1973 Gordon B. Hinckley called President Don Ladd to serve as chairman of the newly organized Washington Special Affairs Committee. He was instructed to report directly to Elder Hinckley, who was chairman of the Special Affairs Committee at Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. This committee was later renamed Washington Public Affairs Committee. Over the years it has been staffed by Latter-day Saint men and women of stature with broad experience in and with government as well as in relationships with the resident diplomatic community of ambassadors and other international agencies in Washington. With the resources and experience of the Washington Public Affairs Committee, Don Ladd was able to convey information and advice to the Church's senior leadership with respect to matters in Washington that affected—or may affect—the vital interests of the Church. Elder Don Ladd chaired the Washington Public Affairs Committee for thirteen years, ending in 1994.

A significant task undertaken by Don Ladd was his due diligence and work with the Public Affairs Department and other senior General Authorities to expand the Public Affairs Office in Washington in order to address the opportunities to work more closely with the resident diplomatic community. In this connection, Elder Ladd worked closely with Beverly Campbell and others to acquire an office in the National Press Building as well as a full-time staff of capable people to handle liaison with congressional offices and Washington embassies.

As stake president Don Ladd also took a leading role in planning for the Church's 1976 bicentennial celebration, which involved all of the stakes in the greater Washington area. These efforts resulted in a special gathering of twenty thousand Latter-day Saints in the Capital Center and a concert presented by the Osmond family. Following his release as stake president in 1977, Don Ladd was called as a regional representative, where he assumed a more significant role in the leadership of the Church in the greater Washington, DC, area.

On 2 April 1994, Elder Ladd was called as a member of the Second Quorum of the Seventy.

CONCLUSION

Within a half century (1940–89), each of these eight men became exceptional Latter-day Saint leaders who were essential to the success of the Church in the greater Washington area. All were visionary builders who possessed the foresight to anticipate what the Church would need and could become. Of the eight leaders, two became General Authorities, four became regional representatives or Area Seventies, two became mission presidents, and two—father and son—came to be numbered among America’s most successful entrepreneurial business leaders while, at the same time, contributing generously their time and means to the service, care, and leadership of the Church. Not one of the eight sought these responsibilities, because each knew he had been “called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”³⁰