



Arnold K. Garr

“I’ve Lived My Dream!” A Conversation with Arnold K. Garr

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I became acquainted with Arnold K. Garr in August 1994, when I received an appointment to teach part time in the Department of Church History and Doctrine at BYU. Arnie received his PhD in American history from BYU in 1986, the same year I finished my MA in history at the Y, so I knew of him, and I knew something about him from historians in the Mormon historical community. I had also heard a few things about him from some of my CES colleagues, particularly my younger brother Aaron Baugh, who taught seminary in Littleton, Colorado, at the same time Arnie was teaching institute in Boulder. We had even met a few times, but it was not until we were colleagues at BYU that we became close friends.

Our friendship might not have developed like it did were it not for Joy Smith, an administrative secretary in the department. When she gave me my office assignment, she put me in 275C JSB (an interior office with no window—generally given to part-time or junior faculty). “You’ll like that office and hallway,” she said. “You’re across the hall from Brother Garr in 275A. You’ll like him. Everybody likes him.” Later, I moved to a larger office, but in the same hallway, two doors down from Arnie. He kept the same office during his entire time at

BYU, except for the year he spent at the BYU Jerusalem Center and the four years he served as department chair.

As “hallmates,” Arnie and I saw each other almost every day—multiple times—so of course we talked about shared interests: Mormon history, the scriptures, general conference, doctrinal topics, Church callings, research interests and activities, our fellow faculty members and students, politics, current events, memories of our youth and childhood, and of course our families. We enjoyed some wonderful heart-to-heart experiences and occasionally shed a few tears. But there were many lighter discussions, mostly focused on sports. Arnie certainly wouldn’t be offended by being called a sports junkie, particularly when it came to BYU football and basketball and Utah Jazz basketball. He knew all the players, the coaches, and the issues involving the teams. I once told a faculty member that if Arnie weren’t in Religious Education, he’d make a great sports radio or television color commentator.

Within a short time after I arrived at BYU, I was called to serve on the BYU Second Stake high council. I had a pretty good idea who initiated my call—Arnie, who at the time was serving as a counselor to George Durrant in the stake presidency. One Sunday morning about a year later, President Durrant and President Garr came to my home, where they called me to be the bishop of the BYU Sixty-First ward. To this day, I consider the time I spent as a bishop of a BYU singles ward as the most rewarding calling I’ve ever had. Arnie had a lot to do with that call, for which I am most grateful. Working with him in the stake also gave me the opportunity to observe him serving in an ecclesiastical role. Always the humble and unassuming leader, Arnie practiced the Savior’s admonition that “whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 20:26–27).

Arnie was appointed chair of the Department of Church History and Doctrine in February 2006, replacing Paul H. Peterson, who had been diagnosed with cancer. (Paul died in September 2007.) Paul’s outstanding administrative skills, congenial personality, and warmhearted nature endeared him to all the faculty members, especially those in Church History and Doctrine. Everyone in the department recognized whoever was called as Paul’s replacement would have a difficult task of meeting the standard of quality leadership set by him. When asked by one of my colleagues who I would recommend, I said it was a no-brainer. “If I could have any say in the matter, I’d choose Arnie,” I replied. “He’s a lot like Paul.” Indeed he was. In fact, in terms of people skills, he reminded me of Paul—kind, congenial, and thoughtful—but he also did things his own way,

particularly in terms of his administrative responsibilities. During the three and a half years he served as chair, the faculty supported him, admired him, and appreciated the significant work he did and what he accomplished.

Arnie's professional career spanned just over four decades—twenty-one years in the Church Educational System (now called Seminaries and Institutes) and twenty years at BYU. In CES he was a seminary teacher, a CES coordinator in New York, and an institute instructor and director in Tallahassee, Florida, and Boulder, Colorado. He became a full-time faculty member and assistant professor in the Department of Church History and Doctrine at BYU in 1991. In 1997 he was appointed associate professor, and in 2004 he was appointed full professor. He retired from BYU in 2011.

In the spring of 2011, just prior to his retirement, Arnie addressed the Religious Education faculty—a "last lecture" of sorts given at our weekly Friday Faculty Forum. During the hour, he shared a number of his experiences in CES and at BYU. In conclusion, he remarked, "I've lived my dream!" That statement had a profound effect upon me. It caused me to think about my expectations and what I hoped I would experience and accomplish in my career in CES and at BYU. I thought in my mind and heart, In a few more years when I retire, or perhaps at the end of my life, I hope that I too will be able to say, "I've lived my dream!"

The history profession has helped me gain a greater appreciation for biography and its related forms, including published and unpublished biographical and autobiographical works, short personal historical narratives and reminiscences, and oral history. Everyone has a story to tell—their own story—and it can be recorded in various ways. However, oral history provides a wonderful means to record and preserve a person's life story in a simple but effective way.

Soon after Arnie gave his talk, I asked if he would let me conduct an oral history interview with him. "You've lived your dream," I told him, "so let's record it, transcribe it, and share it." The interview was conducted on July 21, 2011.

The Interview

Baugh: *You were raised in Ogden, Utah. Talk about your experience in the seminary program at Ben Lomond Seminary.*

Garr: When I took seminary, it was only a three-year program. Seminary wasn't taught in the ninth grade, so I didn't have it in junior high. It's hard for me to even imagine this now, but the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and

Covenants weren't even part of the curriculum. The three courses taught were Old Testament, New Testament, and Church History.

I was raised in an active family. My mom and dad were married in the temple, but there was no expectation for me to go on a mission. I can attribute my seminary experience to helping me make the decision to go on a mission. One of my seminary teachers was Mack Palmer. When I was a junior in high school, he was teaching New Testament and gave a lesson on Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," and he applied it to missionary work, and it touched my heart. I thought, *If I'm going to seek first the kingdom of God, I need to go on a mission.* I can attribute my decision to go on a mission to that lesson more than anything else. I'm really grateful for Mack Palmer and the seminary program.

In part, I'm a product of the seminary program. I certainly believed that the Church was true. I was born with the gift of faith. I wasn't a doubter, but I can't say that I really had a dynamic testimony. All through Primary, I know I received lessons on the plan of salvation, but the plan of salvation really crystallized for me in seminary. When I learned about the three degrees of glory, baptisms for the dead, and missionary work in the spirit world, my heart was touched. I can attribute this to my seminary experience. I had those teachings as a young person, but they never internalized until I was in seminary.

Larry C. Porter was a really important person in my life. Brother Porter was our seminary principal when I was at Ben Lomond Seminary. I never had a class from him, but for some reason he seemed to take an interest in me. He called me by name, and he always seemed to know what was going on in my life. He'd stop and talk to me, and he always treated me so well. When I went on my mission, Brother Porter came to my farewell! He's been a significant person in my life ever since. He was the department chair and my mentor when I was getting my doctor's degree, and then we became colleagues at BYU. When I gave my last lecture to the Religious Education faculty this past spring, Larry Porter showed up for my presentation, even though he had been retired for ten years. This was forty-eight years after he attended my mission farewell. So he has been such a great influence in my life. I think he's a great man. He's a great mentor of mine.

Baugh: Was there any particular year in seminary that was kind of the banner year? You mentioned your junior year when you were studying the New Testament.

Garr: I would say my junior year was my banner year. That's the year that Mack Palmer taught me that lesson in the New Testament. That was a turning point in my life. President Gordon B. Hinckley talked about when he was discouraged on his mission and his father sent that letter that said, "Forget yourself and go to work." Then he said, to follow up on that, "Everything good that's happened to me since then, I can attribute to my decision to stay on my mission." I can say that about Mack Palmer's lesson on "seek ye first the kingdom of God." Everything good that's happened to me, I can attribute to my decision to go on a mission. Seminary was really important.

Baugh: *That's wonderful! Have you ever had the opportunity to tell Brother Palmer about your experience when he gave that lesson?*

Garr: I've told him since. That's also when I started thinking about being a seminary teacher as well. The seminary teachers were so impressive to me. I didn't make a decision then, but I thought, *I think I'd like to be a seminary teacher someday.*

Baugh: *After you graduated from Ben Lomond High School, did you attend a year at Weber State before going on your mission?*

Garr: That's right. My mission call was to Finland. I served a two-and-a-half-year mission from 1963 to 1965.

Baugh: *Did your mission serve as a catalyst for you to go into Church education? Did your mission continue to steer you in that direction?*

Garr: Yes, it did. During my mission, my testimony took a quantum leap. I mentioned that we didn't have Book of Mormon in seminary, and I'm ashamed to say this now, but I had never read the Book of Mormon before I left on my mission. I'd read a little bit in it, but I had never read the entire Book of Mormon cover to cover. I got right into it after I got on my mission, and that's when my testimony and my love for the gospel soared. It made me start thinking, *I'd like to teach the gospel full-time.* So yes, my mission experience did have something to do with my decision to get in the Church education program.

Baugh: *You returned from your mission, and then you started back up at Weber State. Talk for a minute about your experience in the institute program at Weber.*

Garr: I had an excellent experience. Even before I went on a mission, I took a missionary preparation class from Brother Glen Stubbs. He was so energetic. He got me really excited about going on a mission. I was going to go on a mission because I knew it was the thing I was supposed to do, but

Glen Stubbs really motivated me. So that was an important institute class for me. After I returned home from my mission, I took the seminary teacher preparation course from Brother Donald Colvin. In those days, the Church required that you have a teacher's certificate to teach seminary, so I had to take a number of education classes at Weber State. Back then it was called Weber State College. I probably took thirty hours of education classes. But I can say that I learned more about teaching in the class I took from Brother Colvin than I learned in all the education classes I took at Weber State.

Baugh: Did you major in education?

Garr: I majored in history, but I did get a teacher's certificate.

Baugh: Did you do your student teaching in history?

Garr: I did my student teaching in history at Ben Lomond High School—my alma mater—and did my seminary student teaching at Weber High School.

Baugh: What was directing you into history? It seems that all of a sudden you took this road into history. How did that happen?

Garr: History was always my favorite subject in school, with the exception of physical education. I always liked history. I liked it better than English and science. I had some good history teachers. My seventh-grade history teacher was Rulon Garfield. He could talk about politics, and he was just outstanding. Rulon Garfield had actually served on Vice President Richard Nixon's staff. Later on he taught in the Education Department at BYU, and he served as a Utah state senator. So, early in my life, I had good, interesting history teachers, and I've always enjoyed it.

Baugh: So at Weber State you had training in education and history, and then you received training in the Church's preservice seminary program. What year did you graduate?

Garr: I graduated from Weber State in 1969.

Baugh: Did you receive an appointment to teach seminary at that time?

Garr: No. I actually went to Utah State University and started on a master's program in history. I did one year of coursework. Then I started teaching seminary at Roy High School.

Baugh: And were you married at this point?

Garr: Yes. In fact, when I began teaching seminary at Roy High School, my wife, Cherie, was teaching physical education at the same school. It was a great experience for both of us. We didn't have any children at the time. She was the adviser to the dancing group—the Royalaires. It was a lot of fun.

Cherie's girls danced at the halftime of BYU basketball games. They even danced at the halftime of the ABA championship game between the Utah Stars and the Kentucky Colonels. It was a lot of fun.

Baugh: Let's talk about your master's program at USU. I'm guessing you moved to Logan.

Garr: Actually, we lived in Brigham City. Cherie and I were friends with two other couples, and all three of our wives taught school in Ogden while the other two men and I were attending Utah State. Every morning our wives would carpool to Ogden, and the men would carpool to Logan.

Baugh: Who were some of your professors at USU?

Garr: The person I studied under was George Ellsworth—he was an outstanding professor—a Mormon historian and a Utah historian. He was the chair of my thesis committee. I've always been grateful to him. Leonard Arrington was on my committee for a while. However, by the time I completed my master's thesis, he had left to become the Church historian. My thesis was on the history of Brigham Young College. For some people, that college is the forgotten academy. When someone says Brigham Young College, many people think that's Brigham Young Academy in Provo, but it was Brigham Young College in Logan. It was established by Brigham Young just before he died in 1877, and it had almost a fifty-year run. It was closed down in 1926, but it had a really interesting history. It was actually a four-year liberal arts college for a while. One of its most distinguished alumni was John A. Widtsoe. Some people think it was the forerunner to Utah State Agricultural College, now Utah State University, but it wasn't. The two schools operated simultaneously and coexisted for a while. That's one of the reasons Brigham Young College was closed down—because there were two institutions of higher learning in Logan. When they closed BYC down, the Church gave the library to Utah State Agricultural College, and the buildings became Logan High School. BYC had a fascinating history, and I'm glad I was able to do some work on it because I think that history might have been forgotten otherwise. To this day I think it's still misunderstood quite a bit.

Baugh: Talk for a few moments about some of your seminary teaching experiences at Roy High School.

Garr: It was a great experience. I taught there from 1970 to 1974. I think it's important with each lesson to make application to our lives. I learned that in my seminary teacher preparation courses. The students there at Roy were really good students. The principal was Jacob Davies. He was an advocate of

teaching the scriptures sequentially even before it became part of the program in the Church Educational System. The year I began teaching, there were four other first-year teachers—all of us brand new—and Jacob Davies had the responsibility of training five new seminary teachers. He had a great influence on my life. It was an excellent experience for me.

Baugh: *By this time, the seminary curriculum included Old and New Testament, Book of Mormon, and Church History/Doctrine and Covenants. Has Church history always been your favorite subject to teach?*

Garr: It's always been my favorite.

Baugh: *By 1974 you had completed your master's and you'd been teaching seminary for four years. It was at this time you were given the opportunity to be a CES coordinator. Talk about that for a minute.*

Garr: It was a tremendous opportunity and assignment for us. We wanted to eventually get into the institute program—that was our goal—and it was kind of an unwritten rule in those days that if you wanted to get into the institute program in Utah, you were expected to go away from Utah and the Intermountain West and coordinate early-morning seminaries and teach institute part time. We thought my assignment might be in California or Arizona, but we were asked to go to Palmyra, New York. Cherie had never even been outside the western United States before, so this was quite a leap for us, but it was a wonderful experience, especially because of my love for Church history. I was just like a kid in a candy shop. We lived a few blocks from the Sacred Grove and the E. B. Grandin Print Shop, where the Book of Mormon was first printed, and only a few miles from the Hill Cumorah. We lived in the Palmyra area for four years.

In addition to my CES assignment, I was honored to serve as the bishop of the Palmyra Ward. One person who had a huge influence in my life at the time was Kay Whitmore. He was serving in the stake presidency of the Rochester New York Stake when I was serving as a bishop. At the time, Kay Whitmore was associate vice president of Eastman Kodak, and later he became the president and CEO of Eastman Kodak and stake president and still later a mission president. In fact, there's a nice tribute to Kay Whitmore in the Tanner Building on campus. There are three different pictures of him there—one is with President George H. W. Bush, another is with President Spencer W. Kimball, and the last one is with Pope John Paul II. Kay Whitmore was a great man, and I learned more about Church administration from him than from anybody else in my whole life. He was very efficient, very

conscientious, very proactive, but he had the common touch. I mean, he was extremely successful and well-to-do, but he never said or did anything to give people the idea that he was better than them. He had that great combination. He was efficient, brilliant, and well organized, but he just had that common touch. He was a great role model for me as a Church administrator.

Baugh: What were some of the responsibilities you had while serving as a CES coordinator?

Garr: I would teach only one institute class a week, and it was at the stake center, close to the University of Rochester. Most of my time was spent coordinating the home study seminary program. I had the Buffalo, Ithaca, Rochester, and Syracuse stakes—so basically the western half of the state of New York. Coordinators spent most of their time doing seminary work. It was very different than a released-time seminary assignment.

Baugh: After four years in New York, you were ready to return to Utah not to teach institute but to pursue your doctorate. Talk about that.

Garr: We moved to Orem so I could work on my doctorate in American history at BYU. My goal was always to teach in the institute program somewhere here in Utah, so I thought that would enhance my chances if I could get a doctor’s degree. I had some great professors and some fascinating classes. I studied under Thomas G. Alexander, and I have always considered him to be my chief mentor when it came to American history. The most demanding class I ever had in my life was called Problems in Mormon History, and it was taught by Tom Alexander and James B. Allen. We had to read over twenty-five books and dozens of articles and write six position papers, but it was a tremendous class. I also minored in LDS Church history in Religious Education. I took a series of classes called Documents in LDS Church History from Larry Porter and Keith W. Perkins. Richard O. Cowan served on my dissertation committee along with Tom Alexander. I always felt my great mentors in LDS Church history and in Religious Education have been Larry Porter, Keith Perkins, and Richard Cowan.

Baugh: Did you teach part time while you were working on your PhD?

Garr: I taught Church history and Doctrine and Covenants—my two favorites. That got me thinking that if it were ever possible, it would be great if I could teach at BYU full time. I didn’t think it was very possible, but I thought that would be the ideal assignment if I could ever have that opportunity.

Baugh: How did you make it through those years?

Garr: I've always thought about that time. It was a great experience, but it was probably the most stressful time in my life. During my first year (I was thirty-four years old), I was going to school full time and teaching part time. By the second year I was going to school full time, I was teaching three-fourths time, I had a Church calling, and we had three children. I was at BYU for four years. Then it took me another four years before I completed writing my dissertation. During my last year (we had moved to Florida by this time), I was teaching full time, I was writing my dissertation, I was in the stake presidency, and I had five children, so it was really stressful.

Baugh: *After four years you left BYU and you were assigned to be the CES coordinator in Tallahassee, Florida. Talk about that assignment.*

Garr: I loved Tallahassee. I'm a sports fan, and Bobby Bowden was the football coach at Florida State. That's when I became a Florida State University football fan. The institute program was much more developed in Tallahassee than in Palmyra. The institute program had been there much longer. The Church had a building right across the street from the stake center. I coordinated the seminary program, but I spent more time teaching institute. We had some really good experiences. We started Friday forums—a lunchtime forum—where guest speakers would come and speak to the students. I really enjoyed teaching institute students because they didn't have discipline problems. However, with a one-teacher institute, the big challenge is recruiting. It's always such an awkward situation to go out and recruit and say, "We've got this wonderful institute program and oh, by the way, I'm the teacher." I never did enjoy the recruiting part of it, but I really enjoyed teaching college students. That was the difference in Tallahassee.

Baugh: *While you were in Tallahassee, how did you find time to finish your dissertation? Did you come back to BYU in the summers?*

Garr: That's how I did it. At first I was on the stake high council; later I was in the stake presidency. Our stake president was kind enough to let me leave during the summers and keep my calling even though I was absent for two months each summer. I'd bring the whole family to Provo and we lived in married student housing. That's when I would do my research for my dissertation. We made three trips back to Utah.

Baugh: *Talk about your dissertation.*

Garr: I chose to write my dissertation on the history of a Church periodical, actually a mission periodical, called *Liabona: The Elders' Journal*. It was the only mission periodical published in the United States from 1907 to

1945. My decision to write on that subject was actually a practical one. I knew I wasn't going to be able to be in Utah to do research on the topic, so I went to my good friend and mentor Larry Porter, and I asked if he'd give me a little grant to get all of the issues of *Liabona: The Elders' Journal* on microfiche so I could take them with me to Tallahassee, which he did. My idea was that in my spare time, I could do my research on the microfiche machine in Tallahassee. However, I didn't have much spare time, so I still had come to Provo in the summers to get the work done.

Baugh: *Basically, to write the dissertation, you had to read and familiarize yourself with every issue of that paper printed for nearly forty years.*

Garr: Yes! But it was such an important paper. It served a great purpose because at the time it was the only mission periodical for all the LDS missions in America. It was especially important early on when there was no radio, television, or *Church News*. The Saints were spread out all over the country, and for these members the *Elders' Journal* was the only information source connecting them with the Church. Both the missionaries and the members used it. In one of the chapters, I discuss how it was also used as an instrument in conversion. So it had a really important history. I was glad I was able to write about it.

Baugh: *Why was Liabona: The Elders' Journal published in Independence, Missouri?*

Garr: Missouri was centrally located, and that's where Zion's Printing and Publishing Company was located—the Church's main printing operation. It was the ideal place to have it printed.

Baugh: *Jumping back, how many years were you in Tallahassee?*

Garr: Seven.

Baugh: *Then an opportunity came for you to move to be the CES coordinator in Boulder, Colorado. Why did you agree to take that assignment?*

Garr: I always hoped that I could get an opportunity to teach institute in Utah and to be closer to our families. When the CES administrators offered me the opportunity to go to Boulder, I thought, "Well, at least it's closer to Utah and to our family." Even though we loved Tallahassee, we took that offer. We were in Boulder for only a couple years, but it was a good two years.

Baugh: *How did the opportunity come for you to come to BYU?*

Garr: At the time, Larry E. Dahl was chair of the Department of Church History and Doctrine. He called and told me that I was being considered as a candidate for a full-time position in the department and asked if a couple

of faculty members could come to Boulder to observe my teaching. That was exciting for me, but it was also nerve-racking. Leon Hartshorn and Dean Garrett were the two who came to Boulder to observe my teaching. I assume they gave a good report, because I got hired a few months later. I'll always be grateful to Brother Hartshorn and Brother Garrett for visiting my class and, I assume, giving a good report on my teaching.

Baugh: *You began teaching at BYU in 1991, and you had a twenty-year career at the university. What was your main teaching emphasis at BYU?*

Garr: I taught almost exclusively Doctrine and Covenants and Church history. I was one year at the BYU Jerusalem Center. While there, I taught Old Testament and New Testament. Other than that, almost all the classes I taught were Church history and Doctrine and Covenants. I felt these two subject areas were my niche.

Baugh: *In coming to BYU, you knew you would be expected to research, write, and publish. With that expectation, what are some of the subjects you've researched and written about?*

Garr: As I look back on it, I think the three things that I spent the most time on in my career were three books that I wrote or edited: *Christopher Columbus: A Latter-day Saint Perspective* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992); *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000); and *Joseph Smith: Candidate for President of the United States* (Orem: Millennial Press, 2007).

Baugh: *Talk about each of these books.*

Garr: I learned a lot of things researching and writing these books. For example, take Columbus. We know that Christopher Columbus fulfilled Book of Mormon prophecy. We know that he was a forerunner to the Restoration of the gospel. We know that he was inspired to make his first voyage to America. But what about his character? He was far from perfect, but I think his outstanding character trait was persistence—dogged tenacity. Two examples: During a seven-year period, he approached several different European crowns six separate times to try to get them to sponsor his voyage—six times before Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain consented. That, I think, is a good example of persistence. Then on the voyage he went thirty-three days due west, with the threat of mutiny, and he just kept on. I think that is a great example of dogged tenacity as well. Persistence is an important attribute for success in life. That's one of the things I learned from Christopher Columbus.

Compiling and editing the *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* was also a great experience for me. At the time, I was an associate professor—I had been at BYU for only six years. I had only published one book and a handful of articles. I wanted to get some people to help me as editors because I didn't think the publisher would even pay attention to me if I didn't get some high-profile scholars. So I went to Richard Cowan and Donald Q. Cannon and asked them if they would serve as editors with me, and they were nice enough to do it even though I was much less experienced than they were. It was a great project because I got to work with so many LDS scholars. We had over 350 scholars—many of the greatest LDS scholars—contribute more than 1,400 articles to the book. In fact, we asked Leonard Arrington to coauthor with Larry Porter the article on Brigham Young, and I think that it's the last article that Leonard Arrington wrote before he died. The *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* is such a great work, but a lot of people don't realize that as great as that encyclopedia is, only about 15 percent of the articles were about Mormon history. So we feel like we really made a significant contribution because our volume dealt strictly with Church history. To me, the *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History* is my most important contribution.

Baugh: *It had to be a monumental effort coordinating and working with all of the authors.*

Garr: It was. When I think back, I'm not sure how we were able to do it. I had the articles stacked in trays on the floor, on my desk, and on my filing cabinets. The trays were stacked six, eight, ten, and twelve layers high. Richard Cowan was seeing-impaired, and I'd meet with him and Don Cannon every day. One time Richard came in and conked his head on one of those trays and cut his forehead. I felt so bad. But both these men were great to work with.

Baugh: *Talk about the third book, Joseph Smith: Candidate for President of the United States.*

Garr: Over a thirteen-year period, I had written several articles on the political activities of Joseph Smith. Finally, I decided to combine all those articles and produce a book. It's interesting because, in the case of Christopher Columbus, I wrote about the spiritual life of a great secular figure. With Joseph Smith, I wrote a secular, or political, biography of a great spiritual leader. A lot of scholars believe the Prophet's campaign for president of the United States was a waste. They didn't think he could be elected, and of course he died before the election occurred. But when I think back on it, at the time, Church leaders called 337 election missionaries to campaign in all twenty-six states

of the Union. The missionaries included all of the Twelve, except for John Taylor and Willard Richards. When those numbers are added to the number of men called as traditional missionaries, the missionary force totaled 586. And they not only campaigned for Joseph Smith, but they also proselytized. That number was five times more than any other year in missionary work up to that time, and it would be the largest number of missionaries called for the next fifty years. Not until Wilford Woodruff was President in the 1890s did they call that many missionaries again. In addition, at least forty-five newspaper articles about Joseph Smith and the Church appeared in print. The Church had never received as much publicity as it did in 1844. So as I think back on it—it really did a lot of good.

Baugh: *We should also talk about the book you coauthored about the Saints in Illinois during the 1830s.*

Garr: The book is titled *Mormon Thoroughfare: A History of the Church in Illinois, 1830–1839* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 2006). I coauthored it with Marlene C. Kettley and Craig K. Manscill. It's the history of the Church in Illinois before the Nauvoo period. During the 1830s, numerous branches were established in Illinois primarily because it was part of the Church thoroughfare between Ohio and Missouri. Typically, when people think about the history of the Church in Illinois, they think about Nauvoo, but we discovered that even before the establishment of Nauvoo, the LDS Church was the fourth largest church in the state.

Baugh: *In addition to your books, talk about some of the articles you've written.*

Garr: I did an article for *BYU Studies* titled "Which Are the Most Important Books?" (*BYU Studies* 41, no. 3 [2002]). So often our students come to us and say, "I don't have too much money. I want to start my library. What are the most important books?" I thought, "Okay. Let's find out." So I did a survey. I actually surveyed over three hundred faithful LDS scholars and asked them to say what they thought were the most important books. As a result of that survey, I was able to write the article. I think it's been a very helpful essay. It's been ten years now, so it's time for someone to do another survey, because there have been some great books written since then.

Baugh: *What books came out on top? Do you remember?*

Garr: Number one was *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, number two was *Jesus the Christ*, number three was the *History of the Church*, number

four was the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, and number five was *Mormon Doctrine*.

Baugh: *Who were the individuals you surveyed?*

Garr: They were all faithful LDS Church scholars—professors from various departments at BYU, as well as BYU–Hawaii, BYU–Idaho, seminary and institute people, and people in the Church Historical Department in Salt Lake City. In fact, I broke down the survey so a person could see how each entity voted. There were also subtopics such as “Which were the most important history books?” and “Which were the most important biographies?”

Baugh: *Let’s talk for a moment about your experience at the BYU Jerusalem Center. Although you were a faculty member in Church History and Doctrine, not Ancient Scripture, you had a chance to teach at the BYU Jerusalem Center. How did you prepare for that experience, and what was that like for you and your family?*

Garr: Our year at the Jerusalem Center was the greatest experience our family has ever had. The administrators expect you to teach Old Testament and New Testament at BYU before you go. However, even before that, I sat in on classes taught by the Ancient Scripture faculty. Looking back, I’ve thought, *Why was it the greatest experience of my career?* I think the reason is that I got to know my students better there than any other time; therefore, I grew to love my students more than any other time. The BYU Jerusalem students weren’t any more lovable than the other students I’ve had, but I was closer to them. I taught them every day. We lived in the Center, right there with them. We went to church with them. We went on daylong field trips once a week, and we went on weeklong field trips out of the country to Egypt, Sinai, and Jordan. You get to know people real well when you do those types of things. So I’ve determined that the reason it was the greatest teaching experience I’ve ever had is that I got closer to my students there, and I loved them more than any students I’ve ever had.

Baugh: *What was it like for your children?*

Garr: My family had a great experience! For example, my son played on a baseball team. There were only four baseball leagues in the entire nation—in Israel—and one of them was a youth league in the Jerusalem area, and my son played on a team. My son and five other boys who were also at the Jerusalem Center played on a baseball team that won their league, and they got to go to Tel Aviv to play in the national championship, which they won! My fourteen-year-old son received the most valuable player award. And because

there were so many Mormon boys on the team, the coach—he was not a Mormon—let the boys take the championship trophy to church so that our branch president could have them stand up in sacrament meeting and receive some recognition. It just so happened that Steve Young was on a tour in Israel at the time, and he attended the sacrament meeting when the Mormon boys who won the Israeli national championship were recognized. We asked Steve Young if he would speak to our students in a fireside that night, and he was nice enough to do it, and afterwards all the students lined up to get an autograph from him. When my fourteen-year-old son walked up to get Steve Young's autograph, Steve asked, "Weren't you on that team that won the national championship?" And my son Robbie said, "Yes. Would you like to have my autograph?" And Steve Young, the great guy that he is, said, "Yes! That would be great! I'd love to swap autographs with you five boys who were on the baseball team." My boys also played on basketball teams and played games in Tel Aviv, Bethlehem, East Jerusalem, and West Jerusalem. It was the best experience in sports they ever had. Articles about their baseball team even appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* and the *New Era*.

Baugh: *From 2006 to 2009, you were chair of the Department of Church History and Doctrine. You followed one of our dear friends and colleagues, Paul Peterson. Could you talk about your experience as a department chair?*

Garr: Paul Peterson was a great man—a great soul. His son married my daughter, so we have that connection. We were together the year we were in Israel. I also served as associate department chair when Paul was department chair. I had a long history with Paul. He was a great friend of mine.

Serving as department chair was also a great career experience. It's a lot like being a bishop. You just get to know the professors better than you would otherwise, and therefore you get to love them more than you would otherwise. My love for my colleagues took a quantum leap during the three and a half years I was department chair. For that reason, I'm grateful that opportunity came my way. The majority of my time was spent doing administrative things, so I was not able to teach as much. I wasn't a trained administrator, so the members of the department were patient with me. We experienced some great things together. We had a memorable regional studies trip to the Pacific, and a number of our faculty went on a weeklong trip to Missouri together. We also invited Terry L. Givens, professor of literature and religion at the University of Richmond, to come and present a special series of lectures to our department. It was a terrific time to be department chair. I enjoyed

serving with our dean, Terry B. Ball, so much. He was a great man to work with. I enjoyed serving with John P. Livingstone as associate chair and Linda Godfrey, our secretary.

Baugh: *You did a great job, Arnie. You were innovative, and you made some changes and did some things that had not been done before, all the time keeping the ship on course. I'm sure that when you were teaching at Roy Seminary, you never imagined that someday you would teach at BYU and be the department chair in Church History and Doctrine at BYU. You never would have projected that, would you?*

Garr: I never would have projected that. However, most of all I'd like to be remembered as someone who loved his students and loved his colleagues. It was hard for me to retire. I've loved my career and my time at BYU. I lived my dream.

Baugh: *I've been impressed with how you've maintained a balance in your life. You've been devoted to your family, your professional career, and the Church; but what are some of the things outside the classroom that have shaped Arnie Garr's persona? What do you enjoy doing?*

Garr: I've always thought it was important to exercise, and during the twenty years I was at BYU I tried to exercise three or four times a week. For most of that time I would run. I got involved in running marathons. I ran twelve marathons.

Baugh: *I'm going to interject here. You've told me many times that you really didn't run, and you really didn't jog; you shuffled.*

Garr: I shuffled. I never posted very good times on my marathons, but I completed them! Unfortunately, two years ago I fractured a disk in my back and I had to have it operated on, and the doctors told me I couldn't run anymore. However, I've shifted to using the elliptical four or five times a week for about forty-five minutes and get exercise that way.

I've always loved sports. I wasn't a great athlete in high school, but I participated in sports in high school, and I'm a big BYU Cougars fan. I've been a season ticket holder for twenty years. I loved watching Jimmer Fredette play this year—one of the most exciting things I've ever experienced as a fan. Thirty years ago when I was here getting my doctor's degree, Danny Ainge was playing, so I got to see his career as well. That's been a lot of fun. I'm also a Utah Jazz fan. I've kidded that if I hadn't watched so many Utah Jazz games, I probably could have read a couple more hundred books. I'm also an Atlanta Braves fan. I do like sports. I'm really a homebody. I enjoy being with

my family more than anything else. I don't have any hobbies other than being with my family and doing sports.

***Baugh:** One thing that has characterized you among our faculty is how you've come up with all these lists. That's so unique to you. We talked earlier how you took a survey and came up with the most important books used in the Church. How did you come up with this idea of making lists—not only making lists but memorizing them?*

Garr: It all began when I started training to run marathons. When you're training to run twenty-six miles, you build up until you're running three and four hours at a time, which can be pretty boring. So I started memorizing lists just to pass the time while I was running. I ran with friends, and because they liked sports, I started memorizing lists such as the greatest athletes of the twentieth century, the greatest basketball players of the twentieth century, and the great baseball players of the twentieth century. Then I started to expand. I started making religious lists. I compiled a list of fifty-three of my favorite scriptures, forty-five of the most important events in Church history, twenty-three important events in secular history since World War II, and so on. My lists started to expand and multiply until I now have seventy-eight lists. It takes about two and a half hours for me to recite them all. It was important to me to memorize them. I was inspired by my mother because at age ninety-nine, she memorized the thirteen Articles of Faith. I have all these seventy-plus lists memorized. When I would run, I would recite these lists. Can you imagine how boring it would be to run with me? Now that I don't run anymore I get on the elliptical and I don't have enough time to do all two and a half hours of the lists, so I do about a third of them at a time. It's idiosyncratic for sure, but I think the Lord likes lists. The Ten Commandments are a list. The thirteen Articles of Faith are a list. The Beatitudes are a list. So I think the Lord likes lists also. I've even printed my lists in a book and given them to my friends.

***Baugh:** You've also memorized inspirational quotes—not just from Church leaders but from great personalities who have inspired you. Talk about that for a moment.*

Garr: I like to use inspirational quotes in my teaching, and I just feel like they're more effective if you have them memorized. I haven't memorized many, but I've got a few that I like to use. I quite often quote Calvin Coolidge on persistence, Theodore Roosevelt on diligence, Joan of Arc on living according to what you believe, and Joseph Smith on happiness.

Baugh: How about sharing them?

Garr: Okay. Calvin Coolidge on persistence: "Nothing in this world will take the place of persistence. Talent will not; there is nothing more common than an unsuccessful man with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan 'press on' has solved, and always will solve, the problems of the human race."

Baugh: I love that! That's a powerful quote. We don't quote Calvin Coolidge very often, do we? Historians have ranked Coolidge pretty low among the most successful presidents, but that's a great quote. I guess the fact that he lived to become the president of the United States is indicative of his persistence. How about Theodore Roosevelt?

Garr: Roosevelt on diligence: "It's not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again . . . ; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Baugh: That is fantastic!

Garr: I think it's great. I'm a huge Theodore Roosevelt fan. And he was a great president.

Baugh: Joan of Arc?

Garr: Joan of Arc: "The world can use these words. I know this now. Every man gives his life for what he believes. Every woman gives her life for what she believes. . . . One life is all we have and we live it as we believe it. Then it is gone. But to surrender what you are and live without belief—that's more terrible than dying. Even more terrible than dying young."

She said that when she was about to be burned at the stake. They offered to spare her life if she'd recant, but she refused. She's a big hero of mine as well.

Baugh: And Joseph Smith on happiness.

Garr: Joseph Smith: "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God."

***Baugh:** Let's talk for a few moments about some of your Church callings. You talked about serving as a bishop in Palmyra, and you mentioned that you served on the high council and in the stake presidency in Florida. Talk about your Church callings and how they've been a blessing and maybe some challenges there as well.*

Garr: One of the most stimulating Church callings I had was when I served on the Church Correlation Materials Evaluation Committee. I served on that committee for eight years. When I first went on the committee, there were eight members of the committee and we reviewed all the printed literature of the Church—the Church manuals, the *Ensign*, *New Era*, *Friend*, *Liabona*—all of them—everything except the *Church News*. Nine months before the articles are published, they go through correlation. In the case of Church manuals, like the priesthood and Relief Society manuals, they went through correlation three years before being published. I would work in a subcommittee of three. Every Tuesday night we would meet in Salt Lake City and get an assignment, and then we would come back the following week and discuss what each had come up with. It was demanding. Sometimes I would spend as much as fifteen or twenty hours a week reading and evaluating materials. Not always, but sometimes it took a great amount of time. I learned more in that assignment than any other Church calling I've ever had. So that was a great experience for me.

I served in two stake presidencies—in Tallahassee and in a BYU stake. Paul Nicholson was the stake president in Tallahassee. He had the most successful restaurant and pest control business in two counties. He was chairman of the county commission in Gadsden County. He really emphasized missionary work. There was a time when our stake had more missionaries serving in the field than any other stake in the southern United States. He was a great man. I also served in a stake presidency with George D. Durrant at BYU. He was probably the most well-liked professor when he taught at BYU. He'd been a mission president and the MTC president. He was a pleasure to work with. Most recently I've been serving in a branch presidency at the MTC. It's been exhilarating to do that. It's so enjoyable to watch these missionaries come in and try so hard to get their life in order and crystallize their testimony. It's inspirational to see how much progress they make in a three-week period. I loved that Church calling. Those are the ones that I've probably enjoyed the most.

Baugh: Have you had any teaching callings?

Garr: After we got back from Israel, I was the priests quorum instructor for four years. All three of my sons went through the priests quorum during that time. I loved that Church calling as well. I taught Gospel Doctrine for one year also, but other than that, all of my callings have been administrative callings.

Baugh: You’ve probably had some ups and downs and some joys and sorrows in your career and in your life. Talk about some of the hard times.

Garr: I haven’t had a lot of adversity in my life. I really haven’t, but I live in a ward that has about a hundred condominiums which are exclusively for people who don’t have dependent children—retired people. They’re wonderful people, but they’re old. They get cancer and go through chemotherapy and lose their hair. Some have congestive heart failure. But it is so inspirational watching them. I haven’t had a lot of adversity in my life, but I know I’m going to get it someday, and I’ll have no excuse when it comes because I’ve had great examples on how you handle adversity when it comes your way. I believe with all my heart in D&C 121:8 when it says that if you will endure adversity well, you’ll be exalted on high. The people who inspire me the most are people who have endured their adversities well.

Baugh: What are your favorite scriptures?

Garr: I have two favorite scriptures. D&C 90:24 reads “Search diligently, pray always, and be believing, and all things shall work together for your good.” That says that as long as you’re living righteously, you don’t need to second guess yourself. All things will work together for your good as long as you’re living righteously. I love that scripture. It’s a good scripture for these young men that are trying to decide whether to go on a mission and then fall in love like they never have before and are afraid to go because they’re going to lose their girlfriend. That scripture says if you do what you’re supposed to do, all things will work together for your good. She’ll either be there when you come back or you’ll get somebody even better. My other favorite scripture is the one that impressed me so much with Mack Palmer when I was a seminary student, Matthew 6:33: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Those are my two favorite scriptures.

Baugh: What has motivated you?

Garr: I’m not a competitive person, but I am a goal-oriented person. Early in my life—and I don’t know exactly where I got it from—I learned

this definition of success: “Success is the achievement of righteous goals.” That definition has always stuck in my mind. I believe that with all my heart. More recently, President Thomas S. Monson validated that statement when he taught, “Success is the progressive realization of a worthy ideal.” Therefore, I’ve been a goal-oriented person all my life, and I always feel more fulfillment when I’m working on a goal. Actually, I feel bored when I’m not working on a goal. I tell my students, “If you’re bored, I can guarantee you’re not working on a spiritual goal.” If you want to get rid of your boredom, you don’t go out and do momentary pleasure, because as soon as you get done with your momentary pleasure, you’re going to go back to being bored again. The way you get rid of your boredom is to work on goals. Always be working on a spiritual goal. It’s the key to success and it’s the key to happiness. People who are not working on spiritual goals are bored, and they are also boring. That’s what I tell my students. That’s something that has motivated me.

Another thing that’s motivated me is love. The reason I’ve enjoyed teaching my whole life is I just love being with the students. It was hard for me to retire because I love my colleagues and I love my students. I really think you can make a case that love is the greatest force on earth. In D&C 121, it says that the priesthood doesn’t even work unless the person manifests persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, and love—love unfeigned. That’s what I believe in.

***Baugh:** Even though you’ve officially retired, you will still be actively teaching in the classroom because you’ve received a mission assignment to teach at BYU–Hawaii. Talk about your upcoming mission and beyond. What does the future hold for Arnie Garr?*

Garr: We have been called to serve an education mission at BYU–Hawaii for two years. Cherie will be involved in several things as well over there. I understand that about half the students at BYU–Hawaii are international students. So we’re looking forward to a great experience. After we get back from Hawaii, we’d love to work in the temple. I’d like to do some family history work. I’d love to write a biographical family history. I want to keep going. I think that’s really important for happiness—to always be working. We might consider going on another mission, but I’ll be sixty-nine years old then, so I don’t know. Hopefully, I’ll live a long time and be able to continue doing the things I enjoy: serving in the Church and enjoying our family. **RE**