

A Brief History of H. Tracy Hall's Term as Bishop of the Pleasant View First Ward of the Sharon East Stake July 4, 1976–July 19, 1981

I was called to be bishop of the Pleasant View First Ward to succeed Bishop Rey L. Baird by Sharon East Stake President Ernest L. Olsen on July 1, 1976.

I was sustained, along with William T. Woolf, First Councilor, H. Reese Hansen, Second Councilor, and Raymond D. Harrison as my Executive Secretary in Sacrament Meeting on the 200th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, July 4, 1976.

The meeting commenced at 3:00 P.M. in the lovely, rock faced chapel located at 650 East, Stadium Avenue in Provo, Utah and concluded about one and one-half hours later.

The previous Ward Clerks, Lamar Paxman, and his assistant clerks, Richard L. Larson, Jack V. Dixon, and Burthel B. Mayhew were retained as my clerks.

The first two weeks as bishop were frenetic. Twenty two meetings were attended. Twenty persons were released from their church callings and thirty three persons were called to serve. Youth interviews, temple recommend interviews, a marriage interview, a mission call, and counselling interviews together totaled fifty six.

Additionally, there were five visits to ward members, three evenings working at the Stake Welfare Farm in the Provo River Bottoms near the Power Plant, a sitting for a photograph of the new Bishopric, planning for a Young Men's Super Activity, and the "Setting Apart" of those newly called to serve.

A "Prayer Circle" in the Relief Society Room at 5:30 P.M. was held for the seriously ill, one-day old child of Neil and Laurie Hartvigsen Lindberg on July 21st. About 100 ward members attended.

The opening prayer was offered by H. Reese Hansen. Incidentally, Reese and I go by our middle names and the first name of both of us is Howard. A hymn, "I Need Thee Every Hour" was then sung. Brief remarks by Jens Jonsson on the subject of faith and prayer followed, and then, as requested by the Lindbergs, I offered a prayer.

A closing hymn, "I Know That My Redeemer Lives" was sung and William T. Woolf offered a closing prayer.

The baby remained in intensive care at the Utah Valley Hospital for five days and passed away about 2:00 a.m. on July 26th. Shortly thereafter, this new Bishop conducted his first funeral at our Stadium Avenue Chapel.

At a meeting of all the Sharon East Stake Bishops and the Stake Presidency on July 27th at 9:30 P.M., I learned that our Stake would be divided into two stakes by the creation of an Oak Hills Stake. The division would take place at a Stake Conference to be held on August 8th in the Provo Tabernacle.

One week later, I learned that a Pleasant View Third Ward was to be created on August 15th by a division of our Pleasant View First Ward. Additionally, the Pleasant View Second Ward which was still meeting in the "Old Purple Church" on Canyon road at the foot of Stadium Avenue was to abandon that building and move to our Stadium Avenue Chapel. I was appointed "Agent Bishop" for the new three ward operation on September 18th. The agent Bishop's responsibilities include management of the facilities, scheduling, and certain financial transactions.

The Stake and Ward divisions caused many losses of key personnel. Our ward membership before the divisions was 539 persons and only 350 after.

Now, the business of releasing and calling personnel began all over again only one month after being sustained as the new Bishop.

On Monday, August 2nd at 6:00 a.m., the Deacons, Teachers, and Priests left for the High Uintah's annual Super Activity. I was now 57 years old, the oldest Bishop in the Stake. I was not an "outdoorsman" and not particularly used to heavy activity. We all hiked to Pidgeon Springs for a rendezvous. Leadership divided at this point with the Deacons going to Buckeye Lake with Rey Baird. The Teachers headed for the Four Lake Area with Erick Ericksen, and I continued on over Rocky Sea Pass with ten Priests to the 11,200 foot high Uintah Lake. We camped there four nights, fishing, hiking, and enjoying the scenery.

Half of the boys were very unruly and fool-hardy. The weight of my stewardship became very heavy and I was afraid that some of the boys would not come home alive. I also worried about my own physical and nervous exhaustion.

Prayers to my Father In Heaven, however, brought comfort and strength and I hiked out of the Uintahs not only carrying my own backpack but, in addition, also carried the pack of a youth who had injured his foot.

I was asked to write this history while Ida-Rose and I were in the Missionary Training Center (MTC) preparing to leave for Zimbabwe on our mission.

At the MTC you arise at 5:30 a.m. and go to bed at 10:00 P.M. This has left me with little time to detail the five years of my tenure but I will do what I can before we leave for our mission assignment.

I periodically made demographic surveys of the ward because of a nagging fear that an aging ward population would seriously reduce our vitality.

A survey of the Ward in October of 1977 revealed the following: 359 members, 102 families, 190 males, 169 females, 106 LDS homes, 4 non-LDS homes, 6 vacant lots, 2 moderately large vacant pieces of ground, 38 persons work for Brigham Young University (BYU), 84 married couples (32 of the married couples were alone-children gone), 11 widows, 1 widower, 2 male single heads of households, 6 female heads of households, average age of adult population (18 years and older is 50 years).

A breakdown of the number of persons over 18 years within a 5 year age interval (except for the 18-20 year interval) follows:

<u>Interval</u>	<u>No. of persons</u>	<u>Interval</u>	<u>No. of persons</u>
18-20	39	51-55	32
21-25	22	56-60	24
26-30	11	61-65	47
31-35	11	66-70	10
36-40	5	71-75	6
41-45	15	76-80	7
46-50	33	81-85	5
		86-90	3

My concerns of an aging ward were expressed in the various Ward Leadership Meetings where leaders were urged to attract young families to move in where older families move out.

I was also concerned about commercial and BYU encroachments on our wonderful single family dwelling neighborhood. Other ward members also shared this concern.

Young families coming into the Stadium Avenue and Andrus Lane areas have been very helpful in maintaining a fine primary and youth program.

Remember the 32 married couples whose children were raised that were included in the above statistics. These couples constituted a latent pool of prospective missionaries. In this connection, every Bishop has the mantle of his calling and I truly felt that I had mine. With the mantle comes divine guidance and I felt a goodly portion of this from time to time.

Perhaps the most dramatic instance of my ministry is related in a letter written to my children on March 29, 1978.

The letter—

Last Sunday was usual enough except for that dream from which I awakened at 3:00 a.m. I took my usual shower, washed my hair, shaved and brushed my teeth. I have always brushed my teeth before eating. Food tastes better with a fresh mouth. However, it was Fast Day so there was no breakfast this day. I said my personal prayers (in the bath-room, of course). Think of the billions of prayers that go up from bath rooms. Where else in the house can one have locked-door-privacy? The tithing received in the mail during the proceeding week was removed from my locked desk drawer and the mail from church headquarters was placed in my attache case. Then I was off in the cool morning darkness to Bishopric Meeting.

All the time, there was the nagging question, "What about that dream".

Bishopric meeting, Melchezidec priesthood committee meeting, and Welfare meeting passed, and Priesthood meeting began. I was conducting on this day. The members of the Bishopric rotate in this responsibility every week, as you know.

At this time, opening exercises for Priesthood meeting was carried out in the chapel. We had the opening prayer and the announcements, followed by a call for any visitors to introduce themselves. Immediately, A tall young man with a crew cut hair style (rather unusual for this day and age) shot up from his seat up front on my right and said, "I'm Link Hunn; I'm a quaker" and promptly sat down. I shot right back, "Welcome, we're always glad to have quakers attend our meetings, please come up to the rostrum and see me as soon as these proceedings end".

A few more persons introduced themselves and the opening exercises were concluded. Lincoln Hunn came up, said he was from New Jersey, was attracted to come here on account of the Osmonds. We have a lot of this. The Osmonds live in the Pleasant View Second Ward. Three wards, Pleasant View 1st, 2nd, and 3rd all share the same Stadium Avenue Chapel by meeting at staggered times during the day. Teen agers show up from England, Japan, and other places just to get a peak at Donnie or Marie. It creates a lot of problems. In fact, we call it the "Osmond Problem".

It was Easter Sunday and Quaker Hunn was expecting some kind of early morning Easter Extravaganza. He was 22 years old so I took him to the Elder's Quorum meeting. Being Bishop is interesting for a number of reasons, not the least of which are the surprises. About a month ago when I asked visitors to introduce themselves, a man (again up front and to my right) stood up and did not introduce himself but, looking squarely at me, said in a loud voice, "Who are you"?

More meetings followed. Then there were five youth interviews and other business. Sunday School began and ended. I then took care of more unscheduled interviews and telephone calls.

Then I walked home, prayed, turned around and walked back just in time for prayer meeting for Fast and Testimony meeting. High Councilman Lincoln Card was there and I asked him to offer the prayer. It was now time for Fast and Testimony meeting!

Woven into the fabric of all these morning events were two threads: my dream and the message of Acts-2:17 "And it came to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit on all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams".

Well, I qualify for the "old men shall dream dreams part of the quoted scripture. I had made up my mind. I would tell the congregation of my dream.

After the Sacrament Service, it is usual for the person conducting the meeting to lead off in bearing his testimony before turning the meeting over to the congregation for them to bear their testimonies.

I began by expressing gratitude for Easter and the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on our behalf. I then stated that I would bear my testimony in two parts, part of it now and the remainder at the conclusion of the meeting.

Now, on to my dream:

I was in the dream, you were in the dream, everyone in this ward was in the dream. The dream occurred in three sequential scenes. In the opening scene we all beheld a father and mother with a very tall emaciated son. The son was being held in the arms of the father and was visually being presented to us in a plea for assistance.

We were moved and wanted to help. But we were afraid. We were afraid that some personal harm would come to each of us if we attempted to help. It seemed that the harm would come from being too close to the son because we would contract the illness that had caused his emaciated condition. So, we held back and not one helped.

In the second scene, the entire Ward was fishing at a great expanse of water. On the bank were marshes and trees. One large fishing pole was lying on the bank unattended and with a considerable amount of line let out into the sea.

The Ward was paying little attention to the fishing pole. Presently, the line started to unwind and the reel to turn. The action was not vigorous in hooking a mountain trout but was rather sluggish. Nonchalantly, we, somehow, collectively began to reel the fish in. We had a difficult time doing this, not because the fish put up any fight, but because of our own cumbersomeness.

We got the line all tangled up around our arms, the trees, and the grass humps in the marshes. Eventually, the fish was reeled to shore. But— the fish was only two thirds of a fish! The entire tail section was missing, being severed from the rearward part of the fish in an irregular, angular cut. Regardless, we wanted the fish very much and also wanted the remainder of the fish still out in the sea swimming around.

Then, someone remembered that not one of us had a fishing license. Fear again overcame us and we were afraid that we would get caught and suffer dire consequences.

Scene three now begins. It was discovered that a license could still be obtained—a retroactive license as a matter of fact. But it was soon learned that the license could only be obtained from a certain judge and that judge was to be found in scene one of the dream.

Once again, we were fearful. We did not want to return to the opening scene of the dream. Incidentally, the license cost money but entitled us to keep the two thirds of a fish already caught and entitled us to fish for the remaining one third still at sea. It was known that the part at sea would be difficult to catch—difficult indeed, but that it was possible.

At this point, I said that the first half of my testimony was completed and that there was a "Joseph" in the audience, would he please interpret the dream. There followed a suspenseful pause. H. Reese Hansen, my second councilor sitting at my left leaned over and said, "None will bear their testimonies, they are all waiting for Joseph".

Well, people finally began to bear their testimonies, mainly about things that were on their minds prior to coming to meeting. Brother Card bore his testimony relating how my dream applied to recent happenings in his life: namely< his reluctance to hire an applicant for a school teaching job wherein his heart told him yes but his head told him no because he was afraid that his (Card's) career would be damaged if he hired this man. The man had been rejected by a number of prospective employers, had been out of work for a year and a half, wore old clothes and had a "country hick" appearance. Brother Card finally let the Spirit direct him, however, and hired the man and everything turned out all-right,

Sister LaPreal Simmons commented on the dream stating her concern as being one who had not been willing to help in scene one.

The meeting continued until it was time to close and it seemed that there would be no Joseph. But as I was ready to leave my seat for the podium to close the meeting, Richard Anderson arose. He apologized in his opening words as to feeling unworthy to be a Joseph but that he knew yesterday that he was to bear his testimony today. So he commenced to interpret the dream. He felt that the dream, while having general meaning to the Ward had a specific meaning for each of us. Richard said that scene one represented our Father in Heaven presenting the Savior to us for our acceptance. Our fear of accepting Him has been expressed before by the prophets of old. It is indeed a grave responsibility and awesome task if we accept him fully as required.

Scene two represented fishing for the souls of men and one third not caught represented the traditional lost sheep. We have 65 persons over 60 years of age that I would like to have on missions before my term of bishop is over. Also,

there are thirteen eligible young ladies age twenty-one years or older who are not married who could serve on a mission. Unfortunately, none of these are willing at this time to accept a mission call.

On the other hand, our young men respond remarkably well to accepting a call.

I don't believe that Richard responded to the fishing license part of the dream but expressed the general theme of the dream that in spite of our great statistics (we probably lead the entire church), we must examine our lives, find where we are wanting, and do something about it.

I then closed the meeting with some concluding remarks.

I am a person who seldom dreams, and when I do, it is just a passing flash.

Consequently, this dream which was long and full of detail leaves me puzzled and amazed. After waking from the dream, I immediately wrote it down.

Here are some of the messages that I saw :

The fishing licence had to be paid for in money. Money is the symbol of that which is the most difficult for the average person to give up. The same can be said for bad habits and sins. The fishing licence for some could represent a temple recommend. Some may be unwilling to pay the price for this.

Other symbolism might suggest failure to complete the task of repentance for fear of confession to the Bishop. Some may not be observing the word of wisdom. Others may not be taking affirmative action with respect to temple covenants.

The fact that the license could still be obtained after the fish was caught indicates that repentance is still available

The Bishop has a fearful task from which I try hard not to shirk. I am charged with the responsibility of prying into individual lives in a most personal way but strive to do this with love and kindness. I ask anyone present who needs assistance, particularly with regard to confession necessary to assure themselves of eternal life to not hesitate to seek me out.

Referring back to the dream, symbolism that I saw in scene one follows.

1. We have a father and mother in heaven.
2. The emaciated young man was indeed the Savior but , in addition, represented our brothers and sisters out in the world who are seeking our help, particularly in missionary effort by our older couples.
3. Our ward members may be afraid to volunteer for missionary service. Easy, pleasant retirement in "Happy Valley" is hard to leave behind.
4. The sickness we thought we might contract by approaching too closely to the emaciated young man may be real. We may, indeed, be called upon to risk disease in foreign lands, but have we not been called upon to give our very lives if necessary?

Some of the things that might have been symbolized in scene two are:

1. The fishing pole lying on the bank unattended represents indifference.
2. Getting the line tangled while bringing the fish in represents that we need cooperation and training. We need to be more diligent in the scriptures. The fish presented no resistance. The task is not difficult.
3. The fish could represent mankind, as Richard stated, but has a dual meaning that it could also represent the three degrees of glory. Two thirds of the

fish was easily caught, although we were rather clumsy in catching it. We in the Pleasant View First Ward have merited the Telestial and Terrestrial Worlds but have not made it to the Celestial as yet. That part of the fish is still out there waiting for us to catch it.

4. The one third of the fish still at sea, having no mouth would be very difficult to catch but we were informed in the dream that it could be done. This would require some increase in faith on our part as it is not clear how this could be from our normal experience.

Some of the things that I interpret from scene three follows:

1. Even though we have caught most of the fish, we can still get a fishing licence. This means there is still time for repentance.

2. The fact that the licence must be purchased means that we must overcome our fear of total acceptance, without reservation, of Jesus Christ.

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This dream gave me the determination to "lengthen my stride" with respect to missionary work. We already had momentum in this direction from the good work of previous Bishops and youth leaders. We also had the potential in numbers because our "baby-boom" was now peaking in 19 year old young men. Our current youth leaders were also extra special in dedication to the cause.

As a result, a total of 64 missionaries were called while I was Bishop. At the peak of activity, 34 missionaries (just a little less than 10% of our ward membership) were in the mission field at the same time. Ninety percent of age eligible young men served on missions.

The percentage of young women serving on missions was not high but was commendable.

My only disappointment was in the unwillingness of couples whose children were raised and by older single women.

I felt that about 39 older persons had the health and means to go but only 17 accepted the challenge.

Regardless, the paramount characteristic and success of the Pleasant View First Ward during my service was missionary effort. Not the least of this, was the generous financial support of parents, friends, and missionaries themselves. The combined amount of money spent on our missionary effort from July 4, 1976 through July 19, 1981 was about \$500,000.00.

President Olsen once asked me to give a talk on the subject on "How we get so many people to go on missions". The occasion was a Stake Leadership Meeting held on September 18, 1979. I told them that this was the best kept secret in the Sharon East Stake but I was willing to let them in on it. There was a singular characteristic common to every member of the Pleasant View First Ward bishopric, including the Executive Secretary and all the Ward Clerks. Not one of them had served on a mission! I'm sure that I had more to say than this but I usually just talk from notes so there is no record of my additional remarks.

This was a coincidence probably caused by all of these men having served in the military in World War II.

There were some interesting side-effects resulting from our intense missionary activity. Consider Sacrament Meeting. If you subtract Ward, Stake, and General conferences, Fast Sundays, High Councilman Speaker Sundays plus special Sundays for Easter, Mother's Day, Christmas, etc., there are 19 out of 52 Sundays per year available for ward members and incoming and outgoing missionaries to speak. This was not nearly enough. We used all the High Councilman Sundays and often had to have two or three missionaries share Farewells and Homecomings. Many High Councilmen understood our problem and did not speak at all or limited himself to a mere 5 minutes.

One new High Councilman who had a very fine speech prepared but did not get to speak at all was very incensed and in his report to the Stake President said that the entire Bishopric of our ward should be released immediately!

Our Sacrament Meeting Attendance was phenomenal due to family and friends attendance. Sometimes extra folding chairs would have to be placed almost back to the stage in the Cultural Hall, giving us a 140% attendance figure.

The Stake had a performance award based on ten leading indicators. It was called the "Attaboy" award. The award was presented to the Bishop. I won it month after month and year after year. Finally, the other ward Bishops talked President Olsen into abolishing the award on the grounds that the "Leading Indicators" were not fair.

Many important events affecting the entire church took place during my calling as Bishop.

- (a) The Blacks were given the Priesthood.
- (b) A two-piece garment was introduced
- (c) Women were given the opportunity to offer prayers in Sacrament Meeting
- (d) A Young Women's Meeting to be held concurrently with the long established priesthood meeting held for young men was inaugurated
- (e) The Consolidated Sunday Meeting Schedule was adopted.
- (f) Bishops were instructed to spend as much time with the Young Women as with the Young Men.
- (g) The Bishop and his councilors, on a rotational basis, were to attend the opening exercises of the Relief society and Young women's organizations.
- (h) A most important question was added to the list of questions asked of an applicant for a temple recommend. The new question asks: 'Is there anything amiss in your life that has not been fully resolved with appropriate authorities that should be cleared up at this time"?

Through this question, our kindly prophet, Spencer W. Kimball gave us an opportunity to relieve ourselves of any nagging doubts and burden of guilt connected with past, unconfessed sins.

Many, in their youthful years had experienced infractions of the Law of Chastity that for fear or some other reason were not confessed to the Bishop. Lifetimes of faithful service often followed and repentance was complete with exception of confession. I hasten to add that such infractions seldom involved complete intimacy.

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Word concerning the new question spread. Friends and neighbors discussed it. Mustering their courage, many arranged appointments to see me. At the appointed time, a person would often begin by saying, "Bishop, I have known you so long and loved and respected you so much and know that you love and respect me. I can hardly bear to tell you what I must. I fear that you will have no respect for me whatever when I finish.

As kindly and sympathetically as possible, I would hear their confession. Often there were tears for both of us. But the Spirit of God burned in the bosom of Penitent and Bishop alike as assurance was given that God had forgiven all.

I particularly enjoyed working with the youth. Most of my church callings during my life have been related to the youth. I have been surprised at this because my natural personality is reserved and somewhat introverted. I am a thinker and do little in sports and "rough and tumble" activities. But I do truly love and care for them and enjoy being with them. I've been able to attend many of the sports activities of both the Young Women and the Young Men.

My Young Mens president was Dr. Alfred Ridge and the Young Womens president was Patricia Higbee. Ever faithful, untiring, and devoted are just a few of the qualities that Alf and Pat possessed. I will always have a place in my heart for them.

I remember well our last hike into the Uintahs. Alf hiked in spite of bad knees which later had to be operated on. Our goal was Betsy Lake and was for Mutual age boys and girls alike. We had a goodly complement of Mutual leaders as well as a great group of young people.

On driving to the place where cars and trucks were to be parked for the hike into the mountains, several cars had taken a wrong turn. Only two or three vehicles arrived at the right place. We waited and waited.

Meanwhile, it had turned cold and started to snow. It was also getting dark. Some wanted to go back and find a place to camp at a lower elevation and some wanted to cancel out completely and go home. The ultimate decision was up to me. The worry of hiking in was that we might be snowed in and none of us were prepared for winter weather. Turning back would be a disappointment and a waste of all the preparatory effort. I can tell you that I was praying mightily. We needed two things. The lost cars needed to find us soon and it needed to stop snowing. I received an assurance from the Lord that all would be well and that we should go in.

I selected about six, older, stronger boys to hike in, build fires, and set up tents. Slower hikers would follow them and I would follow later when the lost cars showed up. The lost cars showed up just as the advance party of fast boys started out. The snowfall became very light and the stragglers made it to camp just before the night closed in.

Next morning, the sun shone beautifully, air temperature rose, and for three or four days of our camp, we had a very enjoyable time.