

A secret world on the ceiling tiles of the old Language Training Mission

# What are You Doing Looking up Here? Graffiti Mormon Style



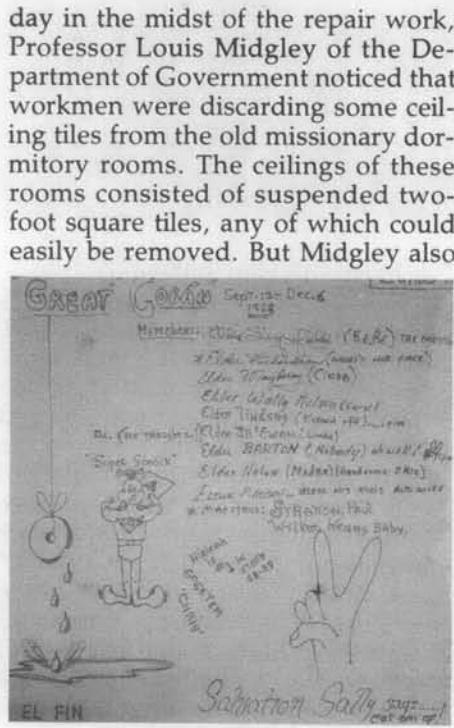
observed that the backsides of these tiles, normally hidden from view, were scribbled with names, slogans, drawings, and messages left by the former occupants of KMH. He salvaged a tile or two and then, almost in passing, mentioned it to us. Intrigued, we began to explore the ceilings all over the building and found, to our delight, that many of the tiles were covered with missionary memories. We had happened upon a secret world of self-revelations.

Some of it, we thought, surely must be worth saving. We applied for and received a small research grant from BYU<sup>1</sup> to cover photographic expenses and obtained permission from the administrators and professors involved to examine the ceiling of every office in the building. It was a tiring, dirty, and time-consuming job—climbing on chairs and ladders, seeking for appropriate tiles, and photographing—but rewarding. We found hundreds of tiles filled with graffiti, and undoubtedly many others had been destroyed in the process of renovation. Curiously, several of the rooms (some probably served as offices or classrooms rather than bedrooms) contained none. Enough was there, however, to provide some fascinating insights into the “other side” of missionary life at the LTM.

How seriously should one take such graffiti as an objective social record? Much of it is little more than spur-of-the-moment scribbling. Too, it could have been created by self-selecting and therefore non-representative groups. But when graffiti becomes more than names on walls (or ceilings), it usually takes the

James B. Allen and John B. Harris

In 1977 the Language Training Mission of the Mormon Church (LTM - as it was known then) moved from Knight-Mangum Hall on the campus of Brigham Young University (where it had been since 1968) to the newly-built modern quarters which became the Missionary Training Center. As soon as Knight-Mangum was vacated, the university began to renovate it for use as office space by several departments. One



form of some kind of message which reflects what someone was thinking about at the time and is interpreted variously as hostility, rebellion, sexual neurosis, well-meaning humor, or simple vandalism. Nonetheless, graffiti is a form of expression, and, like all outward expressions such as poetry, art, drama, and essays, it can be a symbol of the inner needs and motivations on the part of the originator.<sup>2</sup> Even the best literature, in fact, is

words include expressions of faith, comments on the "privilege" of suffering for conscience sake, philosophical utterances, political exhortations, and the recordings of dates and days. In 1540 Thomas Salmon wrote that he had been in the tower for 8 months, 32 weeks, 224 days, and 5376 hours. In 1589 Philip, Earl of Arundel, wrote in Latin, "The greater the misery we endure for Christ in this world, the more glory

quick-drying paint and then set aside a wall especially for graffiti where people could record anything they wanted during the day but by the next morning it would be painted over, waiting for another round.<sup>6</sup>

Graffiti has occasionally been known to help mental patients. At St. Joseph's Hospital in Chicago, graffiti therapy started quite by accident as an attempt to communicate with an agonized schizophrenia patient who

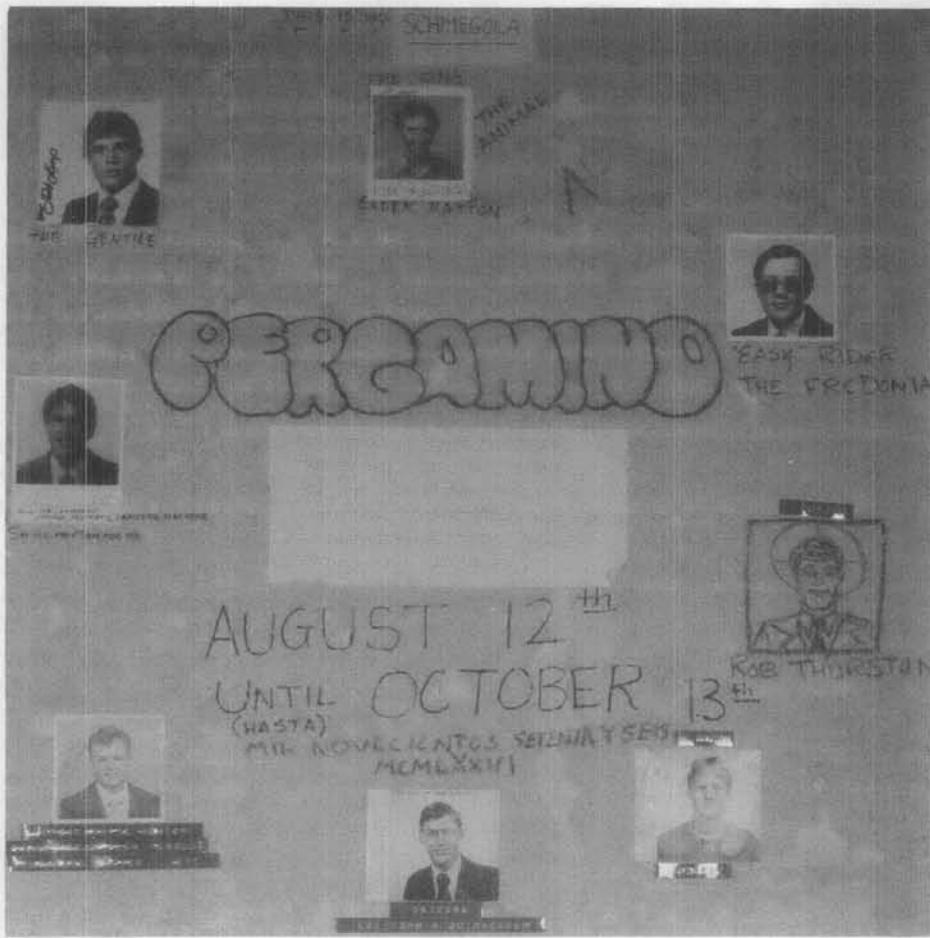


Figure 5

often somewhat autobiographical, in which authors use characters or situations to reveal themselves.

Graffiti goes back in history to when man first used an instrument or medium to put an image on a surface. Some scholars have even used graffiti to reconstruct the social life of Pompeii.<sup>3</sup> Graffiti has appeared in diverse places and for a multitude of reasons. Certain walls in the Tower of London, for example, are covered with messages dating back to the fourteenth century. Prisoners of all sorts, from kings and nobles to the common rabble, have left their mark there. Their

we have with Him in the next."<sup>4</sup>

Graffiti artists have sometimes caused urban problems. In New York City the city fathers once were spending nearly two million dollars annually to clean it off the trains and subway walls. Among many of the ghetto youth it had become a mark of some prestige for an "artist" to have his work on more trains or in a more dangerous location than any others.<sup>5</sup> Stockholm, Sweden, was once spending \$36,000 annually to clean up its graffiti until the Chief Architect of the Parks Department got an idea. He had the chemists develop a special,



had rebuffed every attempt to communicate with him. One day a blackboard and chalk were inadvertently left in the hall and, when no one was looking, the patient wrote some remarks about his feelings upon the board. A perceptive head nurse wrote back, and soon a regular exchange began. Eventually a new program was adopted in which the walls were covered with paper, and patients and staff scribbled messages to each other. In that situation, graffiti became an invaluable tool, not only to break the communication barrier, but also as an aid to diagnosis and therapy.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately, because much graffiti is salacious and obscene, a large portion of the professional studies have dealt primarily with this aspect. One pair of researchers described their excursions through the toilet stalls in the restrooms of certain college campuses searching for such "latrinalia," lamenting the cramped quarters and the need to use flashlights attached to the walls by magnets so they could read and copy the inscriptions from the opposite walls.<sup>8</sup> Such researchers may have distorted their conclusions by ignoring anything but sexual graffiti; in fact, they wrote that "the bulk of non-

sexual inscriptions are of little interest."<sup>9</sup> By contrast, the collection from Knight-Mangum Hall contained practically no sexual matter (only one or two of all the tiles even hinted at anything), and yet we found it fascinating. Missionary life was strenuous but "upbeat," and the graffiti generally reflected it.

Why, then, missionary graffiti? We think that there are a number of possible reasons.<sup>10</sup> One was a need sim-



ply to vent frustration. Even if a young man had long expected and planned for his mission call, even if he had been told what discipline awaited him, the rather sudden change in lifestyle may have been dramatic. Imagine the feelings of a nineteen-year-old Mormon boy, a lover of sports, full of energy and mischief, relatively unrestricted in his choice of activities and conversation topics, proud of his appearance and clothing, possibly involved romantically with an attractive young female. Take this young man, shear him of his proud locks, dress him in a dark, conservative suit, white shirt and tie, separate him from his family and friends, give him the title "Elder," and then propel him into an intensive language training program. There he will be forced to speak primarily in the language he is trying to learn; he will be assigned a "companion" who will accompany him for the most part of his waking hours; he will have his schedule completely outlined for him. And what a schedule:<sup>11</sup>

6:00 - 6:30	Arise, shower, dress, personal prayer
6:45 - 7:20	Breakfast
7:20 - 7:45	Zone meeting
7:45 - 8:00	District meeting
8:00 - 10:00	Memorization drills
10:00 - 11:00	Leadership training on Wed.; Scripture study Tues. & Thurs.
11:00 - 12:00	Memorization drills
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 4:00	Language class
4:00 - 5:00	P.E. on Tues. & Thurs.; cultural lectures, Mon., Wed., Fri.
5:00 - 5:45	Dinner
5:45 - 6:00	District meeting
6:00 - 7:00	Language laboratory work
7:00 - 10:00	Group study
10:00 - 10:30	Group prayer and lights out

He will be allowed no dates, no visits or calls from home, no outside reading, no movies or TV, no leaving the hall without his assigned companion, and only one day off in which to do his laundry, write letters, shop for necessities, mend clothes, or complete all the tasks which have piled up during the week. The nearest thing in Mormonism to monasticism, someone once observed. And even though the missionaries had chosen to serve a mission, gladly, excitedly, and even though they may have understood that the rules and restrictions were designed to assist them in their studies and to help them become better missionaries, it is easy to see that they might need an outlet for their frustrations.

Another motive for leaving graffiti was obviously a need felt by some to preserve identity, a "self," recognizably separate from the sea of hundreds of elders being molded in the same pattern. "We had first names," complained one writer. Writing on the ceiling was like leaving a time capsule, reported an elder who did nothing more than sign his name. Some pasted up their driver's licenses, others glued photos of themselves, alone or with former girlfriends. They gave themselves nicknames and sketched caricatures. They left maps of the places they were going and in-

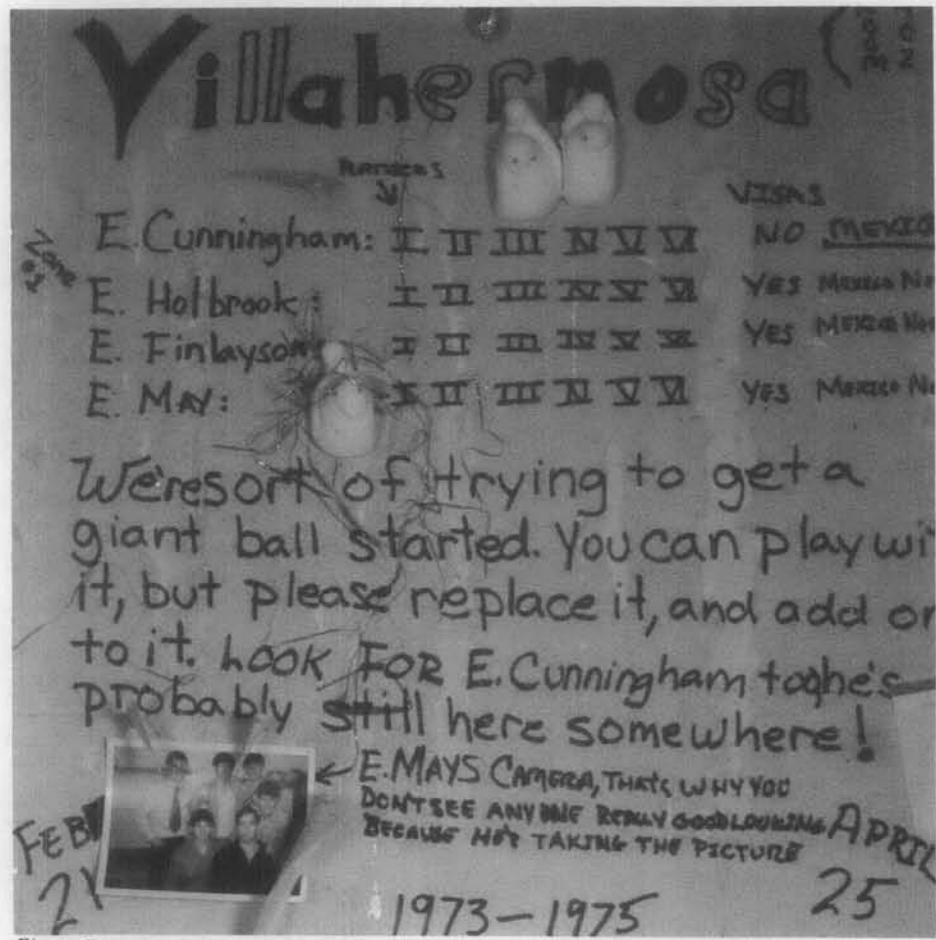


Figure 7

To whom it may concern:  
This is a letter to you from one humble  
missionary. I have lived in this cell for a  
little more than two weeks now and love  
every second of it. The potatoes in this  
abode cannot be surpassed by any  
human form. The beds are as soft as con-  
crete. The air is as cool and clear as  
Chicago during the great fire. The floors  
are as warm to your feet in the morning as  
a glacier. Do not be discouraged if you are  
among the chosen few to live here within  
these hallowed walls. Just count your  
blessings. You are able to keep track of  
how many times the toilet is flushed and  
can, in time tell the difference between a  
shick electric razor and a norelco. From  
all of us who have gone before to you.  
Adios!  
Signed, Elder Turner

Signed, Elder Turner

After 6 weeks of solid  
study, this is the  
composite picture of the  
District of  
success—Harried, Worn,  
but real Missionaries

Dev  
Vickie  
Stephanie  
Lisa

What do I do if they all wait?

Elder S. Pugmire Columbia, Bogat,  
wishes all you Lucky Dogs the  
opportunity of staying in the LTM for  
at least 12 weeks. Don't let the sound  
of flushing toilets get you down, or  
your companions same.

Days Go like years in LTM  
EST Two months

*S18* Living thru this is not  
impossible but improbable.

Declaration of Sanity  
Keith Shirley, witness and my days  
I, Donald plate hereby consummate the trials and  
I, this plate hereby of all the charlas,  
upon that I TM. In the Language, I will these, pa-  
ment in the LTM etc., I am intelligent from July  
here in thes with borne an here leave, val-  
hereinations and tribulations I have and I was A.D. I leave, val-  
tribulachers I have and I was A.D. I leave, val-  
the teachers that I heart and I was A.D. I leave, val-  
known that I heart and I was A.D. I leave, val-  
the willing mind. A.D. I leave, val-  
with a willing mind. A.D. I leave, val-  
Sept. 14, 1976 those who dare to my  
tient & Sept. 14, 1976 these hearts work I leave this  
15, 1976) all these Lord's hereby seal a few  
queath & courageous the & do signature, Es-  
tient & courageous the & do signature, Es-  
ture upon upon my Keith Shirley, Bar-  
blessing with dom.  
testament of wisdom  
words, Edler Texas 1976-July 1978  
Signed (Longrey, July 15, 1976-July 1978  
quite celona, Spain,

Elder Lewis has the record  
for the longest shower in  
the LTM 55 Minutes.  
The rest of the district  
held service for the  
deceased.

This is the last words of the grand  
district of La Paz of Zone "1". Most of  
us are going to Mexico with tres going  
to Central America. We are still hoping  
for our visas. Nov. 28, 1970. We  
hereby bequeath this room to whoever is  
smart enough to find this.

Have you been to Heaven?  
No. But I been to Texas, and  
that's close enough.

E. Alvord  
Saratoga, Cal.—Toulouse, France.  
6'1"  
180 lbs

solid stuff!  
February 76-78

Well I'm glad to see you  
waste your time reading  
the roof because you'll  
probably waste your  
time writing on it to.  
Elder Nicholas G. Cas  
Feb. 13, 1971 has not  
been "Dear Johned"  
yet. I may make it. Who  
knows.

Destination: Central  
America. Adios.

In the Beginning there was Man  
And all those who were wise call him Elder  
And all those who were humble call him Sasquatch  
And all those who were smart at all called him MALMSTROM  
And all those who were

When you get a dear John reply  
with Ezra 9:3  
When you aren't getting any mail  
Proverbs 25:25

The tragedy of Mankind is  
not that he Loses But that he  
almost wins

I stayed here and rotted  
away for 8 weeks. At the  
Provo Hilton (The Rock)  
All I could do was watch  
the girls out the window.  
P.S. My roommate was a  
mex.

JOE COOL alias Elder Donald Lyle arrived  
here on September 1, 1971. He was  
scheduled to leave on November 2 but for  
reasons of health was detained. Today,  
November 28, he is packing his bags to leave  
tomorrow for Florida South Spanish. He is  
writing this small note to you future Elders  
who will have the opportunity of staying here  
to let you know that if you think 8 weeks is bad  
try 12 1/2. He would like to leave a small note  
about the great district of Morte Caseros his  
first district. This district was without a doubt  
the number one district to ever arrive here.

dications of where they were from. They left records of how many lessons they had learned in what amount of time. All of these were attempts to distinguish themselves from the throngs of missionaries pumped through the LTM.

A third motive had to do with the semi-secrecy of the graffiti tradition. Clearly, many of the missionaries housed in Knight-Mangum Hall between 1968 and 1977 knew nothing of the opportunity. Others were not of the temperament even to experiment with the overhead tiles to see if they were moveable. Still others undoubtedly thought it was a form of vandalism which conscience could not allow. Some believed it was against the rules. (We have been unable to determine if, in fact, it was specifically prohibited by the leaders.) When we contacted one former missionary for an interview, he was at first reluctant—fearful that he might still be disciplined for his part in the creation of graffiti.

Because many did not, those who did find and participate in the graffiti production formed a sort of secret bond, an inner circle which operated partly by tradition and partly by chance. Finding the graffiti-filled tiles was easy for some elders, accidental for others. In most cases the elders would replace the tile as soon as they finished their work so that a casual observer would notice nothing amiss in the room. And even though many elders did not tell anyone what they were doing, most intended or assumed that their tile would be found one way or another. The hidden world of graffiti was repeatedly discovered when an elder climbing in or out of a top bunk would hit his arm or head on a tile and displace it. Having found the work of a predecessor, sometimes all four elders in the room would set about looking for other tiles, and then decide to do their own. In other instances, the elders purposely left the tiles turned outward, proudly displaying their artwork to all viewers. Thus the tradition became well-established in some rooms. In still other cases, those who had been there awhile would verbally convey to "greenies" the suggestion that they look in the ceiling. The most curious among the newer ones did so. With

discovery came desire to continue the chain and thus perpetuate the "secret society."

There were those, then, who scrawled graffiti to follow the lead of their predecessors, to maintain what they believed to be a long-standing missionary tradition. There were also those who wanted to insure that the tradition was carried on after them, who offered advice and wisdom to

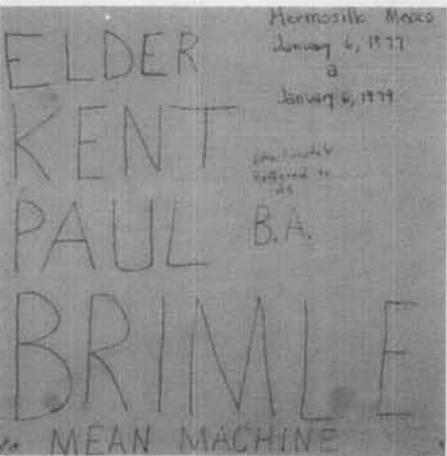
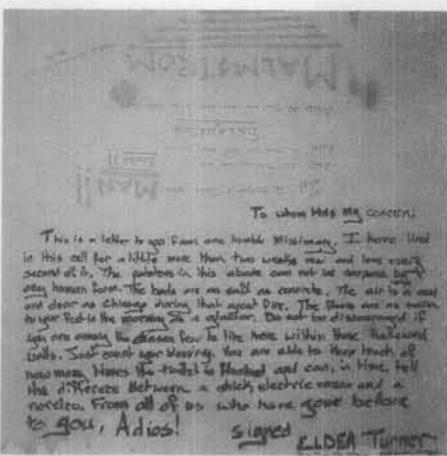
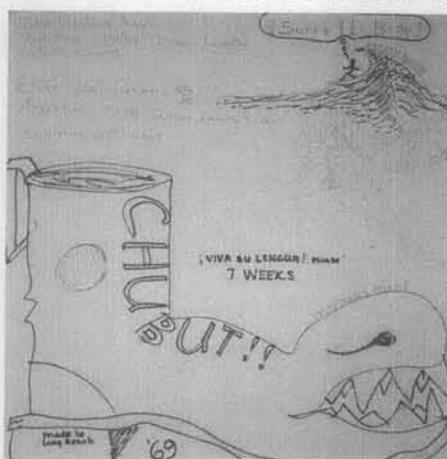


Figure 3

those who would follow. They left "last wills and testaments," suggestions of where to eat and not to eat, what to do and not to do. They left offerings of hope informing the new elders that someone had gone through it all before them.

Lastly, some missionaries did it for fun. It was like writing one's name on the tablecloth of the nearby pizza parlor, one told us. It was a way "to get into the cookie jar without anyone knowing about it." It was a challenge to see if you could do it and not get caught.

The types of materials and quality of workmanship varied so much that it is impossible to generalize about the amount of time or money spent creating the graffiti. It seems apparent, though, that it was not an inordinate amount in either case. The elders used pens, colored pencils, felt tip markers, and, in a few cases, oils to do their work. One panel was made of construction paper (Fig. 1). Anything

Figure 1  
See page 35

and everything they could find within their constraints was used to make an image.

Most of the graffiti was not elaborately planned but rather spontaneously expressive. And even that which was obviously premeditated—colored maps, cartoons, and beautifully illustrated messages—must have been done in between other activities on days off. In a few cases the tiles were prepared, almost ceremonially, some days before the group departed for separate destinations, thereby producing a collective symbol of an enduring emotional bond. In these instances the elders involved became very attached to their tiles. The story of one such tile is illustrative.

A group of elders going to Mexico entered the LTM on January 7, 1977, and were formed into a district called "Distrito de Cananea." The best artist in the group was Elder David Bradshaw of Garden Grove, California. Other members of the district came from such diverse American locations

# NIT WITS FROM THE ROCK

2/21-4/24  
1973

E. ZIPPRO AND E. FLAKE  
FARMINGTON, UTAH MESA, ARIZONA

6 "CHARLIE"

MISSION TIME:

Sept. 27, 1975  
Sept. 27, 1977

Teachers  
El Elder Lillo  
El Elder Pugmire



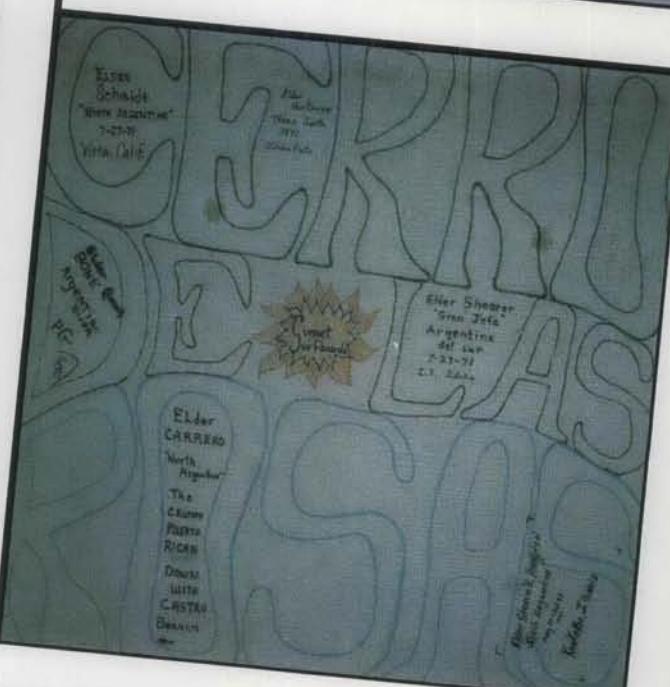
Elder Scott

Pugmire

ELDER  
Bruce Lee Strangier

El Elder Russell Wesley (Dall)  
(Lima, Peru)  
El Elder Doug Elmer Kuhn  
Elder Virgil Joseph Johnson  
Elder Michael M. Fish  
Elder James M. Ferguson  
Elder James G. Fornari

Sister Joan Olson  
Sister Anna Utter



ESTRATO de Ganhaneq

MENOSILLO

BENNETT  
BENNER  
JOHNSON  
MOROS  
WILKINSON

QU 6.1977  
QU 6.1979

VERACRUZ

EL BRONX  
Elder Ericson  
Elder Dennis

VIVA  
SU  
 LENGUA —  
POR FAVOR

ES MUY  
IMPORTANTE

"Y fe, esperanza, coridad y amor,  
con un deseo sincero de glorificar  
a Dios, lo cual

AT LAKELAND CITY

YEP, I WAS HERE.

I WALKED FOR THE SAME THAT  
LIVED IN THE CLOSET  
IN THE MOTHER FLOOR WITH GATHERED  
TO JUMP OUT OF THE CLOSET  
WHEN THE LIGHTS WERE ON  
I BECAME GOOD FRIENDS WITH THEM  
EXTERMINATE

Ford Dole

The Year The Big Wheel  
Met The Big Fruit

HERE RESIDED THE  
PRE-ORGANIZED DISTRICT  
OF DRUMMOND



OLIVER

CHARLES

JOHN

FRANCIS

ROBERT

RONALD

-FREE AGENCY ABIDES HERE-

RONALD

May 30, 1973 - August 2, 1973

# Gálatas

Charles

CRAIG "Jefe" TANNER

\*Ole\* "Bingo" Smith

\*Gerry "Gof" Rye

TERRY "SPUR" HULSE

Blair "Sueño" McLean

Everytime you Rockies speak,  
you subtract from the sum of HUMAN

6.7

PLEASE

FEED THE

PAJARITOS

Kevin "Arizona"

KID" COLLETTE

DOUG "SLAVE"

DEWITT

PAUL "DREVER"

MOURITSEN

Spanish

KNOWLEDGE

ARRIVED AT L.T.M. JAN. 29, 1973

ZONA

3

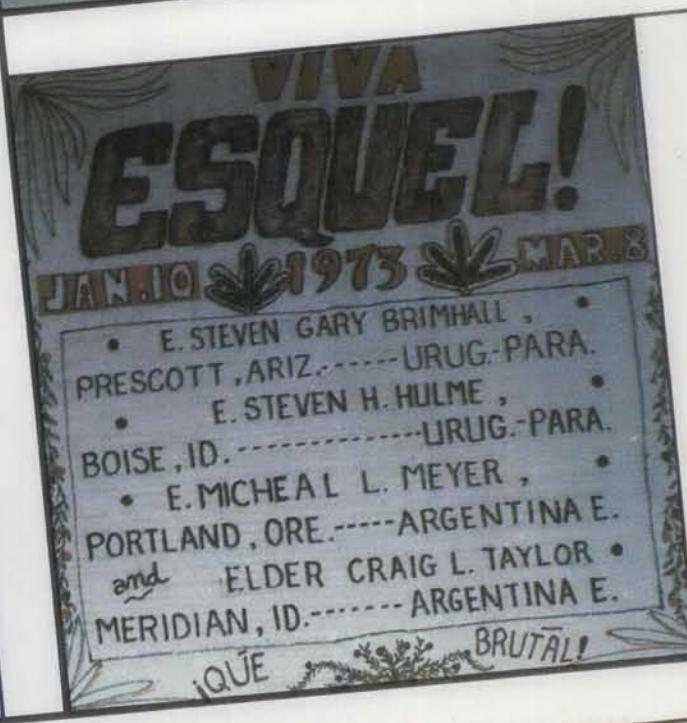
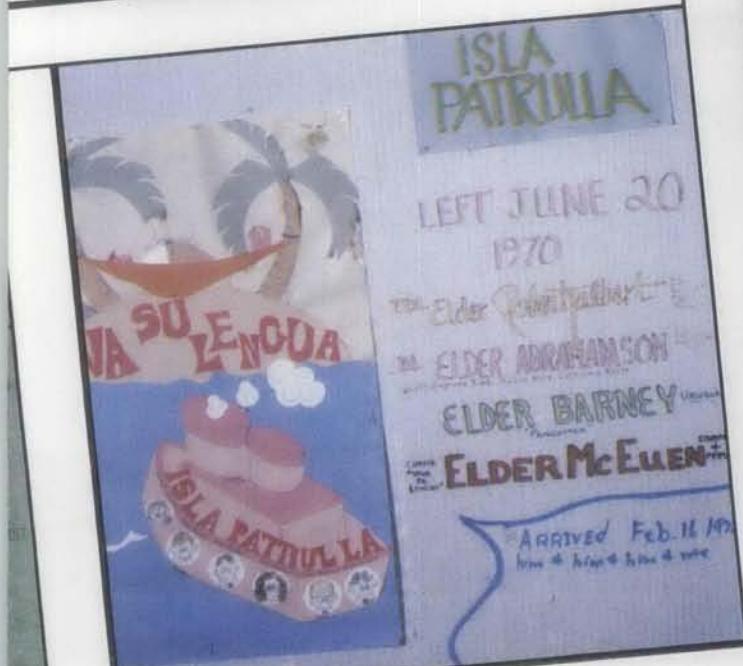
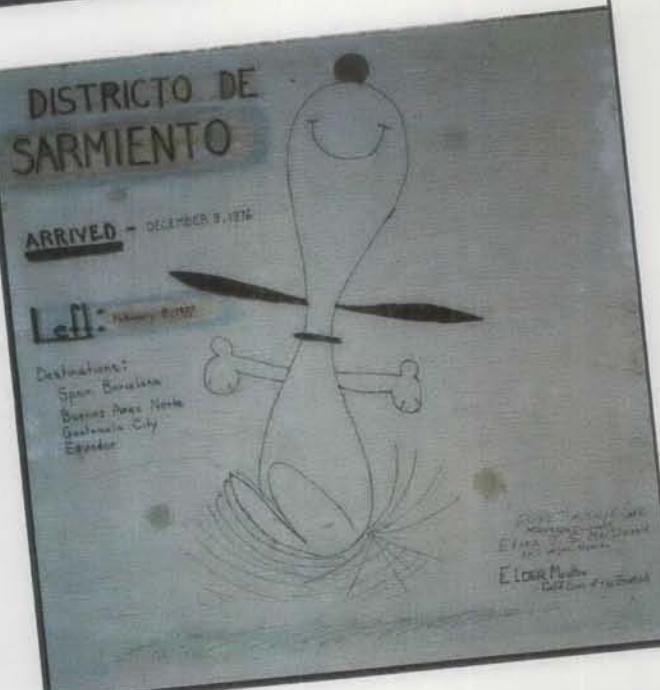
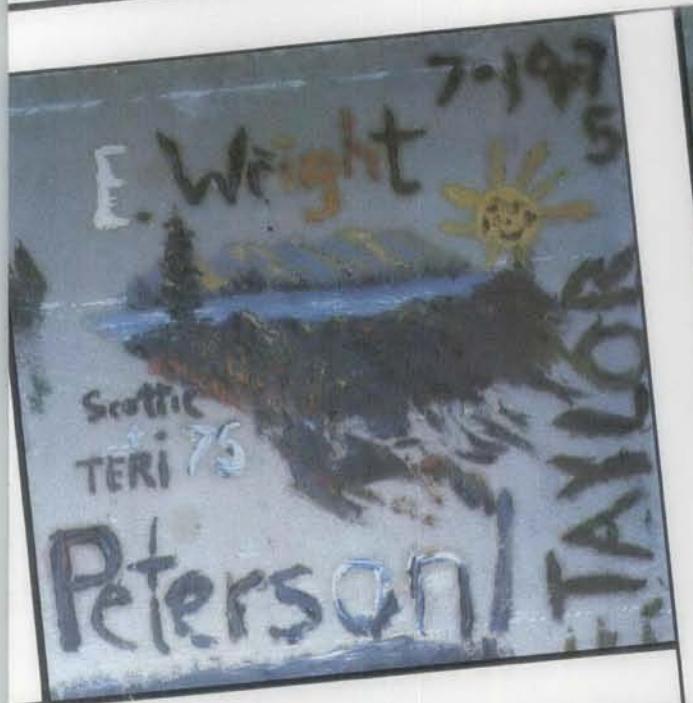
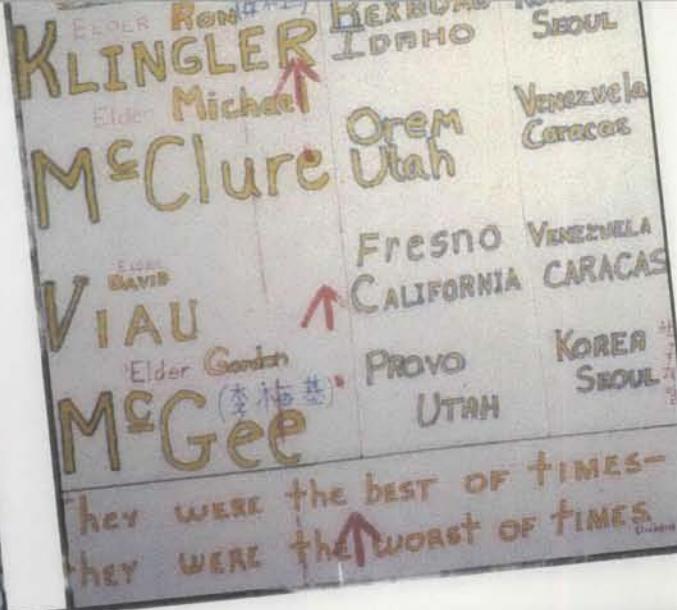
VAMOS AMANDA

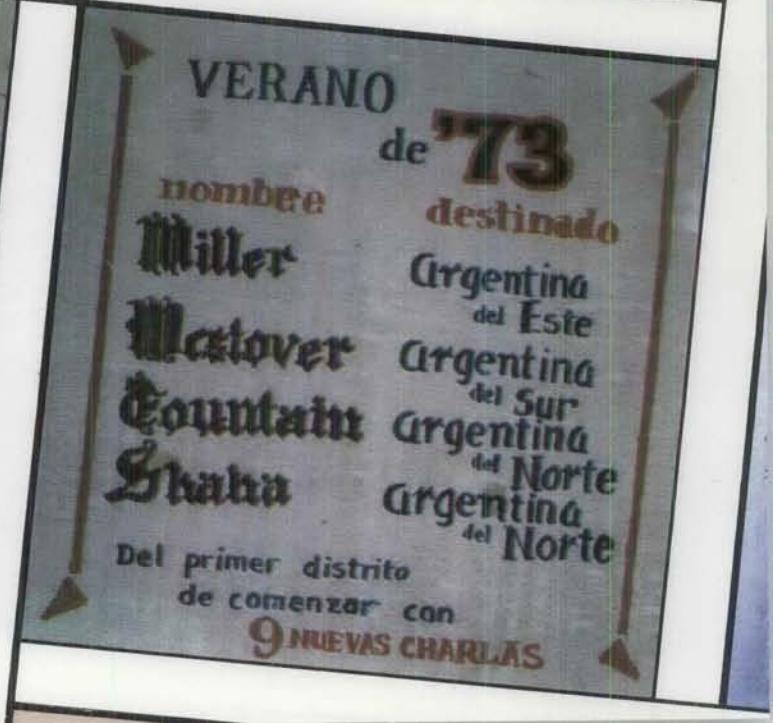
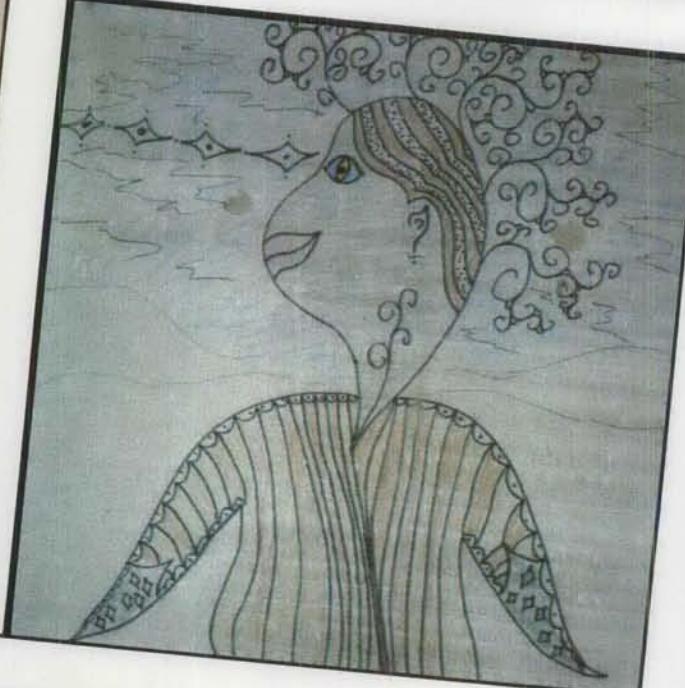
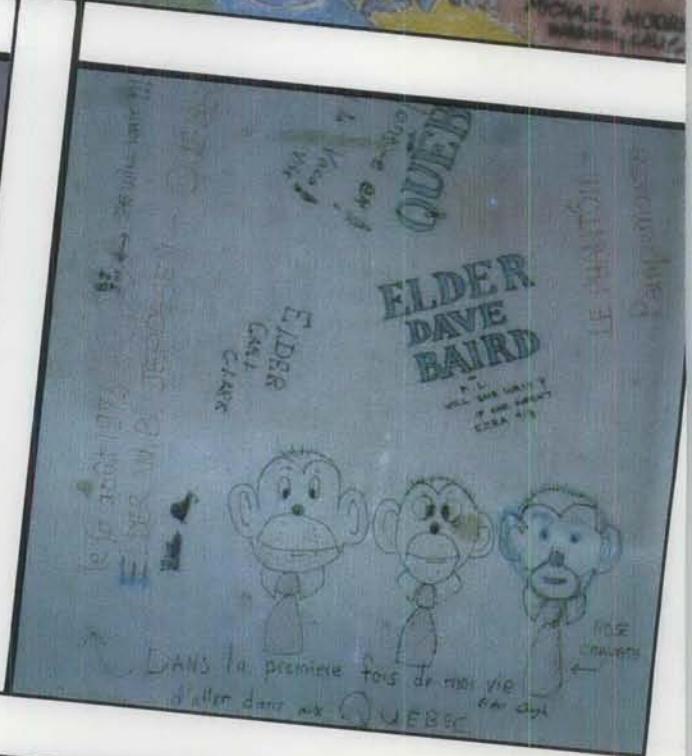
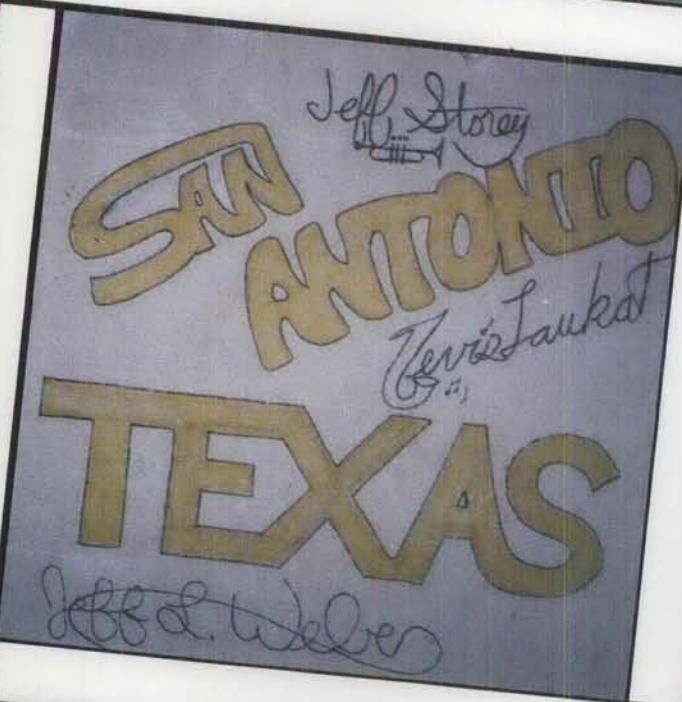
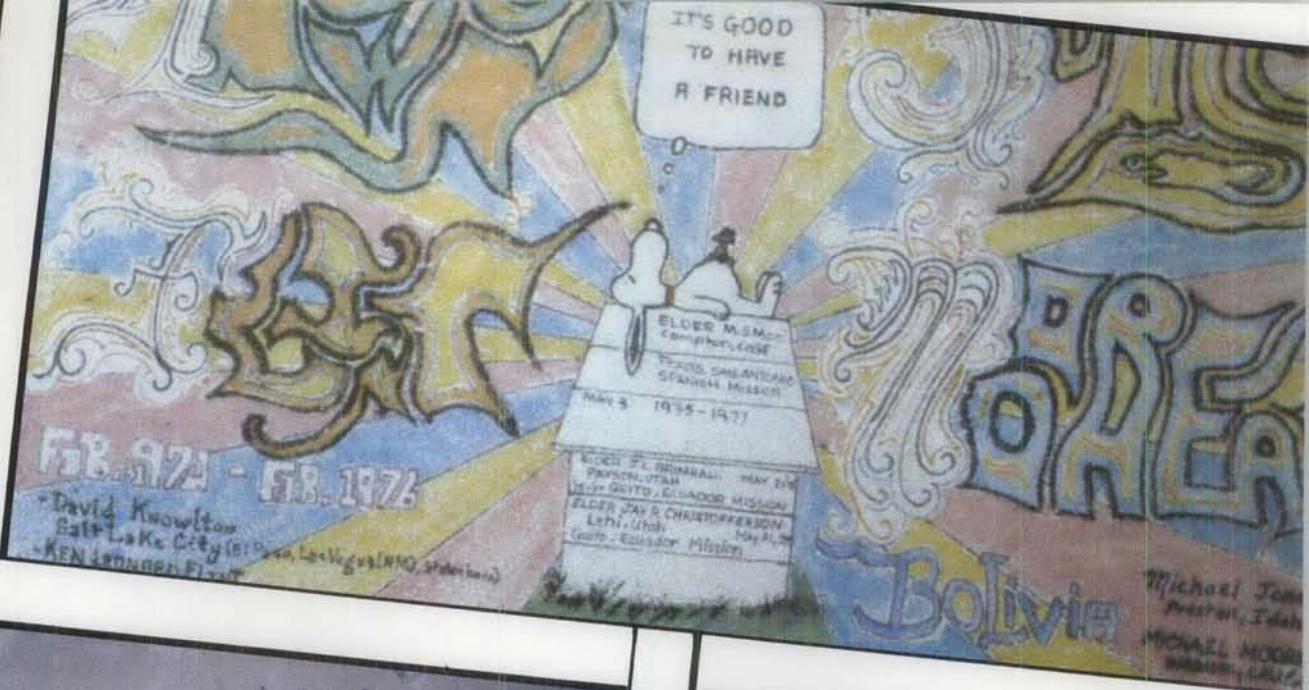
KNIGHT ON

MARCH 12

SYDNEY

E. VANDERKAM - E. VANDERKAM





as Big Piney, Wyoming; Mesa, Arizona; Logan, Utah; Aitkin, Minnesota; Orem, Utah; Billings, Montana; and Glendale, California. It was Elder Bradshaw who decorated the tile with a map of Mexico on which two major cities were designated with large stars. He also lettered in the names of the elders and finished the tile at the bottom with a quotation in Spanish from the Doctrine and Covenants 4:5: "And faith, hope, charity and love, with an eye single to the glory of God, qualify him for the work" (Fig. 2). The missionaries all

Figure 2  
See page 33

placed their signatures under their names, and then they had pictures taken with the tile. In 1980, a year after he had returned from his mission, Elder Bradshaw knocked on the door of 218 Knight-Mangum Hall. He wanted to look at the ceiling. He had not heard of our graffiti project, he just wanted to see if his tile was still there. As the student looked at the ceiling where several tiles had been turned so that the graffiti was visible, a clearly perceptible disappointment came over his face—his tile was not there. When the elder described it, we remembered that his tile had been damaged by workmen putting in a light fixture and so had not been turned over like the others. It was a simple matter to climb on a chair and reverse it for him. The expression of pleasure and relief that came over young Bradshaw's face when he saw his tile still intact is indescribable. Obviously for some, making the tiles was a meaningful experience which they fondly remembered years after their missions were over.

The ceiling tiles fall into several categories. The first might be called "desire for immortality." This category includes the names, nicknames, brief self-descriptions, self-portraits, and self-photos of the various missionaries. "The Mean Machine," one elder called himself (Fig. 3). "Down with Castro," wrote another who identified himself as the "crummy Puerto Rican" (Fig. 4).

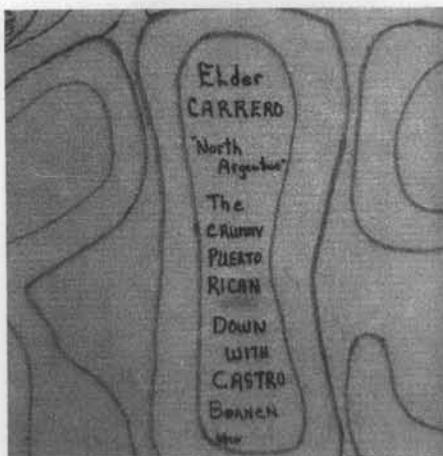


Figure 4

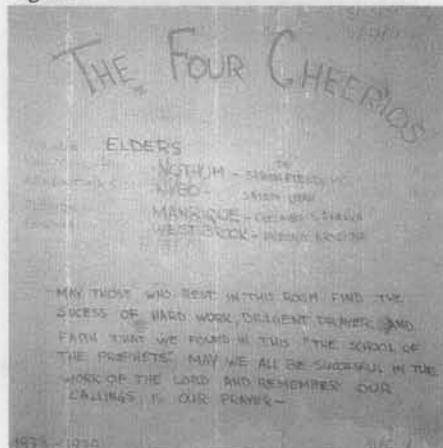


Figure 8

One elder gave his name and then said of himself, "He will be remembered as a missionary who kept as many of the rules as he was able. His own words, 'I never met a rule I couldn't bend.' His ambition in life is to become rich enough to buy his way into the Quorum of the Twelve."

In this category also fall the tiles which we call "the rogue's gallery." These are the self-caricatures. Under the personal photographs on one tile (fig. 5), the missionaries left not only their names but also their nicknames, "The Gentile," "The Animal," "Easy Rider," and others. In other instances the elders xeroxed their driver's licenses and pasted them to the ceiling tile archive, while the missionaries in still another group caricatured themselves as monkeys (Fig. 6).

Figure 6  
See page 36

In February, 1973, the missionaries in room 402 pasted candy chickens and eggs on their tile ("We're sort of trying to get the ball started," they wrote. "You can play with it, but please replace it and add on to it.") They also included a photograph of themselves together and, not wishing to have one of their number forgotten, they made it clear that there was an elder missing from the photograph because he was taking the picture. They also recorded the number of lessons they had learned and whether or not they had received their visas (Fig. 7).

The "desire for immortality" category includes group as well as individual tiles. Some named themselves as a group like "The Four Cheerios" (Fig. 8). Others invented official seals for their districts such as the road runner (Fig. 9). One group of

Figure 9  
See page 33

missionaries created a colorful tile in which their slogan, "Azulito," became the symbol (Fig. 10). "Azulito"

Figure 10  
See back cover

is the Spanish word for "blue," and this reflected a practice in the LTM of placing the missionaries' progress in learning the language on a chart. The color blue on the chart indicated that the missionary had a perfect record, and since all the elders in that district had a perfect record, their chart was completely blue. It became such a matter of pride with them that they bought felt-tip pens to record all their names and signify the impressive achievement.

One tile showed the unity and comradarie of a district, "Campeche #1." "This is to testify," wrote their scribe, "to all whom [sic] may have the great privilege to live in 303 and 301 that you have been preceded by the greatest, wildest, funniest district to ever have bombed the LTM." Then

followed a detailed report that this group had had the most meetings with the zone counselor, was undefeated in basketball and football (they beat the "Frenchies" 21-0), learned more variations of the lessons, had more absentees from class and "retentions" (individual study sessions), had prayer earlier than any other district, and played the widest variety of music (their five tape recorders played everything from Cream to Andy Williams to Dionne Warwick).

A second category of tiles is "descriptions of the place." This includes

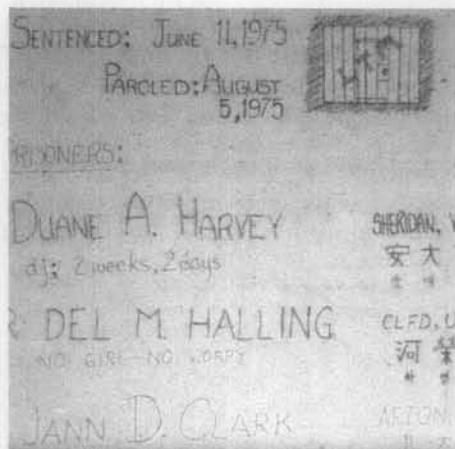


Figure 11

the spectrum of responses to the LTM environment. There were those who wrote, without hesitation, "I love it." There were a few others (and it was only a few) who expressed the opposite view. One said he had learned five lessons in eight weeks and also learned to hate snow, hate Utah, and hate half the people there. (He also posted the name of his girlfriend with a picture of the two of them in a tight embrace.) And one sad elder scrawled at the end of a small message: "I hate this place." Most of the descriptions, however, expressed mixed emotions, mostly positive. One tile used Dickens to sum it up for the others: "They were the best of times, they were the worst of times." Most of the tiles in this category showed very good humor, often making light-hearted fun of the trials and frustrations of missionary life. "The First Epistle of Macoa" is a clever example (Macoa was an LTM missionary district):

In the beginning was the me and the me was with him. All things were done with him, and without him was not anything done that was done, save it be the bano!

And it was the beginning and the morning of the first day, whereon we were brought to that great tower, wherein there was an exceeding great amount of confusion.

And the language therein was confounded. And the me and the him were thrust together, and our language was confounded, as were many therein.

And it came to pass that the him was a companion to the me, and the me to him. Thus commenced the reign of companions.

And therein they worked and found



others which had the same tongue. And they found ten others and formed a district. And they called themselves Macoa!

And it came to pass that they were exceeding strong among others which were known as Ramas.

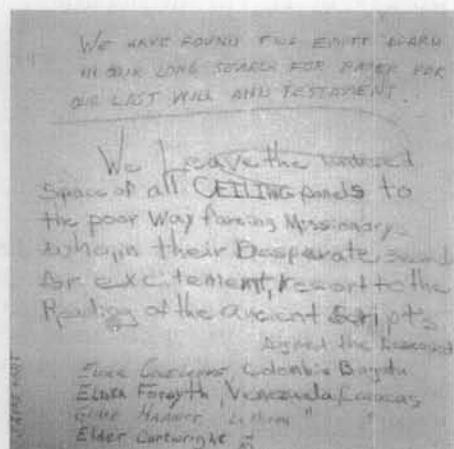
And after eight weeks in the tower, the me and the him and two others were to leave. So I make an end to my writing and I know not who will make an end to this record but I leave it unto those Columbians who weren't as fortunate in obtaining visas.

The "Great Seal of Republica" (Fig. 11) contained several clever symbols.

Figure 11

See back cover

("Really tricky," the key indicated), while Item 4, the rain, stood for the cold showers that woke the elders each morning. Item 5, the ball on the nose of the seal, depicted the juggling act the missionaries went through for two months of many-pronged activities, while Item 6 was their retreat, "Y mountain," where, they said, they could go in their "grubbies." Finally, at the bottom, appeared a term that was sometimes affectionately or unaffectionately used to describe the LTM itself—the Rock, also called in the key, the "depths of despair." The seal



(missionaries) has not, however, descended into those depths, he is still on top of the Rock (LTM).

One of our favorites shows the cartoon characters, Snoopy and Woodstock (Fig. 12). Snoopy, with a

Figure 12

See page 33

book under his paw, is repeating in Spanish one of the then official slogans of the LTM, "Live Your Language, please," while Woodstock is saying, "It is very important." Another took the form of a movie advertisement, part of which describes the plot as "a moving and touching story about four young men together in a room for the purpose to serve God" (Fig. 13). A Mormon historical

Figure 13

See front cover

flair was added when this was cited as "a quote from the *LTM Expositor*." Still another artist tried to sketch what his group would be doing in the mission field—taking the message to the Navajo (Fig. 14).

Figure 14  
See front cover

Missionary life in the LTM obviously included a certain longing for family, home, and girlfriends. "Chicks are Heaven in '77," a group of 1975 elders wrote. Said one lonesome missionary of his forthcoming trip:

As I fly to Paris to begin my labor  
I'm even gonna miss my town of  
Taber  
Even with this, all would be well  
If only I was taking Lorrie Maxwell

Another had somewhat wider interests: "Elder C.K. Rudd slept under this tile and thought of Sharon, Barbara, Cindi, Pam, Julie, Christine, . . ." Thirty-three names in all, "plus all those others!" Still another elder listed only four female names, then asked, "What do I do if they all wait?"

One missionary simply wrote under his photograph, "Say hi to Mom for me," while another moaned, "A nice place to visit, but I miss my Camaro."

One of the most clever tiles (Fig. 15) included gentle digs at BYU cam-

Figure 15  
See front cover

pus, the girls, and Provo itself. "Hurry, Hurry, Hurry," the legend on the map says, "step right up and catch the ugly blue bus to the mall," and it gives the time and price. "To the mall and other neat stuff," the arrow points, and around the edges of the map is a guide to eating establishments. "The Golden Scone" is judged to be fair, but the "Cougareat" on BYU campus is labeled less than fair. No cafe is called excellent, though "Jerry's" is labeled "a real experience." Perhaps the most interesting part of the tile is the central warning against "serpents." In LTM



Figure 16

vernacular the word "serpent" meant, appropriately enough, the girls whom the missionaries constantly encountered while walking around campus and who, undoubtedly, planted distracting thoughts in their not-fully-disciplined minds. So the warning: "This is the Campus. Beware. It is full of serpents. They will try to talk to you. Resist! Train your mind to be lifted up in the highest thoughts of the LTM. Think of something else—contemplate salmon loaf. But if you want to have a real good time, call Peggy, 375-0012."

In this category of descriptions of life at the LTM there are those we call the "prison syndrome." On one tile, for example, the rogue's gallery was combined with a representation of a missionary in prison clothes, dragging a ball and chain (Fig. 16). On another, a group of Korea-bound elders depicted the LTM as a prison and recorded that they had been "sentenced" in June and "paroled" in August (Fig. 17). One missionary drew himself chained to the wall with the letters LTM on his t-shirt, indicating that he had been "booked" on Sep-

tember 17, 1969, and "pardoned" on November 19 (Fig. 18). Using the term

Figure 18  
See page 36

"the Rock," as synonymous to prison, another group expressed the mixed emotions of most by recording at the end of their stay, "GOD BLESS THIS ROCK."

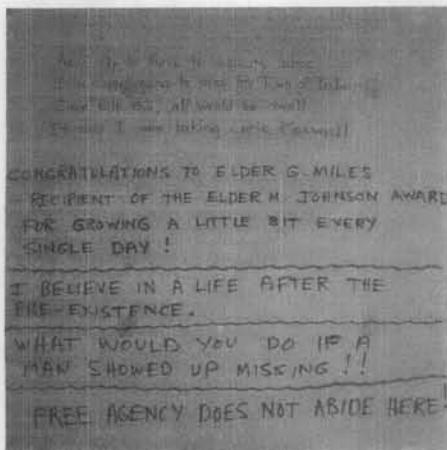
This category is perhaps best represented by a tile which combines artistic lettering, clever cartooning, and meaningful sentiment (Fig. 19). Here

Figure 19  
See page 36

we find inscribed the names of the four elders who have lived in the same room and fought the good fight together for two long months. He also pictured Snoopy (possibly repre-



Figure 20



senting the typical missionary), atop his doghouse saying, simply, "It is good to have a friend."

The final category of tiles we have called "advice to future missionaries." These include "up-and-at-em" type slogans such as, "Go For It;" "Give 'Em Heaven;" "If you cannot give the Lord your very best, who can you give it to?;" "Never get discouraged;" "The district that breaks the rules together, stays together;" "Start each day with prayer, a smile, trust in the Lord;" "Mind over Mattress, Get out;" "Work like \_\_\_\_\_ or go home;" "Salvation Sally says... eat em up;" "On behalf of us, enjoy your stay—it can be great!" Then there's the more tongue-in-cheek encouragement: "Lift up your spirits and be of good cheer. Give thanks to the Lord

Figure 21

See page 34

"you're not here all year" (Fig. 20). We also found a message or two of teasing



Figure 22

superiority: "Every time you rookies speak Spanish you subtract from the sum of human knowledge" (Fig. 21).

Some ribbed those who would go searching for ceiling tile graffiti: "What are you doing looking up here?" said one. "You won't find your chick up here—She's probably making whoopee with some other guy! How's that grab ya?" "Missionaries aren't allowed to lift ceiling tiles," warned one message. Another contained a clever caricature of a General Authority, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, saying, "Do you always rip down the ceiling when you stay at somebody else's place?—Put this back right now!" (Fig. 22).

Some missionaries felt the desire to explain the realities of life in the LTM to their hapless successors. One tile, for example, offered suggestions on how to "stay alive" (Fig. 23). "1. Watch out for the salmon loaf [this must have been a particularly disliked dish, for several scribes commented on it]; 2. Hide the screens in the closet [evidently the window screens could be removed]; 3. Smother the meat loaf with catsup; 4. Jump out of the shower when the toilet flushes [whenever the toilets flushed, the showers turned hot; a favorite way of initiating the rookies was to get them in the shower and then flush all the toilets at once]; 5. Become good friends with the executive secretary."

Figure 23

See page 34

Last in this category is the "last will and testament." Wrote one group, for

example, "We have found this empty board in our long search for paper for our last will and testament. We leave the unused space of all ceiling panels to the poor wayfaring missionaries who, in their desperate search for excitement, resort to the reading of ancient scripts. Signed, the deceased."

And so they wrote, scrawled, scribbled, recorded, chronicled, depicted, printed, scratched, pasted, painted their hopes, frustrations, needs, fears, ambitions, friendships, past, present, future—themselves—on the underside of the ceiling tiles in Knight-Mangum Hall. We have presented their record here simply as an enjoyable and interesting assessment of one side of the lives of the young men who once went through the missionary training program at Knight-Mangum Hall.

#### Notes

- Allen took primary responsibility for the photographic activity while Harris arranged interviews with several of the former missionaries, some of whose names are on the tiles and who had returned to BYU as students.
- Norton Mockridge, *The Scrawl of the Wild, What People Write on Walls—and Why*. (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), pp. 33-36.
- For a general text on the symbolism and use of language, see S.I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964). For a general social and psychological analysis of graffiti, see Ernest L. Able and Barbara E. Buckley, *The Handwriting on the Wall* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1977). See also the bibliography.
- J. Lindsay, *The Writing on the Wall: An Account of Pompeii in Its Last Days* (London: Mueller Company, 1960); H. Helen Tanzer, *The Common People of Pompeii* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1939); M. D'Avino, *The Women of Pompeii* (Naples: Loffredo Press, 1964); all as listed in Buckley, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, pp. 4, 21.
- E.A. Humphrey Fenn, "The Writing on the Wall," *History Today* 45 (June, 1969), pp. 419-23.
- "Subway Painting—Vandalism in the Guise of art," "U.S. News and World Report," June 24, 1974, p. 41.
- Alexander Frater, "Stick it on the Wall in Stockholm," *Holiday* 45 (1969), pp. 85-86.
- "Graffiti Helps Mental Patients," *Science Digest*, April 1974, pp. 47-48.
- Lee Sechrist and A. Kenneth Olson, "Graffiti in Four Types of Institutions of Higher Education," *Journal of Sex Research* 7 (February, 1971), pp. 62-71.
- Most of the following information is gleaned from the John B. Harris collection of interviews with returned missionaries, copies in the files of both writers.
- This schedule is a composite built on discussions with and journals of missionaries who went through the old LTM in KMH.

JAMES B. ALLEN is professor of history at BYU. He is co-author of the book *Story of the Latter-day Saints* and is former institute director and Asst. Church historian.

JOHN B. HARRIS is chairman of the English Dept. at BYU. He received his Ph.D. in English from Wayne State University.