

FOUR GLIMPSES: FRIENDS REMEMBER GENE ENGLAND

TEACHER'S FAVORITE

AT EAST HIGH SCHOOL IN SALT Lake City, we were four friends: Gene, Floyd, Chris, and Max. We competed for grades and achievement in geometry, English, and chemistry. Geometry class was tense. We feared being called to solve a theorem in front of the class, yet we each secretly wished for the chance to excel by doing so. English meant sitting spellbound as Glen Iverson read his favorite pieces of literature to us. We were grown men having stories read to us! Still, for each of us, Mr. Iverson's class helped us gain a lifelong appreciation for things well written. For Gene, it must have had even more impact. Chemistry was taught by a man who wore a shirt and tie every day yet was otherwise quite messy. Hence, the first five minutes of his class were devoted to our analyses (usually led by Gene) of what this man had eaten for breakfast—much of which was quite evident on his clothes. Still, as was often the case, Gene was this teacher's favorite, much to the chagrin of the others. Once when the other three had been absent on the same day, Max did the homework for all. Imagine our faces when we found Gene's grade was the lone "A" among three "Bs."

After school, we would rush to see who could get their homework done first. We would then meet in the street in front of Chris's home for football, two or three to a side.

Some Sunday mornings, we four would drive at first light to City Creek Canyon to test-fly Chris's latest aeronautical design for the free-flight gliders he had built in his basement. Chris would send it up, and we three would chase it—often bringing back just pieces.

Sunday nights were most often devoted to study groups which grew from the LDS Institute classes we attended. With our dates, we would come to meet with intellectually stimulating people whose view of scripture, Mormonism, and theology we would eagerly debate and dissect. A young lawyer, Adam Mickey Duncan, frequently led these groups. I think we were probably more interested in exercising and exhibiting our intellectual skills than in truly searching for meaning. However, through all our "intellectualizing," Gene consistently maintained that more good could be accomplished by remaining within the Mormon cultural and spiritual community than outside of it.

One debate with Gene took a question like this: "What should you do in an emergency that required your automobile if it would not start?" Max said lift up the hood, look for the problem, and attempt to repair it. But Gene said to place your hands on the hood of the car and bless it! Gene's attempt to teach the principles of unqualified faith was perhaps not as successful as he had hoped, for I have spent much of my professional life looking under the hood to see what could be fixed. Gene remained a man of the Spirit and of faith.



Gene in the East High School chemistry lab.

"We competed for grades and achievement in geometry, English, and chemistry."

After high school, we four left for the extremes of the professional compass. Floyd went into law; Chris to Annapolis, Oxford, and Harvard, and then to the corporate world; Max to medical school and academic surgery; and Gene to a life of unparalleled contributions to the intellect and spirituality of thousands. Farewell, dear friend. We have been greatly blessed to have known you.

—GARY JOHN "MAX" MAXWELL

LIEUTENANT ENGLAND

GENE'S TIME IN THE U. S. AIR Force is not well-known by most of his academic and Church associates. I was fortunate to know Gene in AFROTC and Institute of Religion classes at the University of Utah and then at George Air Force Base in Victorville, California, where Gene served as a meteorologist and I was an F-100 fighter pilot. Gene served

well in the Cold War culture of 1960–61, yet even at that early date, he was critical of potential U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia. We debated that issue—one of many on which he was years ahead of me in insight and judgment.

Gene was also a good weatherman. He used to say that anyone could forecast weather when there was no moisture in the air. Once, he forecast strong winds for 0745 the following morning. All local flying was cancelled because of Gene's forecast, but when the sun rose on a clear, serenely calm

Mojave Desert, the wing director of operations questioned the forecast. Gene was not on duty (he was teaching early morning seminary), and after considerable pressure, his boss overrode Gene's forecast. We pilots began taxiing at 0730. The first flights launched at 0740. High winds hit at 0747. Gene's forecast had been off by two minutes.

While at George AFB, Gene delivered a memorable funeral sermon for an LDS F-104 pilot killed in a midair collision with another F-104. Gene fasted and prayed for three days prior to delivering that inspiring



Lieutenant George Eugene England Jr., 1959

*Gene's commander overrode his forecast.
"High winds hit at 0747. Gene's forecast
had been off by two minutes."*

and hopeful sermon. The deceased pilot's wife and children emerged from the chapel with smiles on their faces—only to break down as the pilot's comrades flew their "missing man" salute to a deceased pilot, during which the number 2 plane pulled up into an absolutely vertical climb, and disappeared going straight up into the heavens. That symbolism was too powerful, even for me.

The family asked Gene to give the same sermon at the funeral services planned in Salt Lake City. The Air Force flew Gene to Hill Air Force Base in one of the four F-104s that would perform the "missing man" flyby from east to west over the Avenues in Salt Lake City. Shortly after landing and changing into dress uniform, Gene was whisked via staff car to the Salt Lake chapel, delivered his touching sermon, and then rushed back to Hill field. Meanwhile, the four F-104s completed their salute, and returned to Hill for fuel. They picked up Gene and returned to George AFB.

These early experiences clearly indicate the type of service and dedication Gene would give to everything that came later.

—TOM PARKES

"OUT-OF-THE-BOX" BISHOP

IN THE FALL OF 1982, ANTICIPATING the birth of our first child, my wife and I moved from a one-bedroom to a two-bedroom student apartment in Provo. What a great decision! Our new student ward, according to those living there, had one of the most wonderful bishops they had ever known—Eugene England.

As I came to know this great man, I quickly realized he was not an ordinary bishop. Bishop England really believed his first priority was to "minister," not "administer."

Soon after we moved into the ward, I was called as Gene's counselor. Gene not only taught me what it meant to truly serve Heavenly Father by serving others, but he also taught me that we could be creative and be ourselves in that service.

One of our greatest experiences as a ward took place in July 1983. As a true "out-of-the-box" thinker, Gene thought it would be a wonderful experience for the ward to hold sacrament meeting as the pioneers had done, in nature instead of our brick chapel. He suggested we take the ward up Provo Canyon and hold our meeting in the Sundance amphitheater.

The feedback from many ward members surprised me. They worried it was improper to hold sacrament meeting in the canyon—after all, the canyon was a place they were trying to teach their children to stay away from on the Sabbath! Bishop England responded that chapels are merely buildings for us to meet in and

that the pioneers and other early Saints worshiped in Heavenly Father's true chapel, nature.

While many worried about coming to the meeting that day, they left with feelings they had rarely, if ever, felt before. Our sacrament meeting was a testimony meeting, and member after member shared the conflicting feelings they had prior to our meeting and their change of heart as they truly caught the spirit of what our great bishop was trying to teach: "We don't live the Gospel only in our chapels. We should live the Gospel in every place and in every aspect of our lives." He taught these same principles in his book *Why the Church Is As True As the Gospel*.

Another experience I will never forget occurred on a cold, snowy Sunday morning. I and the rest of the bishopric were sitting in the office waiting for Bishop England to arrive for our regular meeting. Finally, about twenty-five minutes late, he walked in the door and very calmly stated: "Brethren, when I woke up, I had to make a decision about whether or not to go out into the cold, snowy weather to meet with you or stay in bed and snuggle with my beautiful wife. The choice was easy!"

Gene blessed the lives of all who knew him because he was not afraid to be exactly who he was. Gene England was a non-pretentious individual with more love for his fellow humans than many of us can even imagine.

Thank you, Gene, for touching my life.

—MARK RICHARDS



*Early bishopric meeting or stay in bed to snuggle with Charlotte?
One snowy morning, "the choice was easy!"*

HEAVENLY TENNIS

I ADMIRE THE GREAT GOOD GENE has done in our world. I can't drive up Provo Canyon without appreciating his good effects on our environment, can't go downtown without thinking the new library ought to bear his name, can't read an academic article, especially one which bears on my faith, without thinking Gene's essays had more positive impact on Mormon thought than those of anyone else I know. I admire the Professor England of pen, lectern, and pulpit, but I like Gene best where I knew him best—on the tennis court.

Gene was a passionate player, always competing with fierce intensity. I loved to see him loping to the net to smash overheads into our chests, lofting wicked lobs over our heads, and when we'd take even one slight

Gene's tennis style made me think C. S. Lewis might be right, that the most fundamental virtue is courage. I like Gene's brand of courage, the never-say-die, Downey, Idaho, kind, the don't-quit-no-matter-what Mormon pioneer variety.

step toward the middle, lashing his lethal backhand past us down the line. We used to kid him that he took advantage of his superior spiritual insight to hit the ball where we couldn't return it.

Gene's tennis style made me think C. S. Lewis might be right, that the most fundamental virtue is courage. I like Gene's brand of courage, the never-say-die, Downey, Idaho, kind, the don't-quit-no-matter-what Mormon pioneer variety. Many times playing doubles together, we'd be down, and Gene would say, "Time for our patented comeback," and we would actually pull the match out. Our winning percentage when we partnered, as I always liked to, was probably over ninety percent, because the man just wouldn't quit.

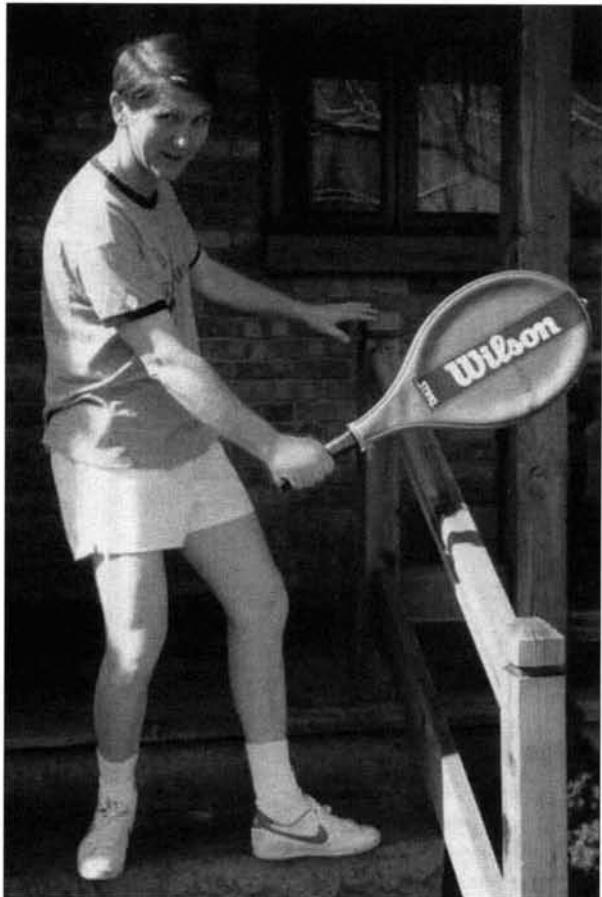
Gene played passionately, but I liked his passion all the more because it was compassionate. We love him like a brother because

he was always, even on the court, a brother to us. As fierce a player as I've played with, Gene was also superlatively kind. In our league, we play hard but none too well, and because some of us don't see very well, a whole match can come down to a single bad line call. Feelings can and often do run high; sometimes there's more debate than play, and the debate can get intense. Yet in more than a quarter century of tennis, averaging I'd guess a match a week, I never once saw Gene angry, never saw him contest a line call, never saw him upset. You'd have to know how much some of those games meant to us to know how much Gene's demeanor meant. In a situation where sometimes not much love was lost, Gene managed to love us more than tennis. And, believe me, he loved tennis.

I like the way Gene loves. He shared my tendency to want to keep on playing and would usually second my pleas for "just one more set." But some nights he'd say, "Got to go. Got to get some Ben & Jerry's ice cream and eat it with Charlotte." I would picture them eating the ice cream in bed together, and I liked the picture. The way Gene and Charlotte love is the way love ought to be.

Gene's love has always been so generous, so helpful. A few years back, I experienced serious professional pressures, compounded by financial difficulties. When I mentioned my frustrations during a tennis game—really just venting—Gene offered to lend me enough money to solve my problems. I couldn't accept the loan, but Gene's large-hearted offer—and it was, as always with him, a sincere offer—was a huge deal to me: not just more than my net worth, more than I then thought my soul was worth. I've been blessed with good friends over the years, but characteristically, typical of the down-to-earth helpfulness of his solid brand of loving, Gene England is my only \$50,000 friend.

Gene lent me more than he knew; my life



Gene was almost always ready for another set.

"We used to kid him that he took advantage of his superior spiritual insight to hit the ball where we couldn't return it."

is the better for what's left of Gene in it. I've always been sure there's a heaven, but I haven't always been sure I wanted to go there. Some of the people who seemed on their way to heaven didn't seem to be having much fun. Playing tennis with George Eugene England Jr. has expanded my tennis testimony. Having played with Gene, I'm absolutely sure there will be tennis in heaven.

These past months, the tennis courts have seemed awfully empty. I am profoundly pained to think of playing tennis the rest of my life without my great friend. Some of us played recently on the Pleasant Grove courts where Gene liked best to play, and when we'd hit a particularly vicious shot, we'd dedicate it as the "Gene England Memorial Tennis Shot." But without him, it really isn't the same. It will never be the same until Gene and I get to play together again: there's a huge hole in my life where Gene was. I would give more than he offered to lend me to see just one more time that great Gene England grin as he drives the ball by us down the line.

—STEVE WALKER