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The mission of The Sunstone Education Foundation is to sponsor open forums of Mormon thought and experience. Under the motto, "Faith Seeking Understanding," we examine and express the rich spiritual, intellectual, social, and artistic qualities of Mormon history and contemporary life. We encourage humanitarian service, honest inquiry, and responsible interchange of ideas that is respectful of all people and what they hold sacred.

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YEA, YEA  NAY, NAY

LIFELINE

THANK YOU FOR the January 2002 SUNSTONE and its many tender reflections on Gene England. I first became aware of Gene when he spoke on peacemaking at a Sunstone symposium in California during the Gulf War. He and others I met there hooked me on Sunstone, which has been a lifeline, helping me want to stay connected with the Church when I otherwise might have given up. It was wonderful to learn more about Gene, his family, and his many contributions. I had heard of "Food for Poland" before, but I was amazed to learn of its scale and outreach!

I am also excited about your new centerfold feature, the "Sunstone Gallery." Michael Schoenfeld's photograph was intriguing. I also applaud your selection of a subject. It was a treat to learn more about Ardean Watts. He is such a joy to sing with at the symposiums. Singing to his conducting and piano playing alone is worth the price of the conference! Keep up the good work.

STEVE SIMPSON
Mesa, Arizona

MENTORS, ARISE!

YOUR JANUARY 2002 issue notes Gene England's constant encouraging of student and other Mormon writers. I saw an example up close. Years ago, a friend won a prize in the Brown fiction contest Gene helped judge. When my friend received the award at the Sunstone symposium banquet, Gene was nearby and vigorously shaking hands, said, "Oh, if I'd known it was *your* story, I'd have voted for you more!" May more such mentors arise.

Bravo for your centerfold reflecting Ardean Watts's persona and personalities. What a lesson on how we see and focus on only certain segments of souls at a time. Please give us more marvelous mirrors!

LORNE WRIGHT
San Francisco, California

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

I JUST RECEIVED SUNSTONE's January 2002 issue, and the articles I have read so far have been very interesting and inspirational. Eugene England certainly deserves the attention which this issue gives to him. I have been enlightened and inspired by the many remembrances.

I also very much enjoyed Holly Welker's mission memoir, "Confronting the Powers." It made me glad that in 1951-53, when I served my mission, there wasn't intense pressure to baptize, at least not in the Central Atlantic States where I served. Such pressure would probably have made me as rebellious as it made Sister Welker. I have heard of the struggle that many missionaries have had as they tried to fulfill impossible goals and then felt unworthy when they couldn't. Being a high priest, it is difficult for me to relate to Welker's struggle with priesthood authority, but I laughed out loud when I read how she handled it.

DEAN THOMPSON
Roy, Utah

GROWING OUR OWN

KUDOS TO HOLLY WELKER for telling it the way it is for so many of us in her essay, "Confronting the Powers." Her essay is one of many articles in recent issues I found to be spiritually and intellectually stimulating. The "many of us" I refer to are those, like me, who are *sort of* in the Church by way of culture, family, friends, and occasional participation, but who have effectively fallen from the inner circles of our wards and stakes for standing up and telling leaders that some directives are "wrong and stupid," or who have been marginalized for being honest in our opinions about what does and does not make sense to us among Mormon teachings.

I believe we all find what is needed for our nourishment where we find it, and it can very well be in other places, traditions, or a smorgasbord of our own making. As Elbert Peck pointed out in his final editorial (SUNSTONE, Apr. 2001), "Mormonism doesn't work for every good person." And as Marybeth Raynes showed so well in her recent essay (SUNSTONE, Nov. 2001), we are all on our own spiritual and developmental paths. We all need our own symbols and understandings to get past temporal, literal understandings as we grow to gain some idea of what Eternal Reality is all about.

DAN PASCAVAGE
Chardon, Ohio

FOCUS, FOCUS

CONGRATULATIONS ON SUNSTONE's excellent coverage on the life and contributions of Eugene England. Gene was a

major positive force for creative writing, thinking, and action in the Mormon community. His work significantly broadened and improved Mormon literature.

Unfortunately, the article by Holly Welker, "Confronting the Powers," should not have been printed in its current form. The article lacks a central focus/purpose and betrays personal trust between her and her mission president.

Anger and disappointment at God and the Church are legitimate literary topics. However, authors should focus their emotions on a specific subject. In this case, the focus could have been the organizational structure of missions and whether it is unfair to sister missionaries. If that were the focus, Welker could have described the current structure and advocated changes based on her experience. Another focus could have been whether her missionary experience was so devastating that it caused her to lose her testimony of the gospel of Christ as defined by the Church. If that were the focus, she could have informed the reader why this event occurred. As published, the article wandered all over the emotional map without addressing a central theme. Moreover, her

conversations with her mission president were private and should not have been disclosed without his express permission. Please work harder to push writers to better focus their articles before publication and to respect private conversations.

G. KEVIN JONES
Salt Lake City, Utah

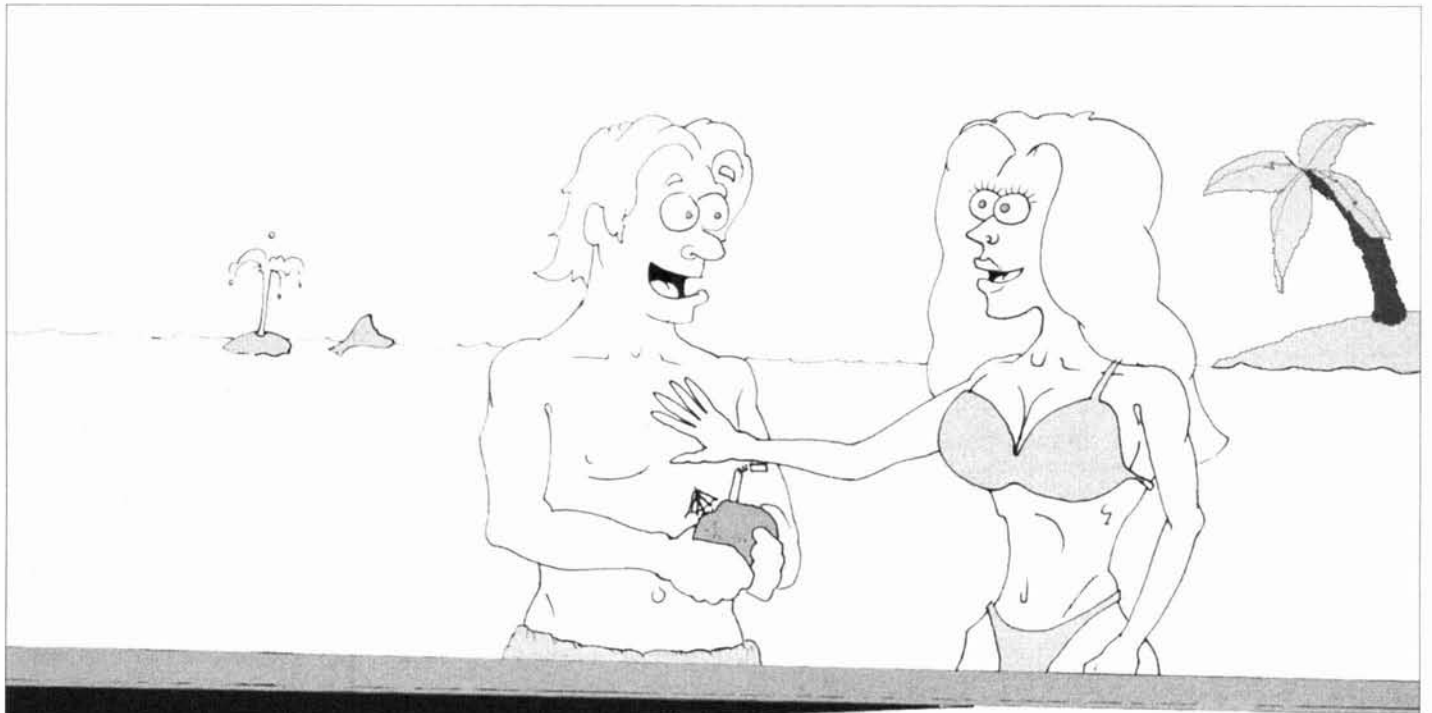
EDITOR'S RESPONSE: As we considered Welker's memoir for publication, we judged it to be wonderfully written, authentic, provocative, and certainly within the parameters of SUNSTONE's goal to publish reflections on "Mormon experience." As indicated in the essay, all names except the author's were changed, protecting the privacy of each person Welker quotes, not just that of her mission president.

NOT SO "CLEAR"

I AM SOMEONE who met Eugene England only through his writings but who regularly found inspiration and motivation in them. The tributes to him in the latest SUNSTONE have made me wish that I had known him well. I know I could have learned so much more from him.

I also appreciated the reflections on the terrorist attacks and Just War Theory by James P. Sterba and R. Dennis Potter. The editor's comment that Sterba's essay provides "an explanatory introduction [about] . . . how his concept of 'just war pacifism' might guide U.S. policy" about how to respond to the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks was appropriately gentle. And while I appreciate Sterba's introduction to his theories, I was disappointed to see how his application of them fell into rhetorical overstatement and illogic.

Sterba writes: "I do not believe two weeks of diplomatic activity were sufficient . . ."; he notes that "If there is any pattern to bin Laden's attacks, it is that . . ." (emphases added); he treats the World Trade Center attacks and the Pentagon attack as if they were one; and he relies upon the time frame between the U.S.S. Cole incident and the more recent attacks, ignoring the trend of decreasing times between attacks since 1998. All these suppositions make his conclusion that "there was no reason to think" that swift military action was required to prevent another attack a matter of mere preference and rhetoric. The proper conclusion, at least



S.S. NINEVEH

"Oh John, I'm so glad you decided to stay home with me rather than go on that silly mission!"

from the information he has provided, would be that it is insufficient, by itself, to conclude that swift military action was required. Yet Sterba concludes that nonbelligerent correctives “clearly have not been [exhausted first] in this case.” That conclusion does not follow from applying his theory to the evidence he provided. It follows only “if there is [in fact a] pattern to bin Laden’s attacks” and if that pattern requires a conclusion that there would be no more attacks for “almost a year.” It wholly ignores the question of whether the apparent coordination of the timing of attacks on the World Trade Center and on the Pentagon implies the possibility or likelihood of further coordinated attacks with no consistent or predictable time between them.

I appreciate Sterba’s efforts and his thought-provoking essay. I wish he had been able to avoid letting his personal preferences infect his logic and rhetoric to such an extent. He would be more persuasive to some of us by acknowledging that his conclusion is less than “clearly” required by his evidence. I, too, wish there had been more diplomatic efforts prior to the military action and a little less immediate response to the groundswell of American public opinion. I cannot say, however, that the military response was “clearly” wrong or that more diplomatic efforts were “clearly required” by the criteria of just war pacifism.

JIM RASMUSSEN
Albuquerque, New Mexico

JAMES P. STERBA’S RESPONSE: *When a person is criticized for falling into “rhetorical overstatement and illogic,” one would think that the critic would be challenging the main conclusions of the person’s argument. But this is not so here. Jim Rasmussen says nothing against 1) my opposition to the U.S.’s almost unconditional financial support of Israel (\$4 billion a year), 2) my opposition to U.S. support for the blockade against Iraq which causes the death of thousands of Iraqi children each month, and 3) my support for a quick transition to a nonbelligerent U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. What he does challenge is the way I support a claim I make along the way, namely, that two weeks of diplomatic activity was not sufficient to determine whether there was a nonbelligerent way of bringing the terrorist before a U.S. court, or better, before an international court (something we have yet to accomplish). Actually, Rasmussen himself wishes that there had been more diplomatic activity preceding the U.S.’s military response. What he challenges, however, is simply my claim that given the past history of bin Laden’s attacks, separated from each other by almost a year, our*

government had good reason to think that it had more time to pursue a nonbelligerent strategy. My mistake, according to Rasmussen, was failing to recognize that the attack on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon represented not just one but TWO attacks, which would mean that the average frequency of such attacks had gone up, no longer being almost a year. I guess I must plead guilty to thinking of the 11 September events as just one coordinated attack. But surely this is not an uncommon view. In fact, I think it is the view that most people have of those events, and I don’t see anything overstated or illogical about it, or about the conclusion to which I believe it lends support.

“FEELING” FOR HOME

I JUST FINISHED reading Diane Saderup Monson’s article, “The World Has Need of Willing . . . Tired People” (SUNSTONE, Nov. 2001). While I relate to a lifestyle that involves a great deal of reading, thinking, and reflection, and while I enjoyed most of her article, two assumptions near the end of the article did not ring true to my experience. First, she suggests that many people leave Mormonism because “it’s fairly easy to think one’s way out of the Church”; and second, she implies that it is dangerous to leave the Church. For me, it would actually take much more intellectualizing and thinking to stay in the Church. Although, I am an intellectual in the sense that I like the questions more than the answers, I did not “think” my way out of the Church so much as I “felt” my way out.

I felt my way out of the Church because I did not like the way it felt to sit in meeting after meeting having to hide part of myself. I did not like the way it felt to see my friends excommunicated for simply expressing their ideas in public forums. My gifts are gifts of radical spiritual, psychological, and intellectual exploration. It did not feel good to me to constantly have to stifle those gifts. Patriarchy feels bad. Silence feels bad. And when I express these feelings to active Mormons, they are the ones who try to intellectualize them away.

As for the danger of leaving the Church, I agree that if you have nothing to replace it with, it can be dangerous. But Mormons are not the only thriving religious community in existence. I recently joined a congregation in which I am free to explore any spiritual paths that I find compelling—even Mormon ones, if I like. I’ve always said the best thing about the Church is the people, but they do not have a corner on spiritual community. In fact, if you don’t feel that Mormonism is your best

fit, it is possible to find other thriving spiritual communities where you may feel more at home.

DEBORAH ROSSITER
Issaquah, Washington

THE REST OF THE STORY?

I LOVED SCOTT KENNEY’S recent article, “Before the Beard: the Trials of the Young Joseph F. Smith,” (SUNSTONE, Nov. 2001) but I was disappointed that it was presented out of context of President Smith’s “after the beard” life. I know that Kenney will note that this was beyond the scope of his article, which was already long, but I do think some readers will miss the point without it. Those who are not familiar with President Smith’s later writings may even conclude that he had no business being a Church leader in the first place. My question is, does the possibility that some may jump to this conclusion make this article a cheap shot?

Kenney’s portrait of the youthful Smith as a troubled young man with a serious anger management problem was one that many of us can relate to. While the article was empathetic in portraying Joseph F.’s good intentions and personal struggles under very trying circumstances, including a very challenging wife, Kenney leaves his readers with two conclusions: first, that Smith justified “outrageous behavior and language on the grounds that he was overcome with rage”; or second, that as a young man and new apostle, he never managed to control “the fires of rage in his heart.” Are these conclusions simultaneously both true and misleading?

There is no doubt that the young Joseph F. was a product of his society—frontier Mormonism still heavily influenced by misogynistic, nineteenth-century American values. By all accounts, what Kenney terms “outrageous behavior and language” was fairly commonplace in those days. If Smith could rise above his upbringing and anger management problem, and renounce the wicked traditions which had trapped him (as the Anti-Nephi-Lehies renounced their own violent ways), he could be an effective leader and powerful example to those similarly afflicted. I have been under the impression that later in life, he did. That is why Kenney’s conclusion is misleading—it leaves out the rest of the story, which gives the first part its true meaning.

The rest of the Smith story seems quite edifying. Some of his children wrote that he never became angry or controlling and never lifted an unkind hand to them. If this is true, it means Smith eventually grew line upon

