

The second half of Elbert Peck's Sunstone tenure featured many exhilarating moments and successes, but also editorial, ecclesiastical, intra-organizational, and personal battles that ultimately proved too exhausting.

“ONLY OUR HEARTS KNOW”—PART 2

SUNSTONE DURING THE ELBERT PECK YEARS, 1993–2001

By Gary James Bergera

The examined religious life is a life of . . . failed but fruitful attempts to capture in words and images that elusive but real something only our hearts know.

—Elbert Eugene Peck

FOLLOWING THE DEPARTURE OF PUBLISHER LINDA Jean Stephenson the month before, the 7 January 1993 decision of Sunstone trustees to reunite the positions of publisher and editor in one person—Elbert Peck—couldn't have appeared more logical. After almost seven years, Elbert was intimately familiar with the operations of both foundation and magazine. Indeed, many thought he had *become* Sunstone, much like his mentor Peggy Fletcher had. By combining the positions, the board would no longer have to worry about miscommunication or bruised feelings between co-executive directors. Duplication of effort would be minimized, continuity in administrative style, assured. However, as Elbert recalls for this history, “the biggest overriding reason for my agreeing to be the new publisher was that Sunstone was broke and deeply in debt. We couldn't afford to hire anyone else to fill that role, and I didn't want Sunstone to fold. I was more seasoned, too, and believed I could do it. Part of me was really excited, but that very quickly diminished. I honestly didn't see myself doing it forever, maybe a couple of years, but I didn't know exactly how the scenario would play out.”¹

On the eve of his thirty-eighth birthday, Elbert knew the foundation's finances had fallen into disarray and, at the same board meeting during which his appointment was decided, reported that “much of last year's employee withholding taxes were not paid” and that the most recent issue of the magazine had been “at press for two months [and] needs to be paid for

and mailed.” In spite of a 53 percent increase in donations from 1991 to 1992, income from subscriptions had fallen by 9 percent, and total expenses had exceeded revenues by 8 percent. Past due payables (including \$27,000 to the IRS and Utah State Tax Commission in back taxes and penalties) totaled more than \$55,000. In fact, the foundation's financial situation was similar to, if not more precarious than, the one Daniel Rector had inherited seven years earlier.²

Of his first few months as executive director, Elbert notes: “In January [1993], we discovered Sunstone had not paid the Hilton Hotel bill for the previous summer [symposium], and the Hilton insisted it be paid or they would cancel the upcoming summer symposium reservation, and there were no other hotels available. They also required that the upcoming symposium be paid in full a month before the conference. So I had to pay for two annual symposiums in a half year—before any symposium revenues came in. On top of that, the IRS required a tight payment plan for the previous year's bill and that we keep up with current tax withholdings—again, paying two years in one. Plus . . . there was the paying of printers and many other creditors and payroll. It was difficult, and I only made it through using Sunstone's corporate American Express card (both for the hotel and the IRS), which gave me a month's float that often was \$20,000, and by not paying myself for more than two months. Ultimately, I missed the AMEX payment for two months, and the card was canceled, and my personal credit ruined, but not until the symposium was guaranteed.”³

As Elbert contemplated his immediate future, he knew Sunstone was projected that year to incur about \$260,000 in expenses but bring in only about \$230,000 in revenues (including \$100,000 in donations), for a shortfall of about \$30,000. (This amount didn't include accumulated debt.) Facing the challenge, he tried to identify ways to “make a pivotal difference in the organization,” while establishing a system of “substantial” rewards “so that they are true incentives—something worth the extra work to obtain them.” He wanted

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to produce eight issues of the magazine a year (any more, he felt, would require more staff), and suggested to the board that as an incentive he earn, in addition to his annual salary, \$500 per issue for the first five issues, then \$1,000 per issue for the next three. Such a program, he believed, would tie future raises to improved performance. "In all probability," he told trustees, "the 7th and 8th issues won't occur, but having their lucrative possibility makes me push for them and, at the least, puts us in a better position to start off the next year." For each new subscriber, he proposed earning an additional \$1; for each successful regional symposium, \$300; for each successful regional lecture, \$100; \$500 if the Salt Lake symposium broke even, \$1,000 if it netted more than \$10,000. One obvious drawback to such a system of rewards was, of course, that it reinforced the idea of Sunstone as a one-person operation, not as a joint endeavor by a group of dedicated staff. Consequently, some of Elbert's recommendations were adopted, some tabled, and others rejected.

Six months into his first year, Elbert had succeeded in reducing long-term indebtedness by about \$10,000. By the end of his first year, he even began sounding a little upbeat. "We are broke," he told trustees on 21 April 1994. "However, if you took a snapshot . . . today compared to a year ago, we are in great shape. However, cash flow is tight, bills are stacking up, and payroll is hard to meet. At the beginning of the year, our liabilities had been significantly reduced, but it was accomplished in part with the year-end donations, and we haven't had that money to carry us through the first part of the year. Right now, our liabilities total around \$25,000. Monies from the most recent renewal letter and from a selected fundraising letter are coming in now. In May, we'll also get . . . \$20,000 that will liquidate many of our debts. Come the end of May, we'll start getting in-advance symposium registrations. But it will be a tight year." Elbert's optimism proved premature. According to year-end figures, expenses exceeded revenues by nearly \$43,000, an annual operating deficit of 17 percent, Sunstone's worst financial year ever.

By February 1995, the financial situation seemed to be improving, and Elbert told the board the foundation "is broke, as usual, but not as poor." While donations rose more than 10 percent that year, income from both subscriptions and symposium registrations fell. Fortunately, magazine- and symposium-related expenses dropped 50 percent and 25 percent, respectively, and payroll grew by only 8 percent. Thus thanks to a 16-percent savings in expenditures (revenues remained constant) and an unexpectedly large donation at Christmastime that paid many bills, 1995 ended with a surplus, the first time in six years. Elbert also continued professionalizing operations by instituting paid holidays, a vacation policy, and health insurance, with the amount of leave and insurance benefits increasing with seniority.⁴

A major accomplishment in 1996 was Sunstone's move from the Carpenter Building on Rio Grande Street to a remodeled old house on Third West (Sunstone's present location). Rent in the new location was similar to what

Sunstone had been paying, but utility costs rose. Still, the new location had more office and storage space and was, some felt, in a better neighborhood. The November 1996 move was accompanied by a fairly successful fundraising appeal to "please help Sunstone move into a new *financial* house, too." The year ended optimistically.

When 1997's Salt Lake symposium lost about \$15,000, year-end indebtedness rose slightly to \$3,000. Elbert's goal, according to minutes of the 1 October 1997 trustees meeting, was to greet that December "debt-free so that for the first time ever, end-of-year giving campaign monies go to next year's expenses and not previous year's debts." Elbert also reprised his earlier suggestions about incentive bonuses rather than an annual raise. "[Elbert] felt that because he is overworked, it is easy to be distracted by immediate concerns (phone calls, visits, etc.) and keep putting off larger deadlineless projects that make a difference, and incentives would help ensure that any extra compensation [was tied to] extra results." With the help of trustee Glen Lambert, Elbert proposed receiving \$500 for the first five issues of the magazine per year, then \$1,000 for each additional issue; \$500 upon completion of the Salt Lake symposium and \$250 following each regional symposium; fifty cents for each new subscriber; \$1,000 "to be paid after 31 January if foundation finances are then better than they were at that point the previous year"; and a "one-time bonus of \$250 for developing a strategic plan for the survival and success of Sunstone." The drawbacks of the personal incentive approach were still apparent, however, and the board eventually decided to simplify Elbert's proposal. Three months later, on 22 January 1998, trustees awarded him "a \$4,000-a-year raise to a salary of \$44,000 (retroactive to 1 January 1998)," as well as a "\$1,000 bonus because finances of the Foundation at the board

PRINCIPAL EXPENSES, 1993–2002*

Year	Magazine	Symposiums	Payroll**	Payroll %
1993***				
1994	\$59,747	\$68,760	\$104,111****	35%
1995	\$29,387	\$51,571	\$113,241****	46%
1996	\$52,237	\$39,650	\$100,444	34%
1997	\$68,508	\$49,268	\$112,703	34%
1998	\$40,440	\$38,692	\$118,933	40%
1999	\$50,865	\$37,893	\$113,389	34%
2000	\$46,173	\$27,852	\$128,043	38%
2001	\$40,519	\$61,913	\$164,806	44%
2002	\$47,370	\$63,230	\$160,054	47%

*The data for 1995-2002 were supplied by William Stanford.

**Includes salaries, wages, and taxes. Magazine-related expenses are counted as a cost of sales, not as a general expenditure.

***According to Elbert Peck, a year-end "Statement of Operations" was not prepared for 1993.

****Includes some IRS and Utah state payroll-related penalties (including interest).

meeting are better (considerably) than a year ago.” Indeed, trustees were pleased to hear that by the end of the month, the foundation would have \$20,000 in the bank.

Despite 1998’s initial optimism, long-term fiscal stability still proved elusive. In fact, over the next several years, as Elbert’s energies slowly waned, Sunstone’s finances gradually worsened. For example, following the modest gains and losses of 1995 through 1999, 2000 witnessed the largest operating deficit in seven years (17 percent), followed by a 6 percent deficit the next year.⁵ From 1998 through 2001, donations increased by 75 percent (accounting for nearly 60 percent of all income), symposium receipts more than doubled, but income from subscriptions fell by 45 percent. On the other hand, symposium-related expenses grew by 60 percent and payroll, by 24 percent.⁶

“SOMETHING SPECULATIVE, FAITH-AFFIRMING,
‘CONSERVATIVE,’ AND ‘LIBERAL’
Ground-breaking articles; BYU’s president fights back

FROM ELBERT’S FIRST issue as editor and publisher in March 1993 to his resignation eight years later, the magazine deviated little from the direction and tone of previous issues. This was due to Elbert’s commitment to excellence and firm guidance, aided greatly by the efforts of hard-working staff such as Devery Anderson, Greg Campbell, Jane England, Martha Dickey Esplin, Victor Gener, Eric Lynn Jones, Brian Kagel, Gregory A. Kemp, Kim Kolan, Mark J. Malcolm, Margery Mullin, Carol B. Quist, Bryan Waterman, and Cherie Woodworth.⁷ “Elbert was always fun in the office,” remembers former associate editor Bryan Waterman, “loud music, popcorn, Coke runs (he kept huge numbers of quarters all over the office), pineapple and jalapeno pizza from Dominos. We had regular staff planning meetings that were fun. Elbert was always coming up with prizes for staff who could think of the best way to do some new thing he wanted to try or come up with a name for some new section of the magazine. But the office was still a pretty business-like place.”⁸

“We try to design each issue,” Elbert’s March-April 1999 editorial explains, “so that in it there is something speculative and something faith-affirming, some faith journey and some scholarly analysis, and something ‘conservative’ and something ‘liberal.’ Regardless of where they stand, I hope every reader finds both comfort and unsettlement in each issue.” Representative contributions from these years include Bruce W. Jorgensen and Richard H. Cracroft debating Mormon literature, William J. Hamblin and David P. Wright on the historicity of scripture, D. Michael Quinn’s memoir of the Church’s “baseball baptisms,” Levi Peterson on the “Art of Dissent,” Richard D. Poll on being a “Liahona Latter-day Saint,” Steve Benson’s remembrance of his grandfather Ezra Taft Benson, Peggy Fletcher Stack’s “Tales of a True Believer,” Wayne C. Booth on “Mormonism and the Seven Deadly Sins,” Armand L. Mauss on “Required Obedience to Priesthood Leaders,” David C. Knowlton on “Intellectual Politics and the Unspeakable in Mormonism,” Rod Decker on the “Church and Utah Politics,” Eugene England on “Becoming a World Religion,” Carrie A. Miles on “Polygamy and the Economics of Salvation,” Bryan Waterman on “Policing ‘The Lord’s University,’” Todd Compton’s “Thoughts on the Possibility of an Open Temple,” Jana K. Riess on “The Cultural Engagements of Contemporary Mormon Kitsch,” and Jan Shipp’s “Surveying the Mormon Image, 1960–2001.”⁹

However, no article during the 1990s generated as much publicity as September 1996’s “‘Clipped and Controlled’: A Contemporary Look at BYU.”¹⁰ The

PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF INCOME, 1993–2002*
Percent of Total (not Net) Income in Parentheses

Year	Donations	Subscriptions	Symposium Receipts**
1993***			
1994	\$128,604 (40%)	\$83,963 (26%) \$12,689 new \$71,273 renewal	\$63,339 (20%)
1995	\$142,171 (56%)	\$49,791 (20%) \$7,103 new \$42,688 renewal	\$46,985 (19%)
1996	\$172,659 (55%)	\$75,312 (24%) \$9,735 new \$65,577 renewal	\$31,330 (10%)
1997	\$187,606 (57%)	\$47,724 (15%) \$7,103 new \$40,621 renewal	\$28,799 (9%)
1998	\$116,138 (39%)	\$47,845 (16%) \$8,081 new \$39,764 renewal	\$29,175 (10%)
1999	\$208,008 (62%)	\$74,205 (22%) \$12,526 new \$61,679 renewal	\$31,470 (9%)
2000	\$163,474 (57%)	\$31,377 (11%) \$5,140 new \$26,236 renewal	\$34,693 (12%)
2001	\$204,036 (58%)	\$32,789 (9%) \$5,576 new \$27,213 renewal	\$71,863 (20%)
2002	\$211,246 (59%)	\$62,945 (18%) \$8,242 new \$54,702 renewal	\$68,823 (19%)

*The data for 1995–2002 were provided by William Stanford.

**Includes registration, tables, advertising, and other.

***According to Elbert Peck, a year-end “Statement of Operations” was not prepared for 1993.

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BIRTHDAY HOOPLA—A SUNSTONE TRADITION UNDER ELBERT PECK

Back row, (L to R): Mark Malcolm, Marti Esplin, Greg Kemp, Greg Campbell, Bryan Waterman, Carol Quist; front row: Elbert Peck, Victor Gener, Brian Kagel

anonymous writer—or writers, some speculated—chronicled a series of recent conflicts at the LDS-owned university between academic freedom and religious imperatives (a “litany of despair,” according to its author). The author was clearly an advocate for several underdog but high-profile faculty members, and the writer’s most sensational claim, and the section of the article most frequently highlighted in the media, was that BYU’s new president (and member of the First Quorum of the Seventy), Merrill J. Bateman, had lifted portions of his inaugural address from the writings of Gertrude Himmelfarb, a well-known conservative critic of American higher education. Bateman eventually responded by downplaying the incident, apologizing for the inadvertent omission of quotation marks, condemning the unidentified author for “hiding behind the cloak of anonymity,” and castigating SUNSTONE for publishing an article “denigrating members of the Twelve and advocating the transformation of BYU into a secular university.”¹¹

“CONDUCT UNBECOMING A
MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD HOLDER”

On trial for hosting a “forum where people feel free to say things with which the General Authorities disagree. . . .”

AS RECOUNTED IN Part I of this history, following the magazine’s reporting on the aftermath of the 1990 changes to the temple ceremony—which included reporting on the disciplining of members who had spoken positively in the media about the changes—Daniel Rector and Elbert had had their temple recommends confiscated for, ostensibly, violating the temple oath of secrecy. But if Elbert’s friends assumed that official Church misgivings regarding his relationship to Sunstone had since dissipated, they were mistaken. In late 1996, after nearly four years as foundation director, he was asked by his new stake president to meet. This

leader, who’d inherited Elbert’s case from his predecessor, wondered if Elbert’s continuing involvement with Sunstone constituted *prima facie* evidence of disloyalty to the Church. Specifically, he feared Elbert had “aided and abetted others in (1) criticizing the Church and its leaders, (2) challenging Church doctrine, and (3) undermining the faith of members.” After a series of meetings over the next several months, he decided to formally charge Elbert with “conduct unbecoming a Melchizedek priesthood holder.” “To hold me accountable for what happens in the symposium isn’t right,” Elbert protested in an email to a friend in early April 1997. “Sunstone’s policy calls for open discussion, and the truth is that I spend my time recruiting faithful, Spirit-filled moderates for the symposium and magazine.”

Word of Elbert’s impending disciplinary council traveled quickly. Elbert’s supporters called for special fasts, wrote letters to Church headquarters, planned vigils and prayer services, and even arranged private meetings with sympathetic General Authorities. “Please see how impoverished, uncreative, and rigid the Church is becoming by this gradual but steady tightening of its fist upon its members,” one supporter wrote to Church president Gordon B. Hinckley. “Recently I talked to a bishop,” another friend observed, “and said, ‘You’ve pointed out all of the avenues that aren’t legitimate—letters, vigils, demonstrations, ads in the newspaper. Well, what are the legitimate avenues of dissent and protest? Tell me what I can use!’ He had to scratch his head and admit that he didn’t know.” For Elbert, such expressions of support were overwhelming. “I almost feel like Jimmy Stewart at the end of *It’s a Wonderful Life!*,” he wrote on 10 April in an email. “Ironic, isn’t it, that such a sad time can be so full of love and goodness, too.”

Then, four days later, Elbert’s stake president changed his mind, concluding instead to keep Elbert on “informal probation” and to meet with him monthly during the forthcoming

year. Elated, Elbert's supporters were convinced that the stake president had been encouraged by more charitable superiors to soften his approach. Elbert, too, was pleased with the change of heart, hoping the Church now saw the injustice in attacking him for other people's words and actions.

Throughout the remainder of 1997 and into 1998, Elbert's relations with his stake president reached a kind of *détente cordiale*. (Elbert alluded to these meetings in an editorial in the July 1997 issue of the magazine.) But on 25 November 1998, a new stake president (who'd served as first counselor to the previous president) met with Elbert for seven hours. Clearly, the matter had not been resolved. After reading aloud a lengthy document he'd prepared outlining his concerns, the stake president told Elbert he was being charged with "apostasy" and that a Church court would convene the next month. "He made it clear . . .," Elbert wrote to a friend, "the charge relates specifically and exclusively to the symposium: it provides a forum where people feel free to say things—pro-gay, pro-feminist, pro-intellectual things—with which the General Authorities disagree, and that's not allowed."

Again, friends rallied. "As to the prayer service you want to organize," Elbert told a supporter, "at the moment, I don't want to hear more about power and unrighteous dominion and all that; I feel a spiritual need to be fed communal bread and wine with friends." The next day he continued, "I am certainly bemused by the current scene, and I think it is wrong, and sometimes my critical assessment leads to anger or at least frustration, but generally I have a surprising (to me) inner calmness and even love for my opponents, or at least good will . . . Goodness is never easy, and for the intellectually self aware, self deception is a big danger. . . . Becoming a symbol, a hero, a saint, is not good for most souls, and I suspect I won't pass the test. I don't want to be refined by this crucible."

Then, less than two weeks after their marathon meeting, the stake president telephoned Elbert and, like his predecessor, said he'd decided to postpone the court. He wanted to continue meeting monthly but gave no reason for the change. As for his own interpretation, Elbert was loathe to speculate, fearing if his stake president's superiors *had* intervened, and it became widely known, they'd be more reluctant to get involved in helping to stop any future disciplinary action.

In an attempt to defuse the volatile situation, Sunstone's trustees decided in January 1999 to relieve Elbert of direct accountability for the activities of the foundation. "The charges," Elbert recalled, had been "against me because I had final responsibility as a board member. Any board member in his [that stake president's] stake would have the same charges, he said." Hence, trustees suspended Elbert as a voting member of the board and placed oversight of the symposium in the hands of a committee of trustees or others appointed by them. Some also suggested they start scrutinizing more closely each proposed issue's contents and cover art. More than a few even wondered aloud: if the reprieve had not come, could Sunstone afford to have an excommunicated Mormon as the foundation's executive director? Others, loathe to consider such a

question at this point, vowed "to do everything in our power not to have that happen."

Over the next several months, Elbert and his stake president's discussions ranged from defending intellectual independence to calling for obedience. Finally, in late spring 1999, the president scheduled yet another disciplinary council and hinted that Elbert would probably be excommunicated. The following July, however, he canceled the court but kept Elbert on informal probation. Reliable reports held that one or more of the stake president's highest file leaders—convinced (by the urging of a Sunstone board member) that a court was unwarranted and that no good could come from the ensuing public controversy—had recommended the stake president reconsider his actions.

JUST HOW "OPEN" A FORUM DO WE MEAN? *The struggle to define Sunstone's role and leadership heats up*

IN THE LATE 1990s, prompted in large measure by the Church's reaction to the foundation's activities and near-disciplining of Elbert, several of the newer Sunstone trustees began to take a more activist role in the foundation's affairs—especially compared to the board's previously limited involvement.¹² Following the appointment of Stan Christensen, a graduate of the Harvard Business School and, at the time, an independent specialist in conflict resolution, as board chair in mid-1997, trustees broke with their hands-off tradition and the next year sent letters to all symposium participants asking that their presentations "respect the gospel and not . . . criticize Church leaders." "[W]e need to complement the Church's mission," the thirty-four-year-old Christensen explained in the magazine's December 1997 issue, "and be part of that community, in contrast to being seen as detractors or outsiders." He now adds: "The perception sometimes is that Sunstone is a group of angry, marginalized, radical feminists or intellectuals. But the reality is that Sunstone is fairly mainstream." He continues: "I think [Sunstone does] things differently today as a result of the statement on symposia. . . . Is that just reactionary behavior? I think it's just good management." As a direct consequence of this new activism and attempt to have Sunstone appear less provocative, the board prohibited all discussion of the LDS temple at 1999's annual symposium and asked some participants to modify portions of their presentations. At least one longtime supporter withdrew rather than comply.¹³

Spearheaded by Christensen, the board's attempts to monitor more closely the magazine and the symposium represented a controversial approach to, as they saw it, improving Sunstone's image with the institutional Church. Observes former trustee Kathy Wilson for this history, "Stan felt that at that point in Sunstone's history, given all the negative feedback from the Church, we needed to make an effort to level the playing field. He did what he thought Sunstone needed to do to gain some credibility in the Mormon community." Some boosters applauded the much-needed restatement of essential loyalty to the Church; others feared that Sunstone's role as a

truly independent forum for thought, discussion, and debate would erode completely if too many compromises were made. For these supporters, Stan and the board came to symbolize Sunstone's drift toward a more conservative approach to Mormon intellectualism. Indeed, though he insists such was not his intention, Stan's assertions in the twenty-fifth anniversary issue that the magazine is a way to "get in closer touch with the gospel," seems to hint that some speakers and views would no longer be welcome "in [Sunstone's] tent of fellowship."¹⁴

For those who agreed with this attempt to refocus Sunstone's energies, the shift simplified what has always been a difficult balancing act for the organization. "Effectively negotiating these tensions," Stan confides in the anniversary issue, "has been one of my greatest challenges in playing a leadership role in this community." While holding out the promise of an open forum, Stan and the trustees hoped to broaden the foundation's core constituency. "Sunstone is a part of the Mormon community," Stan explained, "and the Church leadership is an important part of that community." Eventually, the board came together in acknowledging all sides of this tension in a revamped 1999 mission statement drafted by Eugene England: "The mission of the Sunstone 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."

In addition to the board's concerns, Elbert, too, increasingly agonized over controversial but important subjects to the contemporary Church such as feminism and homosexuality. "I don't think you avoid topics," he told former staffers Brian Kagel and Bryan Waterman during their interview with him at 1999's Salt Lake symposium. "That's censorship. How you host them so as to allow the individual authentic voice, but also so that people don't presume that the magazine is advocating a position, is essential to the longevity of the institution. And that's a hard line to walk. You get killed even when you try." The previous month, Elbert had told the Associated Press, "I would quit Sunstone if we started censoring topics."

"Sunstone is a reflective forum," Elbert continued to Waterman and Kagel, "and to the extent that, for example, homosexuality becomes an issue . . . discussed in the larger American society, you're going to see people wanting to understand that within their Mormon context, and so there'll be proposals for that at the symposium. . . . Actually, with the gay thing," he elaborated, "I'm pretty sensitive about it. Being gay myself, I don't want to be seen as riding that hobby horse. So I don't go out of my way to organize gay sessions. I wel-

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STAN CHRISTENSEN

come good ones that come in, and we accept them. But that's one we're sensitive about, knowing that we're going to allow the discussion but we're not going to let Sunstone be taken over in terms of its reputation because that would help kill the organization." Although he had previously hinted at his sexual orientation in some editorials, Elbert's public self-identification as a gay man represented the next logical step in his own faith journey. At the same time, he knew that acknowledging his homosexuality could be used against both him and Sunstone. Regardless of the risks, he believed that his personal commitment to honesty and integrity demanded the disclosure.

"When I talk about Sunstone being an open forum," Elbert added at 2000's Salt Lake symposium, "I mean that it is a place where any responsible, thoughtful idea can be expressed and the expression of it will not be rejected because of the content or the subject of the idea Inherent in that process is a consideration of who the speakers are, their credentials, if they have something to say, and if it is said thoughtfully and intelligently. Then we take the standards of scholarship in the different [academic] disciplines and try to apply them and hold people to standards. . . . Another standard [for the speaker or writer] that is important is [to be] respectful of any differing position from their own and of any other individuals. . . . [W]e look at things and accept or reject them on their standard of thought . . . not on their content. . . . That means then that Sunstone is not the advocate of any position except the advocate of being an open forum, which is a hard thing to maintain." He continues: "Ideally, in an open forum, we want everyone, all positions, in the tent, talking. People will only come to the festival of discussion if they know they will be treated with respect, if they know that their ideas will be listened to intelligently and responded to with good will and thoughtfulness."

Elbert's attempts at differentiating between "thought" and "content," governed by his own (and his board's) sense of appropriateness, did not go uncriticized, especially by those who felt his quest for scholarly standards, respect, and dignity masked his (or others') own prejudices. For example, prior to

2000's annual Salt Lake symposium, feminist writer Maxine Hanks proposed two presentations, including one for a paper she had delivered earlier that year at Sunstone's California symposium. Devery Anderson, Sunstone's Salt Lake symposium coordinator, accepted both proposals in early June only to discover in late July that Elbert had decided to reject the papers for, what he termed, "bad scholarship," "poor writing," "bad feminism," and "biased, emotional work." After repeated efforts to satisfy Elbert's concerns, Devery told Maxine Elbert might respond more favorably if she provided positive references from qualified scholars. Elbert was soon deluged by e-mails from Maxine's defenders, and eventually more than a dozen people signed a formal letter to Sunstone's board complaining of Elbert's actions. Two weeks later, Elbert reversed his decision, blaming the entire incident on "Sunstone's poor communication and logistical incompetence."

Although relieved at the outcome, Maxine was not persuaded by Elbert's explanation. "No matter how smoothly you make slander sound like plausible reason for rejecting my proposals," she wrote to him, "it's been very clear in every conversation I have had with you about my work that your intent is to discourage, degrade, and humiliate me." Elbert later defended his original decision, "It was bad scholarship. Even by the standards of 'qualitative research'—it was dramatically unrepresentative in its examples."

Responding to the above episode as well as to their own concerns about Elbert's management of the foundation, two other Sunstone supporters and occasional volunteers, Hugo Olaiz and John-Charles Duffy, circulated (with Elbert's knowledge) at the 2002 Salt Lake symposium a petition of complaint addressed to Sunstone's board. They were particularly concerned about what they called Elbert's "editorial single-handedness": "The Editor alone makes all decisions concerning acceptance or rejection of submissions for both the magazine and the Symposium. This single-handedness results in bias, interpersonal conflicts, and the perception that the Editor makes arbitrary decisions." They asked that the board better manage the magazine and symposium, and especially that "decisions concerning acceptance or rejection of papers submitted for publication in the magazine be made by the Editor along with at least two Associate Editors, who will independently review all submissions and have equal vote in the decisions. We also request that all decisions concerning Symposium submissions be made by a Committee composed of at least three members endowed with equal decision-making power. Last but not least, we request that the Associate Editors and the members of the Symposium Committee be appointed by the Board of Trustees, not the Editor." Before the petition could be presented to the board, two separate copies, each containing about twelve signatures, were stolen. Three trustees subsequently met with Olaiz and Duffy, but the latter were "left with a sense of lack of resolution." Shortly after the meeting, Olaiz recounted to supporters: "I believe they [the board] are well-intentioned and, possibly, they are going to make changes for the best. At least they are aware of the problems, and they say they want to help solve them."

"TOO MANY HATS FOR TOO MANY YEARS"

*After fifteen years of remarkable leadership,
a weary Elbert steps down*

AS EARLY AS December 1995, Elbert had publicly broached the possibility of his eventual departure from Sunstone. "The task of being editor and publisher has been intoxicatingly fun," he wrote in celebration of the 100th issue of the magazine, "yet from juggling too many balls—especially the financial ones—I am weary. I have wondered whether it's time for me to leave the Sunstone roller coaster for a calmer ride. Perhaps I will, someday, but in doing this review [of lessons learned during the past ten years], I have remembered how much I love facilitating this discussion of Mormonism. I love the challenging topics, the idiosyncratic authors, and the demanding subscribers. Many are now good friends."

Still, the many stresses—professional, psychological, and personal—continued to snowball, and following 1999's symposium, Elbert wondered if the time had finally come to leave. "The fit between me and Sunstone was not as good as it had once been," Elbert wrote later in an email to friends, "although in many areas, I was now better at many things and made better decisions." By "fit," Elbert meant his personal religious beliefs and being gay, both of which he felt might place him at odds with many mainstream Mormons. "On good days," he had months earlier admitted to Kagel and Waterman, "I'm what a friend calls a hopeful agnostic."¹¹ In addition, Elbert believed at least one trustee, and possibly more, had been trying for the past two years to convince Elbert it would be in both his and the foundation's best interests if he left.

Persuaded to place the issue before the board, Elbert raised the question of his departure at a special trustees' retreat that August. Hoping for discussion, not decision, he was "stunned" to discover that trustees wanted him to leave by the summer of 2000. ("My memory of that retreat," Elbert recalls, "is [that it was] just a disaster.") According to Elbert, Stan Christensen, speaking for the board, "made a strong case that I needed to leave because I was gay and more open and willing to enter into a very public relationship which could get me excommunicated and harm Sunstone." Stan replies, "There is a basket of reasons the board decided on a transition for Elbert, and his personal decisions relating to homosexuality were not significant contributors. Elbert's quote on this issue from the meeting is a perception. He was not in the meeting when we discussed the reasons for his transition, so I find it curious that he is certain that this was our focus. Elbert had put forth the notion as early as 1996 that he didn't think it was wise for the organization to have an actively gay editor. I had the sense that the board agreed with this, although it wasn't the type of thing we ever took a vote on. As changes occurred later in Elbert's life, his views on this issue changed as well." Board member and former *Dialogue* editor Bob Rees concurs: "Some members saw signs that Elbert was increasingly disinterested in his job (or was simply worn out) and increasingly distanced from the

heart of Mormon life and culture. While it was not the determining issue, there was concern that if Elbert chose to live an openly gay life, it could adversely affect the enterprise. In other words, in spite of what I see as Elbert's desire to oversimplify the board's decision, I feel that it was based on a number of factors." Even so, Stan admits, "I'm sure . . . both Elbert and the board could have done better in this meeting." Some trustees later told Elbert that based on Stan's assertions at the retreat, they'd assumed their vote had been largely *pro forma*, that his departure had previously been agreed upon by the two of them.

Elbert left the retreat "kind of torn, sad about leaving Sunstone, the end of an era of my life, and a little miffed at the process of manipulation and coercion, but resigned to it." Gradually, however, his dark mood lifted, and by the end of the year, he decided to stay on. (In addition, his parents had relocated to Utah Valley, and he'd accepted custodianship of an ailing family member—which severely limited his options for where he might live and pursue post-Sunstone employment.) At the board's annual meeting in January 2000, he announced "I want to stay," remain for a year, and that his "future tenure [thereafter] be open-ended," as in past years. The board said he "could stay on throughout the year, but [then] my tenure with Sunstone would end." He was also told controversial matters would need to be approved by Rees, the board's newly elected chair. Elbert acknowledged in an email that some trustees are "troubled with the fit between me and Sunstone," that others feel "change is good," that still others worry "I have bad judgment" and "am too autocratic and will not be flexible with the changes they believe Sunstone needs to make." Still, the board's unanimous decision devastated him. Of his lame-duck status, he wrote, "I am depressed, feel rejected, and feel unempowered to make even many trivial decisions."

When Elbert's allies heard the board decision, some aggressively lobbied the board to reconsider; others pleaded Elbert's case before Sunstone's major benefactors. Hurt and angry, Elbert told the board the next month that inasmuch as they had elected not to accept his offer, he had concluded not to accept theirs and would leave by March at the latest. Faced with the real possibility of Sunstone's demise, the board in late February agreed to retain Elbert for an unspecified term while they would look for a business manager and magazine editor

"The task of being editor and publisher has been intoxicatingly fun, yet from juggling too many balls—especially the financial ones—I am weary. . . . But I love facilitating this discussion of Mormonism. I love the challenging topics, the idiosyncratic authors, and the demanding subscribers. Many are now good friends."



ELBERT AT HIS DESK,
SUNSTONE OFFICES ON THIRD WEST

to take some of the responsibilities from Elbert's shoulders and allow him to focus on other responsibilities, specifically fundraising.

Though relieved, as he and the board began looking for a business manager, Elbert couldn't shake the feeling that the board still meant for him to leave by year's end. In fact, according to the board's minutes for 4 August 2000, hiring both a business manager—whom trustees termed "publisher"—and an editor meant Elbert would no longer have direct responsibility for either the foundation or magazine.

Following the hiring that fall of William Stanford, a career CPA with considerable experience working with non-profit organizations, as business manager, trustees turned to searching for a new editor. But, in a telling 17 November memo, the board suggested it was time "to plan, at the appropriate time, for a transition or evolution of Elbert's role in Sunstone." By the end of the year, they had settled on an editor, Dan Wotherspoon, a Ph.D. in religion and theology from Claremont Graduate School and, since 1994, a regular symposium participant. While trustees insisted that "this motion to make an offer to a new editor is NOT a move to replace Elbert from employment or involvement in Sunstone," Elbert spiraled "into this incredibly deep depression," convinced the board neither supported nor valued him.¹⁵ "I'm not unique and irreplaceable," he says today, "but I am hard to replace. . . . I look back now and think, 'Those guys [the board] should have worked their hardest to keep me rather than to collude in a campaign to get rid of me.'"

For Stan Christensen, the board's and Elbert's clashes were not entirely unexpected, given the evolving nature of the foundation. "The conflicts between Elbert and me," Stan reports for this history, "were natural conflicts between an executive director and a board chair. I think it is fair to say that the board become more active after I became chair, which was what

Elbert expressed he wanted. This did put a strain on our personal relationship which I hope will abate over time. I think it was hard for him to run the foundation with limited oversight for more than ten years, then make a transition to life with a board who didn't always share his opinions. I'm sure I could have done a better job facilitating this transition." In response to these comments, Elbert says today, "I know Stan thinks that, but I [believe] our differences were primarily philosophical and organizational."

"During this period of the board's history," Stan rejoins, "the most significant event in my mind was the shift to a moderate as well as active board. With the approval of the other board members, I asked Bob Rees and Eugene England, moderates with long histories in the Mormon intellectual community, to join the board. Both were reluctant at first but agreed the organization needed change and believed they were each in a position to help with this. The three of us felt that Sunstone had drifted from its founders' mission and had become too captive to the interests of one segment of the community. Gene was elected co-chair, and we worked hard together to develop a vision of moderation in both the magazine and symposiums. Bob had recently returned from a mission to the Baltics and was full of spiritual energy that he wanted to apply to the organization. The three of us and the rest of the board spent many hours debating and defining what we thought the direction of the organization should be. At times this was at odds with Elbert's vision, and inevitable conflicts resulted."

Rees continues: "At the encouragement of some new members, we on the board began to assume our oversight duties, which included finances, publishing schedule, subscribership, and public image. What we discovered was that financial records were in disarray; income and payroll taxes had not been filed for several years (resulting in IRS penalties); and the distance between magazine issues had continued to widen, resulting in a dampening effect on new subscriptions, renewals, and contributions. All of these factors left the prospect of growing indebtedness. For the first time in a long time, the board took a hard look at its legal and fiduciary responsibilities and felt that if it didn't act soon, the entire enterprise might fail. For most of us, it was a difficult time because we felt caught between our loyalty to Elbert and our recognition that unless changes were made, Sunstone might not survive another year." Rees continues: "Elbert's raising the issue of censorship was, to my mind a red herring. It was both inaccurate and unfair for Elbert to so characterize the board's wish to establish clearer guidelines for articles/symposium presentations."

As 2001 opened, Elbert told friends he was beginning to emerge from the depression he'd been struggling with—a depression brought on, or exacerbated, by his recent *annus horribilis*. But at that January's board meeting, he remembers being told: "We'll keep you on through August, and then revisit your continuing status. But there is no guarantee after that. I wouldn't count on it. But we'll get the contract to you later spelling out all the details." "That made it very hard," he recalls. Because of his being excused from the portions of the

board meetings during which his tenure and the foundation's future was discussed, Elbert recalls, "I no longer had a clue about where the board was." He no longer felt treated as a "collaborator on the vision of Sunstone," but as a "mere employee." "You don't know how demeaning it is," he remembers telling the board, "to be sent out of the room and have people talk about you for hours, particularly when all these charges are made and arguments about [Sunstone's] history [are put forth] and I have no chance to respond to them. Who made the board of trustees the high council of Sunstone? . . . I told them, 'I'm never going to be sent out of the room again like that.' To have a discussion whether to keep me or not is one thing, but hours-long discussions of philosophy and I'm no longer part of the collaboration, [is another]. . . . Given the continuing tension, I just did not feel like I could stay unless these things were resolved."

As a result, in March, Elbert outlined to trustees the five conditions under which he would stay; otherwise he would leave by the end of May. First, he would remain executive director of the foundation and be appointed publisher of the magazine. Second, he and Sunstone's other three full-time employees would be named voting members of the board. Third, the board would not censor "submissions and proposals because of topic or person." Fourth, "If I stay," he wrote, "those board members who think I should go, and who campaigned for that end, must leave the board. We must dedicate our resources to projects that grow out of a commitment to a shared vision of Sunstone and stop fighting over that vision." Finally, he would expect trustees "to create a more collaborative relationship between staff and board, with clear and realistic expectations." He closed: "Nagging criticism of things such as my fundamental lack of judgment only snuffs out my hope and confidence . . . and I'd rather be somewhere else. But I feel that I have returned to the land of the living, and that with such trust and confidence in me, I'll blossom. Without it, I'll wilt, and rather than allow that to happen again, I'll leave."

When the board met on 16 March, some felt Elbert's conditions were "a means for him to return as an equal and valued partner with the board" and they "wanted to employ possible ways to negotiate Elbert's proposal with the intent of his staying under certain conditions." According to board meeting minutes, others "interpreted his proposal as an attempt by him to gain greater control of Sunstone and marginalize the outside trustees by insisting that the staff become board members and all trustees who opposed his proposal [be] dropped from the board." These trustees "wanted to accept Elbert's offer to resign." However, a majority of the board "favored attempting to find a way to negotiate with Elbert and establish conditions under which he would feel comfortable working." Consequently, the board agreed (1) not to require members to leave simply because they favored Elbert's termination; (2) to restore Elbert as a voting member of the board and to name other employees as non-voting members; (3) to ask Elbert to focus on fundraising activities; and (4) to stress that as managing director, Elbert "is responsible for sound financial management of Sunstone."

Despite their common ground, Elbert believed the board's concessions camouflaged their real intent, and he felt himself sinking again into the depression he swore he'd never relive. He was visibly exhausted, increasingly short-tempered, and having difficulty focusing on work. Lunch breaks and errands more and more frequently turned into afternoons off, and days off, into weeks off. "The last year I have really been burned

out," he told the *Salt Lake Tribune* (13 June 2001), "I found I just didn't have it in me to do it any more . . . This was a long-term kind of weariness. It became clear I needed to work myself out."¹⁶ "After fifteen years," he told readers of the April 2001 issue of SUNSTONE, "the long-feared 'burn-out' set in. . . As I stumbled, so did the organization, and I apologize for the disarray of the last year." Only two issues of the magazine had

READER'S



FORUM

Excerpts from Letters to the Editor, 1993–2000

Only if we respect and honor one another's spiritual experiences, as honestly told in human weakness, will we feel fully free to share those experiences with each other.

—Miles Spencer Kimball, Ann Arbor, Michigan, July 1993

If God replies to strong criticism with conversation, why should today's living prophets be above such dialogue?

—Colin Firth, Los Angeles, California, Feb. 1994

How can we possibly ask other people to accept a young missionary's challenge to question their deepest, most sacred convictions so that they will be willing to join the Church, and then once joined, demand that they "follow the Brethren" and cease seeking truth for themselves?

—Ted McCann, Lake Forest, California, June 1994

My experience with intellectuals is that they view compassion as a noun, not a verb, and their commiseration is entirely predicated on my devotion to "the cause." Intellectuals accuse the Church of being controlling; obviously they never listen to their own rhetoric.

—Doug Dansie, Layton, Utah, Sep. 1994

The problem is not that our leaders are somehow not "human," but that they are all too human. So whom do we pity? No one? Everyone? I think the Church would be much better off just patting the "dissidents" on the head and saying, "There, there." At the same time, people who pick fights shouldn't be surprised if they keep getting beat up.

—Eugene E. Woodbury, Orem, Utah, Dec. 1994

If questions and doubts and disagreements with the Church stand in the way of worshipping in faith and love with a community of believers, then find another home. Christ is our Savior; the Church is not. Let us worship and serve Christ where we can.

—Rebecca Hirst, Knoxville, Tennessee, Dec. 1994

What has become of the interesting, thought-provoking SUNSTONE? It has digressed into a celebration of worldly experience, intellectual snobbery, and agendas. I expect better, and I used to receive it.

—Gregory S. Prince, St. Paul, Minnesota, Apr. 1995

While "the Brethren" pretend anal openings aren't part of God's creations and don't exist at all, SUNSTONE and Dialogue sometimes

seem equally intent on portraying them as our only organ. Meanwhile, what's left for the rest of us to read in the, uh, john?

—J. Christopher, Los Angeles, California, Apr. 1995

Recently, Mormon scholars have been excommunicated (some of them scriptural scholars). Liberal Mormons have paraded these excommunications as a gross offense, yet the work of these scholars is ignored by those of us who claim to support them. Liberal Mormonism cannot claim to stand on ground higher than any other Mormon institution unless the careful search for truth is our highest priority. At present, it is not.

—Mark D. Thomas, Lynnwood, Washington, Dec. 1996

Honest, open scholarship, utilizing historical and literary criticism, will open up new vistas, and it can enrich a religious tradition. In order for it to do so, however, one must give up the idea that everything must have one right interpretation.

—Timothy A. Griffy, Phoenix, Arizona, Apr. 1997

Don't Church leaders recognize that the "dangerous" radical element of intellectuals, feminists, and homosexuals are incredibly faithful Mormons? I love you brave, peculiar people; I am inspired by your faith; I enjoy your humor and thought-provocation.

—Steve Susoeff, San Francisco, California, Apr. 1997

I tap dance from activity to inactivity. In Sunstone, I feel I have found a place where a person like me can be embraced and be spiritual.

—Scott A. Weakley, Los Angeles, California, June 1998

The LDS church has made itself a world religion, and it is time that the Saints acknowledge their own remarkable accomplishment. Even the first century and a half of Islam does not compare! The LDS church is behaving like a sect [regarding the censure of BYU by the American Association of University Professors], but it is now a world church.

—Jacob Neusner, St. Petersburg, Florida, Apr. 1999

I realize that detente between Sunstone and the Church without compromising honest inquiry will not be easy. But because the line between capitulation and autonomy is difficult to draw doesn't mean it isn't worth the effort, even if first attempts are clumsy and/or objectionable to some.

—Sue Bergin, American Fork, Utah, Feb. 2000

appeared during the past eighteen months, and the foundation's finances were seriously strained. At least one trustee called the "lack of record keeping and proper reporting of the last three years . . . inexcusable." Others confessed "they couldn't in good conscience ask their friends and contacts for donations to Sunstone given the lack of magazine publishing."

Consequently, on 8 June 2001, after a week's absence from work during which no one at the office knew where he was, Elbert emailed his resignation to Sunstone's staff and soon thereafter cleaned out his office. "I leave with a deep sense of gratitude," he wrote, "for the wonderful experience of my fifteen years at Sunstone. It is hard to imagine another job that could be so rewarding, that could connect me with so many

splendid people, that can call me to draw upon my diverse skills, talents, and ideals." He says today: "It was too late to rebuild me for Sunstone. I was just so wasted." Having moved to California, where he found it difficult to be as helpful as he would have liked, Stan Christensen resigned from the board one month after Elbert's departure.

As became apparent in a candid interview with Salt Lake's *City Weekly* shortly following his resignation, privately, Elbert had also grown frustrated with, if not skeptical of, aspects of Mormon intellectualism. "I just became less and less patient with the fools I had to deal with. There were always the same old complaints, the same old insights. They just kept focusing on the same issues. After fifteen years, it became tiresome and boring." In fact, he continued, "I don't know a more temperamental group of people than feminists—gays are even-tempered compared to them. The liberals who, over the years, have gotten up to do their own jeremiads against the church or acted irresponsibly in their presentations at Sunstone have caused as many of the problems with open forums, that they lament now, as the brethren ever did. I don't have as much of a desire to run the church as many of the liberals do. It's not our church. It's not the liberals' church. Any organization's agenda is determined by those who are in the pews and writing the checks. Any time the church has changed, it has done so slowly and at the tail end of the social upheavals that forced the rest of society to change along the same lines. . . . It's not a healthy disposition to consistently write off the church as evil, or anything general for that matter. Lots of the assumptions and concerns that people seem so passionate about now don't interest me at all anymore. Sometimes I see it as sort of a cheap intellectualism. There is so much of my life that is not Mormon—not Sunstone. When I go to Los Angeles or San Francisco and visit with friends there, I realize I am a city boy. I always ask myself why I would ever want to be in Utah debating that crap."¹⁷

While conceding for this history the accuracy of the above statements, Elbert hastens to clarify that the "fools" to which he referred are not the majority of Sunstone supporters, but those who champion their own particular brand of Mormonism. At the same time, he continues, "I think a lot of what goes on at Sunstone is a cheap intellectualism. There's a smug liberalism like we do know the answers and those benighted people at Church headquarters don't. . . . A lot of the people who I love dearly and like a lot I would say fall into that kind of cheap intellectualism. . . . Generally I like and enjoy facilitating the conversation, but there are some people who are real fools and don't know it, but those are very few."

For his critics, Elbert's candor in the *City Weekly* article reinforced their own judgments. "Elbert Peck . . . is a smug, irresponsible, sexist, self-hating gay man who insists on blaming other people ('lazy liberals') for his own incompetence," wrote John-Charles Duffy in a letter to the editor in the 12 July 2001 *City Weekly*. "Sunstone should have sent him packing long ago." Even for his supporters, Elbert's comments seemingly required some explanation: "If you have met Elbert in person," writes SUNSTONE's new editor, Dan Wotherspoon, in the mag-

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 1985–2001

Trustees still serving on current board in italics

John Ashton, 1985–87—attorney
 Kim Bateman, 1999–2000—medical doctor
 Katherine Boswell, 1990–91—administrator
 Martha Sonntag Bradley, 1985–92—educator
D. Jeff Burton, 2001–present—consultant
 Cole Capener, 1999–2001—attorney
 Blaine L. Carlton, 1993–94—attorney
 Stan Christensen, 1994–2001—consultant
 Marie Cornwall, 1991–92—educator
Julie K. Curtis, 1999–present—marketing specialist
 Cindy Dahle, 2000–01—educator
 Robyn Knibbe Davis, 1990–2000—businesswoman
 Eugene England, 1998–2001—educator
 Kent Frogley, 1985–97—executive
 Lisa Bolin Hawkins, 1990–93—administrator
 Edward L. Kimball, 1987–91/2001—educator
 James N. Kimball, 1996–97—businessman
Jordan Kimball, 1999–present—medical doctor
 Glen R. Lambert, 1987–99—therapist
 Brian C. McGavin, 1987–90—accountant
 Louis A. Moench, 1993–2001—psychiatrist
 Mary Ann Morgan, 1990–92, 93–99—educator
 Elbert Eugene Peck, 1986–99—editor; publisher
 Grethe B. Peterson, 1999—educator
J. Frederick Pingree, 2000–present—accountant
 Marybeth Raynes, 1987–90—therapist
 Daniel H. Rector, 1986–95—publisher; businessman
 Robert A. Rees, 1999–2000—educator
 Margaret Reiser, 1995–99—businesswoman
J. Bonner Ritchie, 1985–95, 2001–present—educator
Mary Ellen Robertson, 2001–present—administrator
 Linda Jean Stephenson, 1991–92—publisher
 Vickie Stewart, 1995—employment consultant
Michael J. Stevens, 2001–present—educator
Mark D. Thomas, 2001–present—businessman; educator
 Kathy Wilson, 1998–2001—art dealer
Earl M. Wunderli, 2001–present—attorney

azine's July 2001 issue, "you will know that he has opinions about everything and everyone! Yet, they are always well-reasoned takes, and he offers them with a feeling of joy in community, with an easy laugh and glad heart. If you have met Elbert, I know you also have a strong opinion about him. Most of you extend to him the same grace he feels toward you. But even for you whose feelings are perhaps less generous than others, I ask that as a community, we all join in releasing him with a vote of thanks."

"The effort Elbert expended to fight against the will of the board during his final eighteen months as editor and managing director,"

Stan notes, "hurt Sunstone deeply. In a very human way, he put his own interests in front of those of the organization, and in the end, both he and Sunstone suffered as a result. In retrospect, the board should not have given Elbert so much rope during the transition. The intent was to honor and respect him for all that he had done over the years, yet the impact was disastrous. Elbert didn't feel like he reported to the board, despite a clear mandate in the Sunstone bylaws that all staff, even its editors and publishers, do so." "The board's decision to terminate Elbert's contract," Bob Rees adds, "was met by resistance and ultimately defiance by Elbert. Elbert refused to recognize the board's authority or honor its decisions. The ensuing power struggle resulted in a very sporadic publishing schedule, the decline of Sunstone's financial health, the resignation of a number of board members, and Elbert's further sinking into a deeper depression."

"For the last several years," Bryan Waterman subsequently added for this history, "Elbert kept talking about needing a break, taking time off, or even quitting—well before there were movements afoot to oust him The job had become pretty brutal, and I think we could see what it had done to Elbert. Living in the shadow of an increasingly authoritarian Church was not a fun thing, obviously, especially when you were surrounded by people who were so caught up in the politics of it all that they no longer had any concept of a world outside the valley."

"I think Elbert is a great man," Stan concludes, "and I feel lucky to have had the chance to work with him. He lives aspects of the gospel in a truer and more pure sense than anyone else I have met. He is extremely sensitive towards others and has a Christlike ability to behave charitably toward others. Most of his tenure at Sunstone is characterized by a flourishing

"I leave with a deep sense of gratitude for the wonderful experience of my fifteen years at Sunstone.

It is hard to imagine another job that could be so rewarding, that could connect me with so many splendid people, that can call me to draw upon my diverse skills, talents, and ideals."



outpouring of spirit and generosity, and that is what everyone should remember and focus on. The conflicted denouement to his tenure is a small footnote and will certainly fade over the years."

Perhaps the best insight into Elbert's views as he neared the end of his tenure is found in his farewell editorial, published in the April 2001 issue of the magazine (though not mailed until late May, just a few weeks before he resigned). In it, he writes of his experience a few years earlier participating in a gathering of the Radical Faeries, a loosely knit collective of gay pagans "committed," Elbert explains, "to living simple, interconnected lives in peace with others and with nature." "Living with them," he writes, "called me to be the best Christian I was taught to be as a Mormon boy." But after several days, Elbert concluded that "the presence of love within a community does not prove it is Christian." The challenge of being a Christian, he realized, is not loving one's friends, but loving one's enemies. "Jesus' love of enemies is not a nebulous, warm fuzzy," he elaborates. "No, it's specific and active and democratic. Follow the Father's example, send sun to warm and rain to nourish, and do it for everyone. How simple—treat those outside your community exactly the same as you treat those inside it." Mormonism may not "work for every good person," he admits. "Nevertheless, The Church of Jesus Christ is an incredible force and source in the world for goodness and love. Just below the surface of our boring meetings and the roof of our uninspiring meetinghouses, life burgeons!" "We've come a long way from pioneer oaths of vengeance," he continues, "which fostered a xenophobia [of which] the Mountain Meadows Massacre was only the extreme manifestation. Today, Latter-day Saints and their Church are more singularly focused on growth and service. And because of our pragmatism, we

learn from our past and we avoid over-zealousness as we diligently work to make sure our labors improve.” Still, he closes, “it does not yet appear what we shall be.” Elbert’s own trajectory through Mormonism suggests he could easily have replaced “we” with “I.”

SUNSTONE’S TRIED-AND-TRUE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Happy convergences, glorious failures, gutsy gambles, dogged stamina, quirky personalities, and rivers of caffeine . . .

MORE THAN FIFTEEN years earlier, Elbert had trembled at the thought of returning to Sunstone. Since then, he had become virtually indispensable to the foundation and its supporters as he embraced his role as *de facto* spokesperson for the Mormon intellectual community. Whatever the drawbacks, both for Sunstone and himself, he relished the easy mesh of the foundation’s needs with his own, the ability to set his own work schedule, the privileged association with some of the Church’s brightest minds, the heady give-and-take exchanges with national media hungry for an unofficial point of view, and the respect of thousands of readers and symposium attendees who looked to him—whether or not he agreed with their assessment—as the quintessential liberal Mormon intellectual. To these and similar reasons for staying at Sunstone for as long as he did, add Elbert’s own strong desires for community-building, spiritual fulfillment, and self-understanding.

Regardless of one’s reaction to the board’s treatment of Elbert (or to Elbert’s response), it is difficult to argue with its intention: how best to facilitate Elbert’s eventual departure. For more than eleven years, from 1986 to 1997, Elbert (like his predecessors) had enjoyed a relatively free hand in operating first the magazine and then the foundation. Executive, editorial, and fiscal supervision had been virtually non-existent. The sudden, but not wholly unexpected, involvement of trustees hoping to bring a greater degree of accountability to the management of the foundation—especially a sense of purpose that may have differed from Elbert’s own—was no doubt difficult for everyone. For Elbert, the fundamental conflict was not so much one of control—“a more activist board vs. a maverick manager”—but of vision. “I *do* resist direction when I don’t feel valued,” he explains for this history, “but in a mutually respectful collaborative relationship, where I feel I get heard, I willingly defer.” Given competing agendas and values, that Elbert fought for so long to remain at Sunstone speaks either to his commitment to intellectual freedom, to his fear of finding another job that would come as close to providing the same freedoms and benefits Sunstone offered, or, most probably, to a combination of both.

“When I came to Sunstone as editor,” Elbert elaborates for this history, “I spoke and wrote much like [those who say that] Sunstone is by and for and of believing Latter-day Saints, and it should reflect that mission. That’s certainly how the founders felt when they organized the thing—the articulate expression and celebration of the truths of the Restoration. However, as they and the Mormon intellectual community

took their diverse spiritual and intellectual journeys, that simple mission that assumed a common faith was increasingly harder to implement. The best one example of that is . . . [the] journey to non-belief and eventual membership withdrawal [of one of Sunstone’s founders]. I vividly remember how [this founder] came out of the future-of-Sunstone symposium session that Stan had organized, and said to me, ‘I don’t belong in Sunstone anymore,’ because he was no longer the believer all the panelists described [as who Sunstone was for]. Of course, I didn’t agree [that he no longer fit with Sunstone]. By then, my articulation of Sunstone was that it needed to be a secular, open form for the discussion and expression of Mormonism by *anyone*, including true-believers, that its purpose was not singularly a forum for thoughtful believers (and select, non-offending invited guests). My evolution to that philosophy was in direct response to making a place where [everyone] could and should feel they were full-blown citizens of Sunstone. My views evolved in response to real events. It was a response to allowing excommunicates of the Purge [of September 1993 and beyond] to speak and then articulating a philosophy to defend that policy. It was formulated in my conflicts and arguments with Stan. When he wanted to censor [a particular speaker] because any panel on the Proclamation on the Family was too sensitive for the brethren, I responded that we shouldn’t reject proposals because of topic, but rather all topics were fair game and we accept among the proposals based on quality of thought (academic research) and their respectful tone. The respect part came because I saw firsthand how the jeremiads repelled many thoughtful moderates whom we wanted to be in the tent. To keep the forum’s boundaries wide and expanding, respectful discourse was essential. . . . I believe my views should have been the vision of Sunstone.”

“As one can imagine,” Christensen counters, “the board felt otherwise. Each of us felt Elbert’s views were uniquely informed and an important part of our collective vision. There is a vulnerability and sometimes a cost to organizations that come to embody too closely the feelings and desires of one person. Despite bylaws that outline the board’s role as a governing body to which the executive director reported, Elbert saw our input only as suggestions which he could choose to ignore if he disagreed with them.”

As Sunstone looks beyond its first quarter-century, many observers worry its future is as fragile as ever. While it boasts a talented new staff, it faces many of the same challenges it did in the mid-1970s. Chief among these is the perception that the intellectual freedom it champions is somehow detrimental to the well-being of the LDS church. “It has long been observed,” reports former trustee Mary Ann Morgan, “that Americans are anti-intellectual, and perhaps this most American of all churches comes by its distrust of scholarship predictably. It is ironic, however, that our Church espouses doctrine which encompasses all knowledge and truth, searching and accepting any new truth and eternally doing so, yet its members are currently admonished to look, almost exclusively, to their scripture and Church hierarchy for knowledge. That narrow per-

spective must change for the good of the Church and also for Sunstone to survive.”

A related problem is attracting new, younger supporters. “College-age students are conspicuously few at Sunstone gatherings,” worries Mary Ann. “Do young people still have intellectual curiosity?” “As the Church continues its shift toward conservatism,” responds Kent Frogley, who served on Sunstone’s board from 1985 to 1997, “together with its increasing willingness to define righteousness, it forces members to make choices about their faith earlier in life, to decide much sooner if they want to stay in or out.” However, at the same time, older supporters may be in a better position to donate money to the foundation, give gift subscriptions and symposium registrations, and encourage their own children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews to read the magazine and attend the annual symposiums.

Despite—or perhaps because of—the complex interplay of competing editorial and managerial philosophies, the miracle of Sunstone is that it still exists, that for more than a quarter-century, it has survived an endless parade of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. That it continues to endure (if not thrive), provoking, informing, and inspiring new generations of readers and symposium attendees, testifies to the happy convergence of people and ideas—what Elbert called in an early draft of his own history of the foundation the many “chance meetings, eccentric professors, gifted but brief contributors, juggled finances, generous donors, editors’ hobby-horses, late-night pivotal decisions casually made, glorious failures, gutsy gambles, dogged stamina, naive crusaders, mixed motives, quirky personalities, and rivers of caffeine. . . .”

For a majority of supporters, Sunstone’s effect has been undeniably positive. “I think about the periodic late nights,” reminisces Brian Kagel, “touching up galley slicks with our Exacto knives and hot wax, over slices of jalapeno and pineapple pizza. I think about the hundreds of phone calls and countless hours of planning that we all put into each Salt Lake symposium—and the moderates who never called us back. But more than anything, I think about the friends I made during that time and the world of ideas that each had a hand in opening up to me. They helped me to look at my religious tradition critically, but also charitably. They helped me to have a sense of humor about Mormonism’s quirks and emphasize the things that matter: heart and community, compassion and service.”

“Sunstone deepened my faith in a lot of areas,” says Kent Frogley. “It made me realize that faith and intellect aren’t as disconnected as I once thought they were. Years ago I tended to

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create a divide between the mental and the spiritual. Now I think they’re wrapped up together and you can’t really sift one from the other. To make suspect an intellectual approach to theology or spirituality is wrong. You don’t have a spiritual life and an intellectual life. It’s all the same thing. Sunstone also made me more independent, more willing to listen to the inner voice, the voice of faith, whatever you want to call it. And it helped me create a spiritual life where I don’t feel marginalized or suspect.”

For Stan Christensen, the experience was equally salutary: “Sunstone has been tremendously supportive to me individually. It’s put me in touch with people who are interesting and with whom I want to be involved. Has it supported my testimony? Absolutely. Is my testimony stronger as a result of Sunstone and the forum that it has provided? Do I get inspired by some of the talks I hear or by some of the articles I read? Absolutely. I have a deeper conviction as a result of participating in the Sunstone community. I feel

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very, very lucky and blessed . . . Sunstone has contributed to the increasing of my faith. As I understand the gospel more deeply, I’m more convicted of its truthfulness. And Sunstone has helped me understand it more deeply.”

“I’m a cheap and lazy intellectual,” Elbert Peck confesses for this history. “I’m the sort of person who doesn’t read as many

books as I’d like. Sunstone allowed me to be that kind of generalist intellectual in terms of entering so many fields and discussing with very good scholars in many fields. I’m better and have a better sense of things because of those occasions. It has affected me deeply because those categories of understanding I’ve gained from sociologists, historians, psychologists, affect my self-understanding. As I’ve gone through my faith journey, I’ve understood myself, and interpreted myself, and explained myself, and even pushed myself forward based upon lots of these criteria . . . I don’t know if my faith journey may have taken the same course otherwise. . . . But if it did, it would not have any of the substance and articulation and explanation that it does with the rigor today because of Sunstone.”

Finally, on a personal note, Sunstone over the years has offered me (and, I believe, people like me), not a rod or a compass, but a lifeline, thread-worn from use, tethered to what I still believe are the truths of Mormonism: a loving God, individual accountability, personal integrity, reasonable faith. Granted, I would prefer to be part of a more tolerant, less fractious community committed to the free exchange of ideas, where a FARMS, an Affirmation, and a Mormon Women’s

Forum are found next to each other in the book room, where these and a thousand other voices share their joys and sorrows without fear of censure—a community of faith and intellect where something like Sunstone isn't needed. Increasingly, however, I worry that some of us have abandoned all hope that our leaders will ever understand, never mind appreciate, the sincerity of our beliefs; that many of the General Authorities, frustrated over our recalcitrance, have given up trying ever to understand what faith lies behind our insecurities and hubris. Do present impasses stem as much from Sunstone's missteps as from its successes? As much from the brethren's fear as from their compassion? As much from our own anger as from our love? I don't know. But I do know that whatever its destiny, Sunstone has blessed and continues to bless in countless ways the lives of a broad spectrum of grateful Latter-day Saints. ☞

NOTES

1. The sources for this second installment include back issues of *SUNSTONE*; annual year-end financial statements prepared by Brian C. McGavin and Associates, by McGavin, Siebenhaar & Reynolds, and later by William Stanford; minutes of Sunstone's board of trustees, as well as internal memoranda and other correspondence; interviews (some tape recorded), conversations, and correspondence with Devery Anderson, Lavina Fielding Anderson, Martha Sonntag Bradley, Stan Christensen (interview 12 May 1999, email correspondence 10 and 12 May 2000, May 2003), Kent Frogley (interview 5 Dec. 1998), Eric Jones, Brian Kagel (letter June 1999), Glen Lambert (letter 20 Jan. 1999), Mary Ann Morgan (letter 24 Jan. 1999), Elbert Peck (interviews 7 Jan. 1999 and 19 July 2001, correspondence 9 Aug. 2001, email April 2003), J. Frederick (Toby) Pingree, Ron Priddis, Carol Quist, Robert Rees (email May 2003), George D. Smith, William Stanford, Bryan Waterman (email Aug. 2001), Kathy Wilson (interview 10 Feb. 1999), and Dan Wotherspoon, among others; forwarded email correspondence courtesy Lavina Fielding Anderson, Maxine Hanks, Hugo Olaiz, John-Charles Duffy, Elbert Peck, and J. Frederick Pingree; my own and others' recollections; Elbert Peck's "The Origin and Evolution of the Sunstone Species: Twenty-five Years of Creative Adaptation" (early drafts, which include the subtitle "or Funny Things Happened on the Way to Alternate Forums," as well as the version published in *SUNSTONE*'s twenty-fifth anniversary issue); Elbert's interview during Sunstone's 1999 annual Salt Lake Symposium, "More Light or Heat?: Conversation with Elbert Peck about Sunstone," Brian Kagel and Bryan Waterman, interviewers, 16 July 1999; and Elbert's presentation, "What I Mean When I Say an 'Open Forum' Should Be the Ideal Sunstone Strives For," delivered at the 2000 Salt Lake Symposium, 2 Aug. 2000 (tape #SL00-112). Previously unpublished financial statements and board of trustees documents are currently housed in the offices of the Sunstone Foundation, 343 North Third West, Salt Lake City, Utah. The remainder of Sunstone's official archives is located in Special Collections, Marriott Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City.

Elbert Peck, Stan Christensen, Robert Rees, several current and former staff and members of Sunstone's board of directors, and others reviewed portions of this essay for accuracy. While this history is certainly not what some of them would have produced, I benefited greatly from their advice and suggestions. All errors are my own. I appreciate the cooperation of the Sunstone Foundation and the support of the Smith-Pettit Foundation.

2. One result of the financial straits was that, despite the increase in Elbert's responsibilities, the board decided it could not boost his annual \$35,000 salary but said that "it will be reconsidered later when the foundation's finances improve."

3. According to Carol Quist, who began working for Sunstone around this

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time, some of these difficulties were the result of Linda Jean Stephenson's not notifying the board of the foundation's financial situation during the latter half of 1992.

4. For example, an employee who had worked at Sunstone for six years would have earned seven paid holidays, fifteen paid vacation days. And the foundation would pay 100 percent of her annual health insurance premium.

5. Contributing to the difficulties of 2000 was the fact that in his weariness and with a fewer-than-usual number of accomplishments to point to, Elbert did not send out a 1999 year-end fundraising letter. The result was fewer donations, monies that typically give Sunstone a good running start for its coming year.

6. Unlike expectations placed on Sunstone's current board of directors, who now carry a great deal of the burden to raise monies to keep Sunstone going, fundraising during this period fell primarily upon Elbert's shoulders.

7. These are the staff members who served during the years covered in this article. Staff members who had worked with Elbert earlier, alongside Daniel Rector and/or Linda Jean Stephenson, include: Ron Bitton, Connie Disney, Jason Esplin, Charlotte Hamblin, Hinckley Jones, Bryan Kubarycz, Kristopher Jon Magnusson, R. Scott Pettit, Rob Rowan, and Jan Stucki.

8. Carol Quist, Sunstone staffer since 1993, concurs: "I'd worked for Sunstone only weeks before Elbert threw a party for me on my birthday—with decorations, balloons, confetti, poppers, horns, and a fancy cake. Staff and the Benchmark Books folks (whose offices, at the time, were in the same building) created toasts that were seconded by raising Sprite-filled plastic stemware. For other staff birthdays, balloons big enough to ride on would show up, offices would get filled with inflated surgical gloves and wadded newspapers, and, one time, Republican posters appeared in Democrat-worker Eric Jones's office. In every instance, preparations were always assembled as a surprise, and the honoree had to clean up afterward. Each spring, Elbert would host on his balconied apartment a gazpacho and shrimp feast for staff and volunteers. And whenever he bought office supplies, he bought popcorn—the official Sunstone snack. So, despite constant money worries, we partied, and Elbert's Sunstone was always a high-morale place to work."

9. Bruce W. Jorgensen, "To Tell and Hear Stories: Let the Strangers Say," *SUNSTONE* (July 1993): 40–50; Richard H. Cracroft, "Attuning the Authentic Mormon Voice: Stemming the Sophic Tide in LDS Literature," *SUNSTONE* (July 1993): 51–57; David P. Wright, "Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," *SUNSTONE* (Sept. 1992): 28–38; William J. Hamblin, "The Final Step," *SUNSTONE* (July 1993): 11–12; David P. Wright, "The Continuing Journey," *SUNSTONE* (July 1993): 12–14; D. Michael Quinn, "I-Thou Vs. I-It Conversions: The Mormon 'Baseball Baptism' Era," *SUNSTONE* (Dec. 1993): 30–44; Levi S. Peterson, "The Art of Dissent Among the Mormons," *SUNSTONE* (Feb. 1994): 33–39; Richard D. Poll, "A Liahona Latter-day Saint," *SUNSTONE* (Sept. 1994): 35–38; Peggy Fletcher Stack, "Tales of a True Believer: Picking Up Faith Along the Way," *SUNSTONE* (Apr. 1994): 48–54; Steve Benson, "Ezra Taft Benson: A Grandson's Remembrance," *SUNSTONE* (Dec. 1994): 29–37; Wayne C. Booth, "Pride Cometh Before the Fall: Mormonism and the Seven Deadly Heresies," *SUNSTONE* (Aug. 1995): 35–43; Armand L. Mauss, "Authority, Agency, and Ambiguity: The Elusive Boundaries of Required Obedience to Priesthood Leaders," *SUNSTONE* (Mar. 1996): 20–31; Rod Decker, "The LDS Church and Utah Politics," *SUNSTONE* (Sept. 1997): 35–44; David Clark Knowlton, "Intellectual Politics and the Unspeakable in Mormonism," *SUNSTONE* (Apr. 1997): 46–51; Carrie A. Miles, "Polygamy and the Economics of Salvation," *SUNSTONE* (Aug. 1998): 34–45; Eugene England, "Becoming a World Religion: Blacks, the Poor—All of Us . . .," *SUNSTONE* (June 1998): 49–60; Bryan Waterman, "Policing 'The Lord's University': The AAUP and BYU, 1995–98," *SUNSTONE* (Dec. 1998): 22–38; Todd Compton, "Thoughts on the Possibility of an Open Temple," *SUNSTONE* (Mar. 1999): 42–49; Jana K. Riess, "Stripling Warriors Choose the Right: The Cultural Engagements of Contemporary Mormon Kitsch," *SUNSTONE* (June 1999): 36–47; Jan Shipp, "Surveying the Mormon Image Since 1960," *SUNSTONE* (Apr. 2001): 58–72.

10. Anonymous, "Clipped and Controlled: A Contemporary Look at BYU," *SUNSTONE* (Sept. 1996): 61–72.

11. Bateman's comments were reported in "President Bateman Responds to

Charges," SUNSTONE (Dec. 1996): 68–69. Bateman's special censure occurred a few years into the foundation's most painful period with regard to its relationship with the institutional Church. While five years earlier, the Church's official "statement on symposia" had hinted at a change in its public response to outspoken, intellectually oriented members, and two years later, Elder Boyd K. Packer's naming of homosexuals, feminists, and "so-called scholars or intellectuals" had identified areas of special concern, the disciplining (including disfellowshipment and excommunication) in late 1993 of LDS writers, eventually collectively referred to as the "September Six," sent shock waves through the independent Mormon community that continue to reverberate. As Sunstone prefaced its own November 1993 account of the unparalleled incident in LDS intellectual history: "The events dramatically explored the dynamic between the individual and the institution, drew national media attention to tensions between the Church and its intellectuals and feminists, raised questions about dissent, loyalty, and free speech, and highlighted pluralistic challenges for the monolithic organization." Of the six disciplined that September, five—Lavina Fielding Anderson, Maxine Hanks, D. Michael Quinn, Paul Toscano, and Lynne K. Whitesides—had been specifically cited, in part, for their affiliation with Sunstone. All were charged, in one form or another, with apostasy—with having criticized the brethren, challenged or criticized Church doctrine or practices, or taught "false doctrine" after having been corrected by Church leaders. Five vehemently denied the charges, some alleging certain ultraconservative Church leaders were trying to quash God-given free agency. One, Avraham Gileadi, said very little. Church officials answered that their duty is to protect the integrity of the Church and the faith of its members, that their attempts at counseling and correction had been met with defiance.

News of the dramatic actions spread quickly. The Church insisted the disciplinary proceedings were strictly local matters, denying they had in any way been encouraged or coordinated by central Church headquarters. But the coincidence that all occurred during the same month was too unbelievable for many observers, who worried that an embarrassed Church leadership was attempting to minimize its own involvement in the affair. The public rhetoric grew increasingly acrimonious, allegations of lying and direct high-level intervention by ranking Church authorities erupted, but the number of excommunications mounted in the years that followed, as did similar investigations of BYU faculty members. While no evidence has ever surfaced that Church headquarters directly instructed local leaders to charge members of their wards and stakes with apostasy, they did admit the existence of an apostle-led committee that supplied local leaders with photocopies of selected publications and transcripts of symposium presentations, together with general instructions on the need to cleanse the Church of impurity and false doctrine. "In the Lord's Church," Elder M. Russell Ballard told the Church's October 1999 General Conference, "there is no such thing as a 'loyal opposition.' One is either for the kingdom of God and stands in defense of God's prophets and apostles, or one stands opposed."

12. "Peggy [Fletcher] really only convened [the board] when she was desperate for money," quipped Elbert at 2000's annual symposium.

13. In the course of my research for this story, Elbert and others shared several things in confidence with me. As part of my agreement with them, I have chosen not to reveal the names of several people mentioned in various incidents.

14. This reading of the direction Stan and the board were taking Sunstone is bolstered by some of Stan's comments for this history, including "Our mission . . . is not to sit around and complain and be negative."

15. Compounding the mixed messages Elbert was receiving from the board was the fact that the board's decision to hire two additional salaried employees was a gamble, which, if it were to pay off, would depend in large part on Elbert's own increased effectiveness. Meeting the additional payroll demands meant just that much more money the foundation and especially Elbert—whose change in duties entailed more focus in this area—would have to raise.

16. "The truth is," he'd confessed at the previous year's symposium, "I am burning out and buckling under the extraordinary pressures of the job that I have and just have not been able to sustain the momentum that we've had." Bryan Waterman recalls for this history: "Certainly the tension between the Church and Sunstone took its toll while I was there and during the summers when I would come back. The Church tightened its grip, . . . [and] Elbert always tried to be in the middle, moderate. But the symposiums were getting harder and harder to fill, and the fringe-left was getting angry when he wouldn't let them gripe however they wanted to. Over this time, Elbert gradually became more open both about his sexuality (at least he had adopted a policy that if someone asked he wouldn't lie) and about the tenuous nature of his belief."

17. Scott Lewis, "Keeping the Faith," *Salt Lake City Weekly* (28 June 2001), cover story.



SPEAK AND BEAR WITNESS

Rilke's injunction claws
at the backdoor of failing light:
speak and bear witness,
although a hundred thousand voices
say it better,
although the joy and grief of every heart
remains unsayable,
although the sun slipping like margarine
in a skillet cannot be stilled.

Tell, tell.

Tell from childhood how much of you
is missing.

Tell, paradox by paradox,
how the force of love
draws you to innerwork,
the only work,
how afterward
comes learning,
how you want to name
every sound and sight
that falls upon you,
the task insurmountable.

So bit by bit you try praise.

Things are disappearing.

You want to eat the landscape.

Every day is a door
under which a sealed envelope appears.

You want to open it.

You want to leave it.

Someone walks across

a vast ballroom floor
asking you to dance.

You begin to outgrow everything
and then you shrink.

The best you can record about your life:
a book in your arms,
the forest before you.

—ANITA TANNER