

UPDATE

WITH FLDS SHAKEUP, POLYGAMISTS
FLEE, FIGHT EVICTIONS

STRIPPED OF THEIR priesthood and families, some twenty members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints face the prospects of either leaving town or fighting eviction orders. FLDS president and prophet Warren Jeffs has ordered the men to vacate properties that legally belong to the church.



Warren Jeffs

The FLDS community includes some 6,000 members, most of whom live in the border towns of Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Arizona. Jeffs, who took the FLDS reins in 2002, gave some of the wives of the disciplined men a “noble release,” which means they can now marry a different husband.

Former Colorado City Mayor Dan Barlow and two of his brothers have left town and now live near St. George, Utah.

Milton Holm and Ross Chatwin are fighting their eviction orders, claiming they should be allowed to remain in the homes they built or the church should pay them for improvements they made to the properties.

“Warren gave my family to my younger brother, Ed. I think that’s disgusting,” Holm told the *Deseret News*. “Warren is ripping families apart to punish and hurt men. In a way, husbands are becoming a dime a dozen around here. The wives belong to Warren.”

In related developments, an “underground railroad” of sorts has formed to help teenage girls and boys from the FLDS communities escape the possibility of their being forced to marry someone not of their own choosing, sometimes with only hours of notice. So far, dozens of young people have taken advantage of these offers to stay with friends and relatives. After living on the “outside” for a while, some have chosen to return to their homes; but others, most notably two girls, Fawn Broadbent, 17, and Fawn Holm, 16, now commonly referred to as “the Fawns,” have become public figures and are fighting in the courts to have their legal guardianship transferred from their parents to non-polygamous relatives.

CHURCH SAYS NO GUNS IN CHAPELS

IN A STATEMENT that delighted gun control advocates, the Church’s First Presidency announced that “churches are dedicated for the worship of God and as havens from the cares and concerns of the world. The carrying of lethal weapons, concealed or otherwise, within their walls is inappropriate except as required by officers of the law.”

The statement came on the heels of tension between various religious groups and the conservative Utah state legislature following its passing of a law that requires churches either to register with the state or post notices on their buildings if they did not want concealed weapons inside. Many Utah reli-



PAT BAGLEY, COURTESY SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

gious leaders publicly stated they would not comply with the law, claiming that separation of church and state exempts them from having to register or post notices in order to deny worshipers from carrying concealed weapons on their premises.

The LDS Church has agreed to comply with state law and will register as having banned guns from its properties. The move met with both praise for the Church’s commitment to keep guns out of houses of worship and disappointment over its unwillingness to join other faith-based groups in protesting the new law.

MORMON STUDIES
CONTROVERSY ERUPTS

THE PECULIAR PLACE of Mormon studies in Utah colleges was debated in February as Mormon historian D. Michael Quinn was rejected for a position at the University of Utah. Religious historian Colleen McDannell called the rejection “blatant discrimination” and said that University of Utah history professors see “no intellectual or cultural merit in Mormonism.”



Colleen McDannell

Some observers conclude that the rejection means exactly the opposite: that at a time of budget cuts, the university doesn’t want to inflame the LDS-dominated state legislature by hiring a scholar famous for writing on controversial Mormon topics. Others claim they simply rejected Quinn because the opening is in Utah history, not Mormon history. Quinn had been a finalist for the position vacated by the recent death of Dean May (see SUNSTONE, October 2003, p. 6).

Stunned, history department chairperson Eric Hinderaker called McDannell’s statement an “astonishingly egregious breach of confidentiality” of closed-door personnel discussions. Robert Goldberg, a historian in the department rejected McDannell’s broad characterizations, saying he and the five

BYU BLOTS OUT BARE BELLYBUTTONS



Rafael Araujo without tattoos (above) and with them (below)



BYU OFFICIALS DENIED allegations that they had airbrushed a tattoo from a picture of basketball player Rafael Araujo. But because the BYU athletic publications director admitted altering photos to cover bare midribs, the “cover-up” story is far from over.

The controversy picked up momentum in mid-January when the *Salt Lake Tribune* ran a story quoting Duff Tittle, BYU associate director for communications. “We have touched up photos for years,” Tittle told a reporter, “as far as removing tattoos, covering up bellybuttons, just things like that.”

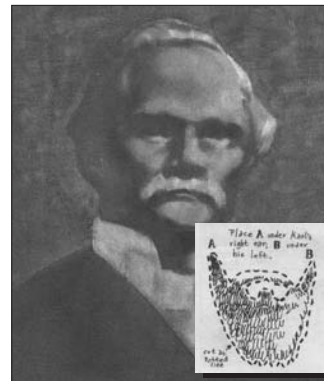
Tittle’s remarks came after someone inquired about a picture on page 13 of BYU’s sports media guide that showed hoop star Araujo’s whole left arm but not the tattoo he currently sports on that arm. BYU officials explained that the picture had not been airbrushed. BYU simply used a picture taken last season before Araujo had gotten his left arm inked.

While BYU officials denied having doctored the photo media guide, David Broberg, BYU athletic publication director, said a picture of cross-country runners had been altered to lengthen their shirts so as to cover their bare

midribs. These actions are not done for Honor Code reasons, Broberg explained, but for the sake of the athlete.

“We are not trying to change reality,” Broberg said. “We want the athletes to look as good as possible, but we cannot change them.”

This latest round of publicity is not BYU’s first in relation to airbrushing. According to Bryan Waterman and Brian Kagel, authors of a book about BYU’s history, the cover of the 1986 student directory featured a picture from which the beard of BYU founder Karl G. Maeser had been removed. The incident, which attracted national media attention, also led to an opportunity for humor as the *Student Review*, an off-campus student newspaper, published cut-out beards that could be fastened to the directory by those who wanted an unaltered Maeser. (See *The Lord’s University: Freedom and Authority at BYU*, 156).



A beardless Karl G. Maeser on the 1986 BYU student directory; “cutout” beard supplied by the *Student Review* (inset)

In recent years, LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley has counseled LDS youth to avoid tattoos and any body piercing beyond one pair of earring holes for women. In a 13 January address, BYU President Cecil Samuelson specifically addressed the matter of bare midribs, alluding to complaints he had received from a former BYU student who recently attended her 50th year reunion. “It shocked me to see so many tummies on the campus,” the letter said.

“I don’t know how many tummies she actually saw on campus,” Samuelson said, “but it doesn’t take all the fingers on one hand to count ‘too many.’”

others who voted against hiring Quinn are not looking for a Mormon apologist. But, he said, they don’t want an avowed critic, either.

Despite the prominence of Mormonism in Utah society and history, Utah state colleges have been slow or reluctant to develop formal programs in Mormon studies. Shortly before his passing in 2001, former BYU professor Eugene England initiated efforts to establish such a program at Utah Valley State College, and Mormon-related courses have continued to be offered on the Orem, Utah, campus. Paraphrasing historian Jan Shipp, UVSC professor David Knowlton says that “Western history tends to be a discourse with a missing center, a doughnut.” By failing to acknowledge Mormons and their history, Western history “has ignored one of the most populated areas of the region along with its people’s social dynamics and concerns.”

In a related development, formal fundraising has recently begun at Utah State University for an endowed chair in

Mormon history and culture named in honor of the late Leonard J. Arrington.

“ILLEGALS” CAN HAVE TEMPLE RECOMMENDS

A CONTROVERSY ERUPTED in Utah’s church-state relations as Russell Sias, co-founder of Utahns for Immigration Reform and Enforcement (UFIRE), cited LDS doctrines in support of HB109, a failed legislative bill that would have prohibited undocumented workers from getting driver’s licenses. Invoking the Twelfth Article of Faith’s dictum of “obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law,” Sias reportedly told members of the Latino legislative task force that “illegals” should not be issued temple recommends or allowed to hold positions in the priesthood.

In a carefully worded statement, LDS spokesperson George Monsivais said the Church had not taken a position on the bill. “The Church is investigating complaints that UFIRE [is] citing

People

Named. LEVI PETERSON as editor of *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* following the 31 December 2003 resignation of former editor, KAREN MARGUERITE MOLONEY. Peterson, a noted LDS author and retired English professor now living in Issaquah, Washington, had been associate editor before Moloney stepped down. In accepting the post, he has agreed to serve out the remaining four-and-a-half years of the editorial term. "I am very appreciative of the highly competent group whom Karen assembled. These people are who make the journal function," Peterson wrote to SUNSTONE. "As for editorial policy, I will try to maintain *Dialogue's* tradition of serving as a high-quality forum for diverse opinions and points of view on Mormon matters. I am proud of this tradition and hope I can live up to the vision and determination of the editors who have preceded me."



Moloney, whose resignation letter cited time commitments associated with her teaching duties at Weber State University, along with increased family responsibilities as reasons for stepping down, shepherded *Dialogue* through the production of the recently published Spring 2004 issue devoted to reflections on peacebuilding in today's war-torn world. With work having already begun at the time of her departure, Moloney's name will appear as associate editor on the masthead of the Summer 2004 issue.



Competing. As FOX television's *American Idol* continues to dominate in the ratings, one face viewers keep seeing is LDS finalist JON PETER LEWIS. A BYU-Idaho pre-med student, Jon Peter (affectionately dubbed "JPL") has kept his religious affiliation fairly low-key, only mentioning that his ability to speak fluent Spanish

might be what would surprise his fans the most. Lewis had been serving a Spanish-speaking LDS mission during the first two *Idol* seasons. At the time SUNSTONE went to press, John Peter had survived three rounds of eliminations and has continued to endear himself to fans (particularly the ladies) with his Elvis-like swinging hips and down-home charm.

Hitched. Congratulations to Sunstone friends TODD COMPTON and LAURA HANSEN (now Compton). After getting acquainted at the 2003 Sunstone West in San Francisco, California, the two were married Saturday, 27 March, in Toquerville, Utah. Todd is



the author of *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* and the co-editor of *A Widow's Tale: The 1884-1896 Diary of Helen Mar Kimball Whitney*. Laura has a degree in journalism from Humboldt State University and is the daughter of Sunstone board member Nadine Hansen.

Appealed. After a nearly four-year battle, CHRISTINA AXON-FLYNN finally won a round in her lawsuit against the University of Utah. A former drama student, Axon-Flynn sued the university after she was pressured to use in class language she found objectionable. A lower court had ruled in favor of the university, but the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision and sent the case back to a lower court and to an eventual jury trial. Axon-Flynn insists she's not for censorship, nor does she believe in changing the content of artwork. She contends there is a difference between auditioning for a role and being required to perform as a part of coursework.



Church teaching as apparent justification for their political positions," said Monsivais.

Tony Yapias, director of the state's Office of Hispanic Affairs, said he was "assured by the Church that the members don't need to worry about [not being granted] temple recommends, that they're issued on the basis of personal worthiness and not nationality."

BILLIONAIRE LAUNCHES BRAVE NEW WAY TO DO GENEALOGY

IN THE 1950S, Mormons conducted genealogical research using bulky charts. In the '80s and '90s, they began to use computers. Could genealogical research soon be conducted with a cotton swab and a saliva sample?

The Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation allows anyone who has had a simple DNA test done to compare the

genetic markers of their Y-chromosome DNA (the paternal line) with those sent in by volunteers who have already done their genealogy. Such comparison can help online visitors establish who their ancestors were.

Especially accurate for establishing ancestors up to eight generations back, this technology can be used to go back as far as fifty or sixty generations. In order to protect the identity of the living, those who find matches will be able to see only those who lived before 1900.

The project is being funded by LDS billionaire James Sorenson. "It's a 'turning the hearts'-type process," Sorenson declared in an interview with the *Deseret Morning News*, in reference to scriptural passages from Malachi and the Doctrine and Covenants that inspire faithful Mormons to do temple work and genealogy. "A lot of people working here are working on the basis that they feel something more than just a test-tube study."

SUGGESTIVE PICTURES STOLEN

A FIERCE CONTROVERSY erupted at Salt Lake Community College as a group of suggestive photographs were displayed, then moved to a different room, and finally stolen from the premises. Shot by local artist Don Farmer, the photographs displayed two LDS missionaries kissing and embracing in various stages of undress.



One of the stolen pictures

On the first day of the college's annual Gay Pride Art Show, students got into a shouting match after one of them began taking down Farmer's photographs. Police were called, and the photographs were moved to a different room and re-hung;

but two days later, three of the five photographs were stolen. The stolen pictures were ones that contain LDS symbols such as the Book of Mormon, garments, and name tags.

"Some people are offended by our use of garments in the photos," wrote Matthew Grierson, one of the models, on his website. "But the photos are not meant to offend; they are meant to create awareness and open lines of communication, as many people don't understand that this does exist within Mormon culture, especially out in the mission field."

The photographs are now on display at <www.affirmation.org/art>.

Those interested in the project can visit <www.smgf.org>.

MORMONS HOOKED ON DA VINCI

HOW POPULAR IS the novel, *The DaVinci Code*, among Mormons? Count as a big hint the 700 who attended a recent lecture on the subject at Brigham Young University—plus the hundreds who were left outside.

"Mystery, Metaphor and Meaning: LDS Perspectives on the *Da Vinci Code*" is a series of lectures by BYU professors exploring different aspects of Dan Brown's popular novel. Since its publication one year ago, the novel, packed with stories about secret societies, cryptic messages, and conspiracy theories, has sold 4.5 million copies.

For LDS readers, the appeal is partly due to the novel's notion that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a special relationship. Based on nineteenth-century statements by Orson Hyde and Orson Pratt, some Mormons believe Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' wives.

During the first lecture, BYU professor Eric Huntsman refused to state his opinion about the nature of the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, but he said scriptural evidence for a close relationship is significant.

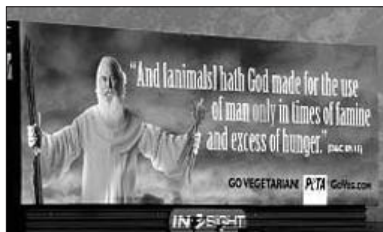
"If the evidence is inconclusive, then why is [Mary Magdalene] there?" Huntsman asked. "Why is she prominent in the scriptures?"

"Still," he added, "I'm not going to be making some sensationalistic claims."



Solar Flares

God Promotes Vegetarianism. Quoting from D&C 89, a Salt Lake City billboard promotes vegetarianism and a more humane treatment of animals. "And (animals) hath God made for the use of man only in times of famine and excess hunger,"



reads the sign, posted along the south side of 3900 South near 300 West. The ad portrays a man in robes (presumably God), holding a staff in one hand and carrots in the other.

"Animals raised for meat on factory farms live miserable lives and die bloody, violent deaths," says Sean Diener, who is LDS and coordinates the PETA campaign. "Anyone who thinks that Jesus would approve of the way these animals are raised and killed completely misses the gospel's greatest message—compassion."

Although it is impossible to estimate how many LDS are vegetarian, close to two hundred Latter-day Saints interested in vegetarianism participate in MormonVeg, an online discussion group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MormonVeg/>.

R-Rating Trumps Potential Lessons in the Passion. While delivering a fireside talk on Church standards to more than 400 youth gathered in the stake center in Huntington Beach, California, stake president Frank Parker took the opportunity to renounce Mel Gibson's movie to the teens by telling them that "even though the movie is about Jesus, the Prophet would disapprove of your seeing it."

In a game called "What's wrong with this picture," the stake president displayed overhead images to the wide-eyed group of 12- to 18-year-olds and asked them to explain what was not right with the various pictures. Unable to locate his illustration of Gordon B. Hinckley standing in line at a movie theater under a marquee that read *The Passion of the Christ*, Parker described the picture to the youth, then asked and answered his own "what's wrong" question by stating, "We have been told by the prophet not to see R-rated movies and even though this movie is about Jesus, Latter-day Saints should not see it."

According to our source, one young woman in the congregation had already seen the film with her parents and felt that viewing *Passion* had moved her toward wanting to live a better life. The chastisement she received from her peers after the fireside for her having seen the film did not have the same effect.

*Celluloid Watch*MORMON CINEMA BEGINS
ANOTHER REEL

WITH THE RELEASE of movies such as *The Best Two Years* and *The Home Teachers*, and with the celebration of the third LDS Film Festival, Utah-based filmmakers and actors continue to expand the Mormon film industry.



More than 1,000 BYU students and movie fans participated in the festival held in February at the Provo City Library and Orem's University Mall. In addition to short projects by BYU film students and graduates, the festival screened *Saints and Soldiers* and *The Best Two Years*, two full-length features being released nationally.

"In short films, people try new things," says festival organizer Christian Vuissa. "The festival is, in that sense, a showcase that encourages creative thinking. Some of the students who participated in last year's festival are now making full-length features, such as Jared Hess and Jeremy Coon."

Hess and Coon wrote, directed, and produced *Napoleon Dynamite*, which screened this year at the Sundance Film Festival. Set in Preston, Idaho, *Napoleon Dynamite* focuses on the life of a man who alters his eccentric daily life in order to help his best friend become class president. Intended for a broader, non-LDS audience, the film was picked up by Fox Searchlight and will have a wide theatrical release this spring.

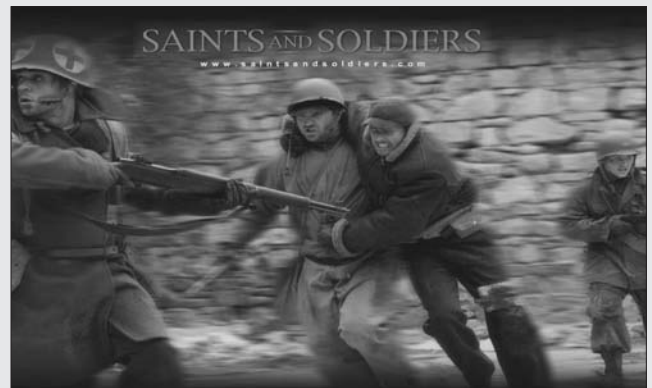
Directed by Scott S. Anderson, *The Best Two Years* follows four LDS missionaries in Holland, including one who has just received a "Dear John," and an enthusiastic greenie, played by omnipresent LDS actor Kirby Heyborne. "Anderson finds gentle humor in the details of mission life," writes Sean P. Means for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, "but [he] also explores the spiritual side of mission work. . . . Even for non-Mormons, there is an undeniable power in the scenes where these young men talk about their faith."



The Home Teachers describes the adventures of two men trying to complete their home teaching before the end of the month. With this comedy, director Kurt Hale and producer Dave Hunter aim at the same kind of clean family fun offered by their two previous films, *The Singles Ward* and *The RM*.

MORMONS AND MOVIE VIOLENCE

AS LDS FILMMAKERS expand their creativity, they confront questions of values and content. Mormons have been accused of having strict standards in matters of language and sexual content but lax ones concerning violence. Recent developments seem to confirm this perception.



While the LDS Film Festival awarded Kohl Glass's violent short *The Promethean* for its creativity, depictions of violence in big productions can have disastrous financial consequences. The Motion Picture Association of America recently dealt a blow to the World War II drama, *Saints and Soldiers*, by giving it an R rating.

"My wife and I don't see R-rated movies," says *Saints and Soldiers* producer Adam Abel. "So it's interesting now to have made one. Am I not supposed to see my movie?"

Anxious to release the film for LDS as well as mainstream audiences, the filmmaker appealed the MPAA rating, and, according to the online version of *Newsweek*, studied movies such as *Pearl Harbor* before reshooting some scenes with less blood in order to ensure a PG-13 rating upon appeal. Just days before SUNSTONE went to press, it was announced that the appeal had been successful.

Even though an R-rating makes a film taboo for many Mormons, LDS prophets have seldom warned specifically against R-rated movies. Elder Alexander Morrison even once praised *Saving Private Ryan* for portraying violence as something horrible, rather than enjoyable (see SUNSTONE, March 2003, 16–22). Likewise, BYU religion professor Robert Millet recently praised Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, one of the most violent and gory movies of the season, which he described as "moving." "I don't know if

my system could have taken it another hour. But it was a beautiful experience,” said Millet.

AMID CONTROVERSY, GAY MORMON MISSIONARY FILM FINALLY SCREENS

AFTER WEEKS OF controversy, the film *Latter Days* finally screened in Salt Lake City on 17 March. The comedy tells the story of a gay Hollywood waiter who falls in love with a 19-year-old LDS missionary who is then forced to rethink his beliefs. Amid rumors of threats and protests by local customers, Salt Lake’s Madstone Theater decided to cancel a scheduled engagement. After having originally turned it down, the Salt Lake Film Society reconsidered and finally picked up the controversial film, screening it at the Tower Theatre.



“By making this movie, I hoped I would send a message back to that 19-year-old [I once was], who was so uncertain about himself, that everything was going to be OK,” says *Latter Days* director C. Jay Cox, who is gay and a returned LDS missionary. “But he ended up having just as much to say to me. I was able to reaffirm a lot of spiritual tenets that I’ve kind of rediscovered because of him, because of the movie.”

GET THE FIRE SPARKS CONTROVERSY

A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT the lives of LDS missionaries was aired by PBS in December 2003. *Get the Fire! Young Mormon Missionaries Abroad* follows three Utah teens from their homes in Salt Lake City through their training at the MTC and finally to their destination in the Germany Munich Mission.

The documentary, however, turned out to be controversial, as filmmaker Nancy du Plessis juxtaposed images of the missionaries speaking imperfect German and having doors slammed in their faces with interviews with five returned missionaries who have since abandoned Mormonism. Du Plessis says she included the interviews because test audiences “had questions to things that my subjects never wanted to talk about.”

One year into the project, LDS officials withdrew their support. That problem, along with depleted funds, forced du Plessis to finish the film with imperfect lighting and sound.

In an interview with the *Salt Lake Tribune*, returned missionary Brady Flamm described as unpleasant his experience as one of the film’s missionary subjects. “I got nicer and nicer to her, thinking it would be harder for her to trash me. But she did it anyway.”

Viewer comments, both praising and criticizing the film, can be found at <www.pbs.org>.

BYU ATHLETES PARTY, GET PUNISHED

IN A STORY that received wide media attention, Brigham Young University has punished six BYU football players for participating in a party at which they allegedly drank alcohol and had sex with a female BYU athlete. The party took place on 19 January at the home of three members of the BYU football team.

The female student had first claimed that she had been raped—an allegation she later recanted. She said she had fabricated the rape story because “she was simply embarrassed and somewhat frightened as to her status at the school.” Investigators concluded that the sex had been consensual.

BYU will not reveal the names of any of the players, and coaches will not comment on why some names are not on the new football roster. However, local media reports have named four players as having been dismissed or suspended. BYU says that two of the six players involved in the incident have been placed on probation and will be able to continue with the team.

LDS MAYOR OUT OF JAIL

MORE THAN A year after being accused of misusing public funds, former Boise, Idaho, Mayor Brent Coles got out of jail on 23 February. Coles is one of three Boise City officials, all LDS, who pleaded guilty or were convicted for misusing city funds to visit various LDS temples and other sites.

Among the billing violations they found, auditors determined that Coles and former chief-of-staff Gary Lyman were reimbursed by the city of Boise for non-business-related trips to Salt Lake City, long-distance phone calls to the LDS Church, a limousine ride from a Boston hotel to a nearby LDS temple, and a trip to Nauvoo.



Brent Coles

Coles pleaded guilty to one count each of misusing public money and presenting a fraudulent voucher. Lyman pleaded guilty to two counts of misusing public money, one count of presenting a fraudulent voucher, and one count of illegal wire-tapping.

The third person involved in the scandal was former Human Resources Director Tammy Rice. Rice accompanied Lyman on a city-funded trip through Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, which reportedly included a stop at historic Nauvoo. Prosecutors also contended that Rice and Lyman were having an affair.

Last year, LDS leaders in Boise released Coles and Lyman from their church callings—Coles as a high counselor and Lyman as a member of a stake presidency.

At the time the scandal broke, newspaper articles noted the irony that Lyman had also used city funds to buy ten copies of *Standing for Something: 10 Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes*, the bestselling book by LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley. Chapter 2 of the book is titled, “Where There Is Honesty, Other Virtues Will Follow.”