

A Change of Heart.

I penned an illustration of the old Granite Stake Tabernacle for my Christmas card in 2009 because it has a special significance in my life. It once stood proudly on the North East corner of 33rd South and State Street in Salt Lake; but it is no longer there. It aged and deteriorated, as we all do, but though it was demolished many years ago, it meant a lot to me and I would like to tell you why.

It was 64 years ago, when, as an impetuous 15-year-old boy, I declared to my mother that I would not be going to Stake Conference with the family that Sabbath morning. I was determined to “be my own man” and in my prideful youth I firmly resisted her entreaties to attend. I remember watching resolutely as nine members of our family trooped out the door to fill an entire row at conference, leaving the 10th behind—entirely alone. The house was very quiet except for the occasional creaking and groaning of an aging home, and in a short time I began to feel lonely. There was no television then, and the radio was ‘on the fritz’. As I rattled around in our spacious home I felt as though something important was missing from my life. I thought about leaving the house to play with a few of my friends; but quickly realized that they would be in Church. My brothers and sisters—dear friends all—were in Church too, leaving me all alone to wallow in my solitude.

Because I was a gregarious, outgoing, boy I decided that I would go where the action was, and after dressing quickly, I wandered about the deserted streets for a time and finally found myself in the foyer of the Granite Stake Tabernacle. Because I had declared in an adolescent ‘declaration of independence’ that I would not attend conference, I could not humble myself enough to enter the chapel; but remained, sole alone, in the spacious foyer. Axel J. Andreason was our stake president at the time, and he was a remarkable orator. In previous conferences I had sat spellbound as his sonorous tones rose to vast crescendos and then, in a moment, dropped to a strident whisper; and on this day—as stood alone in the foyer—I heard his powerful testimony explode from the pulpit, echo from the vast dome of the building—and into a young boy’s heart.

It was that experience that somehow settled the course of my future, for I determined, then and there, that I would never miss Church again; but that I would make the Savior, Jesus Christ, and His Church, the bastion and bulwark of my life from that time forth. Well Perhaps I have overstated what I felt at that moment yet, while I feel sure that the decision of a

boy so young was not as focused and resolute as that, in the end that is what it grew to be.

Perhaps that is what places of worship are meant to be; a place for a change of heart. At least it was for me!

Just as an aging tabernacle crumbles, so do we. Our physical bodies, once vibrant and strong begin to deteriorate. Our hair begins to fall away, our joints begin to creak and groan, we grunt at the smallest exertion, and our plumbing, sight and sound systems falter. But I have been delighted to note that through it all the tender mercies of the Lord continue to lift, strengthen—even carry—His children through the rough and tumble of daily life. If these are the truly the ‘golden years’ it is because God has blessed us with the capacity to respond to our problems with patience, faith, hope—and love. And with the willingness to hold tight to the glorious promises that await the faithful in eternity.