

THE COLLEGE AND THE TEMPLE ON THE HILL

Brent and DonnaJean Kinghorn—First Counselor, Rexburg Temple Presidency, and Assistant to Temple Matron

For those of us who have lived in the shadow of Brigham Young University–Idaho all of our lives, watching the metamorphosis from an academy to a four year university has been a most interesting experience. I remember my dad and mother talking about attending some of the early classes when Ricks College transitioned from an academy to a junior college. My dad showed me his “letter sweater” with great pride. His stories of football games and track meets were legends in our home. My parents actually met as they participated in a drama production held in the old gym building. I grew up thinking that Ricks College was synonymous with falling in love and having fun.

Later on, Brent and I expanded our view; yes, Ricks College was a place of courtship and amusement, but it was also a place to get a good education that prepared us well for future schooling and employment. Then Brent was hired at Ricks College, and again our lives were blessed. We worked daily with wonderful people and befriended great students in both educational and spiritual settings.

We watched as Ricks College, called by some the “best kept secret in the Church,” grew from having a predominantly Upper Snake River Valley enrollment to attracting youth from all over the West. Then there was not space to admit all who wanted to attend, and many struggled with the cap which had been placed on enrollment. We fielded dozens of phone calls from parents hoping that we could in some way help their student to be admitted. We watched as recruiters no longer recruited—they just handed out admission forms.

Then came the announcement! Never had we dreamed that it would again be possible to earn a four-year degree in Rexburg, Idaho. The little school built on a firm foundation was coming out of obscurity. Its doors opened to members of the Church worldwide. With the help of generous benefactors, students from all nations were invited to come and learn and use their knowledge to bless their countries and the Church.

Then the Rexburg Temple was announced. A temple would cap the learning experience of the students at BYU–Idaho. But more importantly, it would prepare the students to go out into the world protected by “the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Doctrine & Covenants 27:17) and prepared with the “gospel of peace” (Doctrine & Covenants 27:16).

This temple on the hill is, as Elder Bednar pointed out, an integral part of Brigham Young University–Idaho being a Disciple Preparation

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Center. We daily see young people leave their classes and come to the temple, if only for an hour. They come seeking. They come open ready to be filled. They truly come to worship, and they seem to leave different than they came. They are fortified, having found answers. They are ready to follow the promptings they receive.

Elder Bednar quoted Elder J. Ballard Washburn as he shared what he had learned from the temple

I have come to better and more fully understand the protection available in the temple and through our covenants. I have come to better and more fully understand what it means to make an acceptable offering of temple worship. There is a difference between church-attending, tithe-paying members who occasionally rush into the temple to go through a session and those members who faithfully and consistently worship in the temple.¹

Elder Bednar then stated, “The Rexburg Temple will contribute to a potent and powerfully protected place of preparation for disciples of Christ who will be an influence for good all over the earth.”² We are watching the fulfillment of this statement. What a privilege to be involved in helping these young people be prepared to be an influence for good all over the earth.

A once obscure little junior college has now become a university that sends academically well-qualified students all over the world. And another House of Learning, the Lord’s university, is sending those same students out into the world armed with faith, knowledge, and firm testimonies of our Savior, Jesus Christ. They are prepared to bear and to defend that testimony and have been fortified by their temple worship.

Yes, the Rexburg Temple blesses all of us who have the privilege of working there. It blesses and strengthens families as mothers and fathers come and worship together, but it is also preparing our university students to become a powerful influence for good wherever they will live and with whomever they will come in contact. We have discovered that the temple on the hill, coupled with its neighboring university, provides a complete learning experience. ☺

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NOTES

¹ David A. Bednar, “Brigham Young University–Idaho: A Disciple Preparation Center (DPC),” *BYU–Idaho Devotional*, 31 August 2004.

² *Ibid.*