

IMAGING THE TEMPLE

Michael Lewis—University Photographer

Many times,
after getting the
photos I needed, I
would just linger
and enjoy the
wonderful feeling
I got from being
near the temple
construction.

As the university photographer, I was responsible to provide weekly construction photos of the Rexburg Temple to show the progress for the employee newsletter, *News and Notes*. All my photos were taken outside; I was not allowed inside the building to photograph. Because I had that opportunity to be so closely involved with the construction process, many times, after getting the photos I needed, I would just linger and enjoy the wonderful feeling I got from being near the temple construction.

I tried to capture the temple from a different angle each week. Those weeks when I planned ahead, I was able to consider the time of day for the best light. Of course, the days with beautiful blue skies and fluffy white clouds were my favorite. On occasion I sought to find interesting foreground material, perhaps a yellow wildflower leading the eye to the temple, contrasted by deep blue sky. One day while walking up to the temple, I noticed the decorative grass which looks a lot like wheat. Knowing that a visual theme of the temple was wheat, I wanted to capture this grass in a way that it would frame the temple. These photos were later used in the *Temple Times* newsletter.

When the Angel Moroni was to be hoisted into place, the inclement weather was not ideal for picture taking. I knew the shot to get was the raising of the statue up off the truck with the temple in the background. I was allowed inside the fence long enough to get some photos without the fence and the crowd to obstruct.

Another assignment dealt with providing photos for the Temple Cultural Celebration. In the early part of August the idea had come up to capture Primary children dressed in white walking through wheat fields carrying bundles of wheat towards the temple. The problem was that many of the wheat fields had already been harvested. Children were gathered from all over the temple district to meet us at the field near the temple. The farmer had agreed to delay harvesting until we were able to complete our photo shoot. The early morning golden glow of light on the fields backlit the children, giving them a heavenly glow. It was a glorious scene.

Finally, I wanted a beautiful photo in the snow since that would depict the time of year the temple was dedicated. Too often when it snows, by the time the sun comes out there is no longer snow on the branches because the wind has blown it off or the sun has melted it. So I was looking for a winter shot with a nice blue sky, perhaps some fluffy white clouds, and snow still on the branches of the trees. One week before the

dedication we had such a day, which resulted in some beautiful winter photos of the temple.

The temple photography assignment was different and challenging because of its longevity. To try to come up with a new image each week did get monotonous at times, but my responsibility to the readers of *News and Notes* gave me drive to carry on. That weekly visit to the temple construction site has given me great rewards. There were many occasions I felt reinvigorated by having visited the temple site. Also, when the temple missionaries submitted their final report, they included a DVD of all the photos I had taken to complement their own archive of photos.

Several years before the Rexburg Temple was even announced, I remember being asked to photograph the donated land. I remember walking near where the temple is right now and having a strong feeling that someday we would have a temple here in Rexburg, built on this site. Years later when the temple was announced and before the location was decided upon, I remembered those earlier feelings and was very excited to hear the formal announcement to confirm those feelings I had so many years earlier.

I regularly find myself looking towards the temple, especially in the morning and evening hours when the low light streaks across the valley, illuminating the temple on the hill, setting it against the heavens above. What peace and joy it brings to my soul. I love to see the temple.

**I regularly find
myself looking
towards the temple.**

