

## Funeral Service for James Bryce Wadley

6 Jan 2010

Topeka Stake Center

**Prelude Music by Julie Rivers** (a Washburn music professor and friend of Jim, who played beautiful music on the piano for about 30 minutes)

**Hymn: "Lead Kindly Light"**

**Invocation: John Christensen**

**Eulogy by Jim Bayles** (who lives now in St. George, Utah, but who came to Topeka after visiting children in Michigan and Indiana)

Jim Wadley would like the drama of dying and being buried in this cold, snowy weather, which symbolizes the opposite of life. The grave will be cold. The day will be gray outside, appropriately, because we miss him. "If we didn't miss him, something would be wrong."

"He touched us all."

"I was in awe because everything difficult for me was easy for him."

Though he could do so much, he wasn't arrogant. He maintained his naivete that others could do whatever he could do (such as figure out how to play a baritone in three hours!), even though we couldn't!

He could pick up and play any musical instrument in a short time. He was also very artistic—a rare, rare gift.

"He had instant mastery of many other things." He wrote books. He taught classes in new, innovative, "revolutionary" ways that worked well. He loved to cook. He redecorated his living room in a day, explaining, "I just felt like it."

He loved costumes. He loved to lie in a coffin on his porch on Halloween and rise up and scare kids. Once at a Scout camp, Jim Bayles was telling a bear story. Jim Wadley got into a bear costume that "he'd probably made in twenty minutes" beforehand and scared the scouts!

"What a thrill to know him!"

Jim Bayles said, "I wept [during the family prayer before the funeral]."

The poet and author Henry Wadsworth Longfellow lost his wife, then had a son severely injured during the Civil War. Longfellow went for two years thinking God was dead. Then he heard bells on a Christmas day and penned the words to the poem "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." These two verses are most important to remember:

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:*

*"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;*

*The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,*

*With peace on earth, good will to men."*

*Till, ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,  
Of peace on earth, good will to men!*

(LDS Hymns, #214)

“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep.’ We are here today to mark the truth of that statement.” We are God’s spirit children. He knew all of us. We were His family, His family in the spirit, in what we call the pre-existence. We are numbered with Jesus as His spirit children. We are God’s family. He has a plan. He does not sleep. He is not dead. This idea is, as Elder Dallin Oaks calls it, “a powerful antidepressant.”

Jim followed the scriptural injunction to be “anxiously engaged in a good cause.” We are meant to experience contrast in life. The important thing is what we do when we face difficulty.

We’re still alive after death. After the resurrection, we will have a perfect memory of our life on earth. (As an aside, Jim Bayles told about a tractor that he and Jim Wadley owned together. Jim Bayles sold his half to Mark Broz, but Jim Wadley didn’t want to sell his half; he wanted to keep it. Jim Bayles quipped, “Contrary to property laws as we know it, you, Mark, share a tractor with an immortal who won’t sell it!”)

After death we’ll remember who we are and will love each other still. Families are forever. We believe that. “It’s a precious truth to me,” added Jim Bayles. The continuation of families is part of God’s plan. God is fair and includes in His plan a way to bless people who didn’t get a good shake in this life. God provides for them. He loves them. He provides a time for people who die without knowing about His plan to learn it.

In the end, God’s promise is that all will have a chance to experience joy in a later life, if not now. Jim experienced joy in this life too.

We each have the seeds of eternal potential. What will you do with your eternal potential? Will you fill life to the fullest, the way Jim did?

Jim was gentle—and maybe too soft on some of us. He didn’t like controversy. Jim Bayles said that once, after he shared his position on something with Jim Wadley, Jim Wadley said, “I agree strongly with what you said, except there are also some things about your position with which I strongly disagree.”

Speaking directly to Jim’s children, Jim Bayles said, “You can ask, ‘Is this [Jim’s death] a disaster or has he prepared me to go forward?’ Sometimes it’s hard to live in the presence of great men because their aura is so broad. Maybe this is an opportunity you each need. You children have a mother who needs looking after.”

Speaking directly to Jimmy, he said, “It’s hard to be the oldest [son] in the family, but you can do it.” The funeral is a transition that says we’re moving on.

“This wintry day reflects the sober feelings we have. But you will heal and move on. Jim paved the way for you. He left a big shadow. Now you get to shine forth in greatness. Time is short to prove your potential on earth, but you can do it.”

Jim Bayles closed by reading two verses of “Be Still My Soul” (LDS Hymns, #124):

*Be still, my soul: The Lord is on thy side;  
With patience bear thy cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide;  
In ev'ry change he faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: Thy best, thy heav'nly Friend  
Thru thorny ways leads to a joyful end.*

*Be still, my soul: The hour is hastening on  
When we shall be forever with the Lord,  
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone;  
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.  
Be still, my soul: When change and tears are past,  
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.*

**Speaker: Joy Erikson** (one of Jim's sisters, who was speaking on behalf of his three sisters)

She said she felt honored to give a tribute "to the remarkable life of my friend and brother."

Speaking to Frances, she said, "These tributes to Jim are also tributes to you. He couldn't have done what he did without you—your love and support. That's the flipside of the love coin."

"I think Jim would've loved to have us pass out instruments and play music today! I think he'd want us to laugh."

She shared a cute joke that she made up, but she said it's like something Jim would've made up. In the joke, three law professors are talking about what they would like people to say about them at their funerals. Dean Tom Romig said that he'd like speakers to talk about how he helped a lot of people through his law work. Professor Jim Bayles said he would like people at his funeral to talk about his great love for his family. Then it was Jim Wadley's turn. He said, "I'd like them to say, 'Look!! He's moving!!'"

Joy then said, "He still is moving—and shaking too, I'm sure!—in heaven!"

She compared our spirit to a hand and our body to a glove. Though the body, like the glove, may be taken off and may be buried, the spirit, like the hand, continues to live and move.

She recalled going to an Institute of Religion class that Jim taught. In it he compared life to a ladder and said we need to recognize that there are higher rungs than the ones we're on and then we need to have the desire to take the next step—and the next one and the next one, etc. We may start taking steps up the ladder for the wrong reasons, then for the right reason, and then for no reason at all: because we've become Christlike.

Joy said she loves acronyms and suggested one that we should all associate with Jim's real name:

*J=Jesus Christ*

Jim had a testimony of Jesus Christ as the Savior. He made covenants to live a Christlike life, and he lived them. "I'm sure that he was greeted by the Savior with, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'" Jim's love of Jesus was reflected in how he behaved.

Joy recalled that Jim had just turned 16 years old and been ordained a priest when she turned eight-years old and was going to be baptized. She asked that Jim baptize him. He did, and she felt especially close to him ever since then.

Because of Jesus Christ, Jim and Frances don't have "to death do you part" as part of their marriage. "[When death comes,] will you miss each other? Yes! But will you have a glorious reunion? Yes!"

A=Art

Jim thought everyone could do the things he did, but not everyone could! Joy said that Jim got most of the creative genes in the family, then added, "But we were never jealous of his talents because we were blessed by them." She said that she had asked Jim one time to draw a picture of a sailboat for a family that was mourning the loss of the mother (who died at about the same age that Jim did). Joy made a copy of the picture and gave it to that family, along with the saying, "You can't change the wind, but you can adjust the sail." She said that before the funeral she made copies of that same picture Jim drew so she could give one to family members today. She shared with all of us a short writing about a sailboat that gives a Gospel perspective on death:

**Gone From My Sight**  
by Henry Van Dyke

*I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.*

*Then someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!"*

*"Gone where?"*

*Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.*

*Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!" there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"*

*And that is dying.*

Jim is now with his parents, Frances's parents, and the baby he and Frances were never able to raise.

M=Music

She spoke briefly about Jim's musical creativity, including his making a musical instrument out of a bedpan. She said it was probably for a "chamber pot orchestra"!

*E=Enthusiasm*

Jim loved life, nature, creative thinking, rapelling. He always had a twinkle in his eye.

Joy said that Jim had more interests than he had time and then quoted Val Wilcox, who said, "For the eager learner with more interests than hours, eternity promises to be heaven indeed."

*S=Service*

He had a soft spot in his heart for everyone.

Joy then shared two scriptures. The first one reminds her of her father and Jim:

*"And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. O remember, remember that these things are true; for the Lord God hath spoken it. (Mosiah 2:41)*

The second scripture, she said, was for Frances, the five children, and the grandchildren, all of whom share at least part of Jim's name (first, middle, or last):

*"Behold, my sons, I desire that ye should remember to keep the commandments of God; and I would that ye should declare unto the people these words. Behold, I have given unto you the names of our first parents who came out of the land of Jerusalem; and this I have done that when you remember your names ye may remember them; and when ye remember them ye may remember their works; and when ye remember their works ye may know how that it is said, and also written, that they were good." (Helaman 5:6)*

Joy closed by saying, "Jim, good work. Remember the messages we gave you to give Mom and Dad." Then she added, "I know that Jim knew—and I know—that Heavenly Father's plan includes the sad part we call death—but it also includes reunion."

**Clarinet and Flute Hymn Medley** by Kirt and Julie Saville (who came in from Mapleton, Utah)

("Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing" was the centerpiece of the medley, which also included "Adam-ondi-Ahman." They arranged the piece themselves especially for Jim's funeral service.)

**Speaker: Bob Wadley** (Jim's brother)

"This is a sad, but sacred, occasion."

"The only way to take sorrow out of death is to take love out of life—and that's not part of God's plan. 'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.'"

Bob quoted Doctrine & Covenants 42:49:

*“Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die, and more especially for those that have not hope of a glorious resurrection.”*

The first experience with death that he and Jim had was when a blacksmith friend died. (They’d watch him heat metal and pound and shape it into something useful. We too can be shaped by things that heat and pound us.) They were devastated by the death of their friend the blacksmith.

“I’m not saying, ‘Poor Jim.’ I still mourn his loss but know he’s in a place of joy and reunion with loved ones....I don’t mourn for him but for the loss of him.”

He quoted Joseph Smith, who said that the separation caused by death is only “for a moment” and that the expectation of seeing friends and family later helped him bear with their loss. Death is like a great journey that someone takes; we’ll be able to meet again with joy.

Bob said he is grateful for the Savior, the Atonement, Heavenly Father’s plan, the Holy Ghost and the comfort He brings, and God’s love, which he said they felt last night (during the visitation) and today as they interacted with people who knew Jim.

He read Pres. Hinckley’s poem, “What Is This Things Called Death?”

*What is this thing called death  
This quiet passing in the night?  
Tis not the end but genesis  
of better worlds and greater light.*

*O God, touch Thou my aching heart  
And calm my troubled, haunting fears.  
Let hope and faith, transcendent, pure,  
Give strength and peace beyond my tears.*

*There is no death, but only change,  
With recompense for vict’ry won.  
The gift of Him who loved all men,  
The Son of God, the Holy One.*

Bob said that he’ll miss several things, in particular, about Jim:

- 1) His sense of humor—He never took himself seriously. Bob said he never remembered seeing Jim angry. They laughed a lot together.
- 2) His artistic ability and creativity: e.g. his dressing as a cowboy and playing cowboy music at the Kansas Museum of History, his artwork, etc.
- 3) His love of history, particularly Civil War and early Mormon history. “He was a walking encyclopedia of Church history.” Bob mentioned that Jim had managed a Goodwill Store in New Orleans, when he was a law student there, and was able to collect a number of historical artifacts.
- 4) His commitment to the Church and to service. Even as a 14-year old teacher in the Aaronic priesthood, Jim was committed to home teaching. One day, when the month was almost over and his

adult home teaching companion was gone, Jim asked Bob, his 12-year old brother, to come with him. Bob balked initially but finally went—after Jim had already left. When Bob arrived at the home where they were going, he found the family already gathered and Jim visiting with him. “He didn’t feel the need to be trained but just did it.”

5) His commitment to learning. He was smart and worked hard. He was self-taught in many areas. He got straight A’s all through high school, college, and his masters program. He was the valedictorian of his college. Jim and his older sister, who also did very well in school, were role models for Bob.

6) His love for his family. After he and his family moved to Topeka from Florida, he told Bob they were working their way west, but they never left Topeka, where they were for 30 years.

Bob likened Jim and Frances’ s family now to the Israelites after Moses left. Joshua wasn’t sure that he was up to the task of leading the Israelites. The Lord told Joshua—and tells the Wadley family now—“Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Joshua 1:9)

Bob closed by saying, “God knows of your loss, circumstances, and inner strength. He will guide you.”

**Speaker: Brian Wadley** (representing the children)

He said he had a “superhero” for a dad, who was married to “Wonder Woman”!

His dad was always supportive of Brian. He got him his first camera. He helped him with homework. He showed him how important it is to help people. He took him to seminary even when Brian was too young to attend himself. (He had siblings who attended but wanted to go too.)

His dad let him know it was OK to be different. He told him not to put limits on what he could do and accomplish.

Brian said, “[My dad] showed me how to jump out of a [Halloween] coffin and scare people!”

His dad was an example of hard work—e.g. on the farm they had [which was located by the Prairie Home Cemetery, where Jim was later buried.] Brian mentioned that his dad used sugar cubes to lead their donkey where he wanted it to go.

“I’m grateful for everything he taught me.”

“He made everything look so easy.”

“He inspired me in everything I did.”

“I’m grateful for my mom too. It hasn’t always been easy, but she makes it look easy.”

“I’m grateful that he was my dad and that I had time with him. I’ll never forget him.”

“We know we’ll see him again.”

“He loved his grandkids and was always making things for them.”

Brian said that his dad, Herb Vice, and Vance Mellen [fun-loving Sherwood Ward members and friends who have passed away] are probably having lots of fun now.

“I love my family and know we can make it.”

### **Pictorial Slide Show Accompanied by the Flamingos Band**

(The Flamingos, the Topeka band in which Jim played for over 20 years, played “Getting to Know You,” “Sentimental Journey,” and “I’ll Be Seeing You.” The band members--Phil Skow, Bob Wolfersberger, Sue Carlson, Rob and Jennifer Bidwell, Alan Dunaway, Chris Hamilton, and John and Carol Christensen--thought it was especially appropriate to end our playing that day with “I’ll Be Seeing You,” both because it was our band’s “swan song” whenever we played and because we know that, if

we live faithfully, all of us will be seeing Jim again! When we played for the service, we set up one empty chair—with a derby and sparkly pink vest on it and an instrument stand in front of it—next to the other chairs for the band, signifying that one musician—our dear friend Jim—was missing, but not forgotten.)

**Additional Time for People Who Wanted to Share Comments** (Unfortunately, since I was sitting with the band during the rest of the service, I didn't have paper and pen with which to take notes. The information in this section is based on notes from Jan Wilkes, a conversation with Brian a few days later, and my memory.)

**Mike Wadley**, explaining through tears that he inherited his mother's "crying genes," thanked people for their helpfulness to the family. He said that people were truly mourning with those who mourn and comforting those who stand in need of comfort, as the baptismal covenant states in Mosiah 18: 9-10 (a scripture that he read to us). He expressed love and gratitude for his father. He said that when he was a boy, other children would often say, "My dad is better than yours" and then explain what their dads did to make them the best. Mike said that, after he told them about different things his dad did, his dad always came out on top! Mike told a story about his dad shearing sheep at the farm one day with Ken Robbins, a law student. In an attempt to get an uncooperative ram into the shearing area, Ken lassoed it and then tried and tried to pull it where he wanted it to go. Instead, Ken was the one who was pulled around! When Jim showed the ram some sugar cubes, the ram calmly—and on its own—followed Jim into the shearing area, where it was then sheared! Mike referred to his dad's enthusiasm, which he said literally means "God in us." We can have the Spirit of God with us when we're enthusiastic, just as his enthusiastic dad did.

**Kirt Saville** spoke about Jim's love of life and his ability to excel in everything—even in basketball, which they played one-on-one when they waited for their teenagers who were in seminary. Kirt spoke of Jim's "Magic Garage," the detached garage behind the Wadleys' home that seemed to hold every prop that was ever needed for any event or activity. Kirt said, "Someone would say, 'We need a coffin,' and Jim would say, 'Oh, I have one of those in our garage.'" At other times other people would say they needed things. "Oh, I have that in our garage," Jim would say. The "Magic Garage" seemed to have anything and everything. Kirt wondered aloud if the garage actually had all those things in it or if Jim took materials from there to create what was needed. Kirt said he never found out—and never ventured into the "Magic Garage" either. Kirt also mentioned that Jim told him that his favorite place to serve in the Church was in the nursery, where he could sit on the floor, play with the kids, and eat!

**Jene Hillyer Angel** told about Jim dressing up as Santa Claus and bringing Christmas gifts on Christmas Eve to her sleeping and then Santa-doubting daughter Eris, who, afterwards, ended up believing in Santa through her high school years.

**Closing Hymn: Oh My Father**

**Benediction by Larry Hansen**

**Poem printed in funeral program: "The Grade" by Carol Lynn Pearson**

*God does not grade  
On the curve,  
I'm sure of it.*

*But we sit around  
Like high school students  
In an important class  
Whose teacher has drawn  
On the blackboard  
The tiny wedges  
For the A's and B's  
And the great bulge  
For the C's.*

*We sigh in veiled relief  
As the person down the row  
Messes up,  
Because it makes us  
Look better  
And probably means an F  
For him, which is good,  
Because while we have  
Nothing against him personally  
It means an A is more  
Available to us.*

*And we secretly sorrow  
When the person in front of us  
Does really well,  
Although we like him okay  
Because there goes another good grade,  
Darn it, and we're looking  
Worse and worse  
And slipping further down the curve.  
And God, I think  
Sits at the front of the class,  
Holding A's enough for all,  
Watching us  
Work out our salvation  
In fear and competition.*

(This summary was prepared by Carol Christensen, with valuable input from Jan Wilkes and some clarifications from Joy Erekson and Brian Wadley. I tried to be as accurate and complete as possible.)